Henrik Ibsen

An Enemy of the People

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About this edition

An Enemy of the People

Henrik Ibsen

EDITION BASIS

An Enemy of the People: Eleanor Marx Aveling's translation, revised and introduced by William Archer, in The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen, volume VIII, Heinemann second impression 1910 (collected edition 1907). Includes the complete character list, all 5 acts and their historical notes. The companion Wild Duck is not included.

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AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE.

INTRODUCTION.

From *Pillars of Society* to *John Gabriel Borkman*, all Ibsen's plays, with one exception, succeeded each other at intervals of two years. The single exception was *An Enemy of the People*. The storm of obloquy which greeted *Ghosts* stirred him to unwonted rapidity of production. *Ghosts* had appeared in December 1881; already, in the spring of 1882, Ibsen, then living in Rome, was at work upon its successor; and he finished it at Gossensass, in the Tyrol, in the early autumn. It appeared in Copenhagen at the end of November.

John Paulsen[1] relates an anecdote of the poet's extreme secretiveness during the process of composition, which may find a place here: "One summer he was travelling by rail with his wife and son. He was engaged upon a new play at the time; but neither Fru Ibsen nor Sigurd had any idea as to what it was about. Of course they were both very curious. It happened that, at a station, Ibsen left the carriage for a few moments. As he did so he dropped a scrap of paper. His wife picked it up, and read on it only the words, 'The doctor says....' Nothing more. Fru Ibsen showed it laughingly to Sigurd, and said, 'Now we will tease your father a little when he comes back. He will be horrified to find that we know anything of his play.' When Ibsen entered the carriage his wife looked at him roguishly, and said, 'What doctor is it that figures in your new piece? I am sure he must have many interesting things to say.' But if she could have foreseen the effect of her innocent jest, Fru Ibsen would certainly have held her tongue. For Ibsen was speechless with surprise and rage. When at last he recovered his speech, it was to utter a torrent of reproaches. What did this mean? Was he not safe in his own house? Was he surrounded with spies? Had his locks been tampered with, his desk rifled? And so forth, and so forth. His wife, who had listened with a quiet smile to the rising tempest of his wrath, at last handed him the scrap of paper. 'We know nothing more than what is written upon this slip which you let fall. Allow me to return it to you.' There stood Ibsen crestfallen. All his suspicions had vanished into thin air. The play on which he was occupied proved to be *An Enemy of the People*, and the doctor was none other than our old friend Stockmann, the good-hearted and muddleheaded reformer, for whom Jonas Lie partly served as a model."

The indignation which glows in *An Enemy of the People* was kindled, in the main, by the attitude adopted towards *Ghosts* by the Norwegian Liberal press and the

"compact majority" it represented. But the image on which the play rings the changes was present to the poet's long before *Ghosts* was written. On December 19, 1879—a fortnight after the publication of *A Doll's House*—Ibsen wrote to Professor Dietrichson: "It appears to me doubtful whether better artistic conditions can be attained in Norway before the intellectual soil has been thoroughly turned up and cleansed, and all the swamps drained off." Here we have clearly the germ of *An Enemy of the People*. The image so took hold of Ibsen that after applying it to social life in this play, he recurred to it in *The Wild Duck*, in relation to the individual life.

The mood to which we definitely owe *An Enemy of the People* appears very clearly in a letter to George Brandes, dated January 3, 1882, in which Ibsen thanks him for his criticism of *Ghosts*. "What are we to say," he proceeds, "of the attitude taken up by the so-called Liberal press—by those leaders who speak and write about freedom of action and thought, and at the same time make themselves the slaves of the supposed opinions of their subscribers? I am more and more confirmed in my belief that there is something demoralising in engaging in politics and joining parties. I, at any rate, shall never be able to join a party which has the majority on its side. Björnson says, 'The majority is always right'; and as a practical politician he is bound, I suppose, to say so. I, on the contrary, of necessity say, 'The minority is always right.' Naturally I am not thinking of that minority of stagnationists who are left behind by the great middle party, which with us is called Liberal; I mean that minority which leads the van, and pushes on to points which the majority has not yet reached. I hold that that man is in the right who is most closely in league with the future."

The same letter closes with a passage which foreshadows not only *An Enemy of the People*, but *Rosmersholm*: "When I think how slow and heavy and dull the general intelligence is at home, when I notice the low standard by which everything is judged, a deep despondency comes over me, and it often seems to me that I might just as well end my literary activity at once. They really do not need poetry at home; they get along so well with the *Parliamentary News* and the *Lutheran Weekly*. And then they have their party papers. I have not the gifts that go to make a good citizen, nor yet the gift of orthodoxy; and what I possess no gift for I keep out of. Liberty is the first and highest condition for me. At home they do not trouble much about liberty, but only about liberties: a few more or a few less, according to the standpoint of their party. I feel, too, most painfully affected by the crudity, the plebeian element, in all our public discussion. The very praiseworthy attempt to make of our people a democratic community has inadvertently gone a good way

towards making us a plebeian community. Distinction of soul seems to be on the decline at home."

So early as March 16, 1882, Ibsen announces to his publisher that he is "fully occupied with preparations for a new play." "This time," he says, "it will be a peaceable production which can be read by Ministers of State and wholesale merchants and their ladies, and from which the theatres will not be obliged to recoil. Its execution will come very easy to me, and I shall do my best to have it ready pretty early in the autumn." In this he was successful. From Gossensass, on September 9, he wrote to Hegel: "I have the pleasure of sending you herewith the remainder of the manuscript of my new play. I have enjoyed writing this piece, and I feel quite lost and lonely now that it is out of hand. Dr. Stockmann and I got on excellently together; we agree on so many subjects. But the Doctor is a more muddleheaded person than I am, and he has, moreover, several other characteristics because of which people will stand hearing a good many things from him which they might perhaps not have taken in such very good part had they been said by me."

A letter to Brandes, written six months after the appearance of the play (June 12, 1883), answers some objection which the critic seems to have made—of what nature we can only guess: "As to *An Enemy of the People*, if we had a chance to discuss it I think we should come to a tolerable agreement. You are, of course right in urging that we *must* all work for the spread of our opinions. But I maintain that a fighter at the intellectual outposts can never gather a majority around him. In ten years, perhaps, the majority may occupy the standpoint which Dr. Stockmann held at the public meeting. But during these ten years the Doctor will not have been standing still; he will still be at least ten years ahead of the majority. The majority, the mass, the multitude, can never overtake him; he can never have the majority with him. As for myself, at all events, I am conscious of this incessant progression. At the point where I stood when I wrote each of my books, there now stands a fairly compact multitude; but I myself am there no longer; I am elsewhere, and, I hope, further ahead." This is a fine saying, and as just as it is fine, with respect to the series of social plays, down to, and including, *Rosmersholm*. To the psychological series, which begins with *The Lady from the Sea*, this law of progression scarcely applies. The standpoint in each is different; but the movement is not so much one of intellectual advance as of deepening spiritual insight.

As Ibsen predicted, the Scandinavian theatres seized with avidity upon *An Enemy of the People*. Between January and March 1883 it was produced in Christiania, Bergen, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. It has always been very popular on the stage,

and was the play chosen to represent Ibsen in the series of festival performances which inaugurated the National Theatre at Christiania. The first evening, September 1, 1899, was devoted to Holberg, the great founder of Norwegian-Danish drama; *An Enemy of the People* followed on September 2; and on September 3 Björnson held the stage, with *Sigurd Jorsalfar*. Oddly enough, *Ein Volksfeind* was four years old before it found its way to the German stage. It was first produced in Berlin, March 5, 1887, and has since then been very popular throughout Germany. It has even been presented at the Court Theatres of Berlin and Vienna—a fact which seems remarkable when we note that in France and Spain it has been pressed into the service of anarchism, as a revolutionary manifesto. When first produced in Paris in 1895, and again in 1899, it was made the occasion of anarchist demonstrations. It was the play chosen for representation in Paris on Ibsen's seventieth birthday, March 29, 1898. In England it was first produced by Mr. Beerbohm Tree at the Haymarket Theatre on the afternoon of June 14, 1893. Mr. Tree has repeated his performance of Stockmann a good many times in London, the provinces, and America. He revived the play at His Majesty's Theatre in 1905. Mr. Louis Calvert played Stockmann at the Gentleman's Concert Hall in Manchester, January 27, 1894. I can find no record of any performances of the play in America, save German performances and those given by Mr. Tree; but it seems incredible that no American actor should have been attracted by the part of Stockmann. *Een Vijand des Volks* was produced in Holland in 1884, before it had even been seen in Germany; and in Italy, *Un Nemico del Popolo* holds a place in the repertory of the distinguished actor Ermete Novelli.

Of all Ibsen's plays, *An Enemy of the People* is the least poetical, the least imaginative, the one which makes least appeal to our sensibilities. Even in *The League of Youth* there is a touch of poetic fancy in the character of Selma; while *Pillars of Society* is sentimentally conceived throughout, and possesses in Martha a figure of great, though somewhat conventional, pathos. In this play, on the other hand, there is no appeal either to the imagination or to the tender emotions. It is a straightforward satiric comedy, dealing exclusively with the everyday prose of life. We have only to compare it with its immediate predecessor, *Ghosts*, and its immediate successor, *The Wild Duck*, to feel how absolutely different is the imaginative effort involved in it. Realising this, we no longer wonder that the poet should have thrown it off in half the time he usually required to mature and execute one of his creations.

Yet *An Enemy of the People* takes a high place in the second rank of the Ibsen works, in virtue of its buoyant vitality, its great technical excellence, and the geniality of its humour. It seems odd, at first sight, that a distinctly polemical play,

which took its rise in a mood of exasperation, should be perhaps the most amiable of all the poet's productions. But the reason is fairly obvious. Ibsen's nature was far too complex, and far too specifically dramatic, to permit of his giving anything like direct expression to a personal mood. The very fact that Dr. Stockmann was to utter much of his own indignation and many of his own ideas forced him to make the worthy Doctor in temperament and manner as unlike himself as possible. Now boisterous geniality, loquacity, irrepressible rashness of utterance, and a total absence of self-criticism and self-irony were the very contradiction of the poet's own characteristics—at any rate, after he had entered upon middle life. He doubtless looked round for models who should be his own antipodes in these respects. John Paulsen, as we have seen, thinks that he took many traits from Jonas Lie; others say[2] that one of his chief models was an old friend named Harald Thaulow, the father of the great painter. Be this as it may, the very effort to disguise himself naturally led him to attribute to his protagonist and mouthpiece a great superficial amiability. I am far from implying that Ibsen's own character was essentially unamiable; it would ill become one whom he always treated with the utmost kindness to say or think anything of the kind. But his amiability was not superficial, effusive, exuberant; it seldom reached that boiling-point which we call geniality; and for that very reason Thomas Stockmann became the most genial of his characters. He may be called Ibsen's Colonel Newcome. We have seen from the letter to Hegel (p. x.) that the poet regarded him with much the same ironic affection which Thackeray must have felt for that other Thomas who, amid many differences, had the same simple-minded, large-hearted, child-like nature.

In technical quality, *An Enemy of the People* is wholly admirable. We have only to compare it with *Pillars of Society*, the last play in which Ibsen had painted a broad satiric picture of the life of a Norwegian town, to feel how great an advance he had made in the intervening five years. In naturalness of exposition, suppleness of development, and what may be called general untheatricality of treatment, the later play has every possible advantage over the earlier. In one point only can it be said that Ibsen has allowed a touch of artificiality to creep in. In order to render the peripety of the third act more striking, he has made Hovstad, Billing, and Aslaksen, in the earlier scenes, unnaturally inapprehensive of the sacrifices implied in Stockmann's scheme of reform. It is scarcely credible that they should be so free and emphatic in their offers of support to the Doctor's agitation, before they have made the smallest inquiry as to what it is likely to cost the town. They think, it may be said, that the shareholders of the Baths will have to bear the whole expense; but surely some misgivings could not but cross their minds as to whether the shareholders would be prepared to do so.

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

(1882)

CHARACTERS.

• Doctor Thomas Stockmann, *medical officer of the Baths*.

• Mrs. Stockmann, *his wife*.

• Petra, *their daughter, a teacher*.

• Eilif
Petra }*their sons, thirteen and ten years old respectively*

• Peter Stockmann, *the doctor's elder brother, Burgomaster*[5] *and chief of police, chairman of the Baths Committee, etc.*

• Morten Kiil,[6] *master tanner, Mrs. Stockmann's adoptive-father*.

• Hovstad, *editor of the "People's Messenger."*

• Billing, *on the staff of the paper*.

• Horster, *a ship's captain*.

• Aslaksen, *a printer*.

Participants in a meeting of citizens: all sorts and conditions of men, some women, and a band of schoolboys.

The action passes in a town on the South Coast of Norway.

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE.

PLAY IN FIVE ACTS.

ACT FIRST.

Evening. Dr. Stockmann's sitting-room; simply but neatly decorated and furnished. In the wall to the right are two doors, the further one leading to the hall, the nearer one to the Doctor's study. In the opposite wall, facing the hall door, a door leading to the other rooms of the house. Against the middle of this wall stands the stove; further forward a sofa with a mirror above it, and in front of it an oval table with a cover. On the table a lighted lamp, with a shade. In the back wall an open door leading to the dining-room, in which is seen a supper-table, with a lamp on it.

Billing *is seated at the supper-table, with a napkin under his chin.* Mrs. Stockmann *is standing by the table and placing before him a dish with a large joint of roast beef. The other seats round the table are empty; the table is in disorder, as after a meal.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

If you come an hour late, Mr. Billing, you must put up with a cold supper.

Billing.

[*Eating.*] It is excellent—really first rate.

Mrs. Stockmann.

You know how Stockmann insists on regular meal-hours——

Billing.

Oh, I don't mind at all. I almost think I enjoy my supper more when I can sit down to it like this, alone and undisturbed.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh, well, if you enjoy it—— [*Listening in the direction of the hall.*] I believe this is Mr. Hovstad coming too.

Billing.

Very likely.

Burgomaster Stockmann *enters, wearing an overcoat and an official gold-laced cap, and carrying a stick.*

Burgomaster.

Good evening, sister-in-law.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Coming forward into the sitting-room.*] Oh, good evening; is it you? It is good of you to look in.

Burgomaster.

I was just passing, and so—— [*Looks towards the drawing-room.*] Ah, I see you have company.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Rather embarrassed.*] Oh no, not at all; it's the merest chance. [*Hurriedly.*] Won't you sit down and have a little supper?

Burgomaster.

I? No, thank you. Good gracious! hot meat in the evening! That wouldn't suit my digestion.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh, for once in a way——

Burgomaster.

No, no,—much obliged to you. I stick to tea and bread and butter. It's more wholesome in the long run—and rather more economical, too.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Smiling.*] You mustn't think Thomas and I are mere spendthrifts, either.

Burgomaster.

You are not, sister-in-law; far be it from me to say that. [*Pointing to the Doctor's study.*] Is he not at home?

Mrs. Stockmann.

No, he has gone for a little turn after supper—with the boys.

Burgomaster.

I wonder if that is a good thing to do? [*Listening.*] There he is, no doubt.

Mrs. Stockmann.

No, that is not he. [*A knock.*] Come in!

Hovstad *enters from the hall.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

Ah, it's Mr. Hovstad——

Hovstad.

You must excuse me; I was detained at the printer's. Good evening, Burgomaster.

Burgomaster.

[*Bowing rather stiffly.*] Mr. Hovstad? You come on business, I presume?

Hovstad.

Partly. About an article for the paper.

Burgomaster.

So I supposed. I hear my brother is an extremely prolific contributor to the *People's Messenger*.

Hovstad.

Yes, when he wants to unburden his mind on one thing or another, he gives the *Messenger* the benefit.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*To Hovstad.*] But will you not——? [*Points to the dining-room.*]

Burgomaster.

Well, well, I am far from blaming him for writing for the class of readers he finds most in sympathy with him. And, personally, I have no reason to bear your paper any ill-will, Mr. Hovstad.

Hovstad.

No, I should think not.

Burgomaster.

One may say, on the whole, that a fine spirit of mutual tolerance prevails in our town—an excellent public spirit. And that is because we have a great common interest to hold us together—an interest in which all right-minded citizens are equally concerned——

Hovstad.

Yes—the Baths.

Burgomaster.

Just so. We have our magnificent new Baths. Mark my words! The whole life of the town will centre around the Baths, Mr. Hovstad. There can be no doubt of it!

Mrs. Stockmann.

That is just what Thomas says.

Burgomaster.

How marvellously the place has developed, even in this couple of years! Money has come into circulation, and brought life and movement with it. Houses and ground-rents rise in value every day.

Hovstad.

And there are fewer people out of work.

Burgomaster.

That is true. There is a gratifying diminution in the burden imposed on the well-to-do classes by the poor-rates; and they will be still further lightened if only we have a really good summer this year—a rush of visitors—plenty of invalids, to give the Baths a reputation.

Hovstad.

I hear there is every prospect of that.

Burgomaster.

Things look most promising. Inquiries about apartments and so forth keep on pouring in.

Hovstad.

Then the Doctor’s paper will come in very opportunely.

Burgomaster.

Has he been writing again?

Hovstad.

This is a thing he wrote in the winter; enlarging on the virtues of the Baths, and on the excellent sanitary conditions of the town. But at that time I held it over.

Burgomaster.

Ah—I suppose there was something not quite judicious about it?

Hovstad.

Not at all. But I thought it better to keep it till the spring, when people are beginning to look about them, and think of their summer quarters——

Burgomaster.

You were right, quite right, Mr. Hovstad.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, Thomas is really indefatigable where the Baths are concerned.

Burgomaster.

It is his duty as one of the staff.

Hovstad.

And of course he was really their creator.

Burgomaster.

Was he? Indeed! I gather that certain persons are of that opinion. But I should have thought that I, too, had a modest share in that undertaking.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, that is what Thomas is always saying.

Hovstad.

No one dreams of denying it, Burgomaster. You set the thing going, and put it on a practical basis; everybody knows that. I only meant that the original idea was the doctor's.

Burgomaster.

Yes, my brother has certainly had ideas enough in his time—worse luck! But when it comes to realising them, Mr. Hovstad, we want men of another stamp. I should have thought that in this house at any rate——

Mrs. Stockmann.

Why, my dear brother-in-law——

Hovstad.

Burgomaster, how can you——?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Do go in and have some supper, Mr. Hovstad; my husband is sure to be home directly.

Hovstad.

Thanks; just a mouthful, perhaps.

[*He goes into the dining-room.*

Burgomaster.

[*Speaking in a low voice.*] It is extraordinary how people who spring direct from the peasant class never can get over their want of tact.

Mrs. Stockmann.

But why should you care? Surely you and Thomas can share the honour, like brothers.

Burgomaster.

Yes, one would suppose so; but it seems a share of the honour is not enough for some persons.

Mrs. Stockmann.

What nonsense! You and Thomas always get on so well together. [*Listening.*] There, I think I hear him.

Goes and opens the door to the hall.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Laughing and talking loudly, without.*] Here's another visitor for you, Katrina. Isn't it capital, eh? Come in, Captain Horster. Hang your coat on that peg. What! you don't wear an overcoat? Fancy, Katrina, I caught him in the street, and I could hardly get him to come in.

Captain Horster.

Enters and bows to Mrs. Stockmann.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*In the doorway.*] In with you, boys. They're famishing again! Come along, Captain Horster; you must try our roast beef——

[*He forces Horster into the dining-room. Eilif and Morten follow them.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

But, Thomas, don't you see——

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Turning round in the doorway.*] Oh, is that you, Peter! [*Goes up to him and holds out his hand.*] Now this is really capital.

Burgomaster.

Unfortunately, I have only a moment to spare——

Dr. Stockmann.

Nonsense! We shall have some toddy in a minute. You're not forgetting the toddy, Katrina?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Of course not; the water's boiling.

[*She goes into the dining-room.*

Burgomaster.

Toddy too——!

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes; sit down, and let's make ourselves comfortable.

Burgomaster.

Thanks; I never join in drinking parties.

Dr. Stockmann.

But this isn't a party.

Burgomaster.

I don't know what else—— [*Looks towards the dining-room.*] It's extraordinary how they can get through all that food.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Rubbing his hands.*] Yes, doesn't it do one good to see young people eat? Always hungry! That's as it should be. They need good, solid meat to put stamina into them! It is they that have got to whip up the ferment of the future, Peter.

Burgomaster.

May I ask what there is to be "whipped up," as you call it?

Dr. Stockmann.

You'll have to ask the young people that—when the time comes. We shan't see it, of course. Two old fogies like you and me——

Burgomaster.

Come, come! Surely that is a very extraordinary expression to use——

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, you mustn't mind my nonsense, Peter. I'm in such glorious spirits, you see. I feel so unspeakably happy in the midst of all this growing, germinating life. Isn't it a marvellous time we live in! It seems as though a whole new world were springing up around us.

Burgomaster.

Do you really think so?

Dr. Stockmann.

Of course, you can't see it as clearly as I do. You have passed your life in the midst of it all; and that deadens the impression. But I who had to vegetate all those years in that little hole in the north, hardly ever seeing a soul that could speak a stimulating word to me—all this affects me as if I had suddenly dropped into the heart of some teeming metropolis.

Burgomaster.

Well, metropolis——

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, I know well enough that things are on a small scale here, compared with many other places. But there's life here—there's promise—there's an infinity of things to work and strive for; and that is the main point. [*Calling.*] Katrina, haven't there been any letters?

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*In the dining-room.*] No, none at all.

Dr. Stockmann.

And then a good income, Peter! That's a thing one learns to appreciate when one has lived on starvation wages——

Burgomaster.

Good heavens——!

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh yes, I can tell you we often had hard times of it up there. And now we can live like princes! To-day, for example, we had roast beef for dinner; and we've had some of it for supper too. Won't you have some? Come along—just look at it, at any rate——

Burgomaster.

No, no; certainly not——

Dr. Stockmann.

Well then, look here—do you see we've bought a table-cover?

Burgomaster.

Yes, so I observed.

Dr. Stockmann.

And a lamp-shade, too. Do you see? Katrina has been saving up for them. They make the room look comfortable, don't they? Come over here. No, no, no, not there. So—yes! Now you see how it concentrates the light——. I really think it has quite an artistic effect. Eh?

Burgomaster.

Yes, when one can afford such luxuries——

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, I can afford it now. Katrina says I make almost as much as we spend.

Burgomaster.

Ah—almost!

Dr. Stockmann.

Besides, a man of science must live in some style. Why, I believe a mere sheriff[7] spends much more a year than I do.

Burgomaster.

Yes, I should think so! A member of the superior magistracy——

Dr. Stockmann.

Well then, even a common shipowner! A man of that sort will get through many times as much——

Burgomaster.

That is natural, in your relative positions.

Dr. Stockmann.

And after all, Peter, I really don't squander any money. But I can't deny myself the delight of having people about me. I must have them. After living so long out of the world, I find it a necessity of life to have bright, cheerful, freedom-loving, hard-working young fellows around me—and that's what they are, all of them, that are sitting there eating so heartily. I wish you knew more of Hovstad——

Burgomaster.

Ah, that reminds me—Hovstad was telling me that he is going to publish another article of yours.

Dr. Stockmann.

An article of mine?

Burgomaster.

Yes, about the Baths. An article you wrote last winter.

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, that one! But I don't want that to appear for the present.

Burgomaster.

Why not? It seems to me this is the very time for it.

Dr. Stockmann.

Very likely—under ordinary circumstances——

[*Crosses the room.*

Burgomaster.

[*Following him with his eyes.*] And what is unusual in the circumstances now?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Standing still.*] The fact is, Peter, I really cannot tell you just now; not this evening, at all events. There may prove to be a great deal that is unusual in the circumstances. On the other hand, there may be nothing at all. Very likely it's only my fancy.

Burgomaster.

Upon my word, you are very enigmatical. Is there anything in the wind? Anything I am to be kept in the dark about? I should think, as Chairman of the Bath Committee——

Dr. Stockmann.

And I should think that I——Well, well, don't let us get our backs up, Peter.

Burgomaster.

God forbid! I am not in the habit of "getting my back up," as you express it. But I must absolutely insist that all arrangements shall be made and carried out in a businesslike manner, and through the properly constituted authorities. I cannot be a party to crooked or underhand courses.

Dr. Stockmann.

Have *I* ever been given to crooked or underhand courses?

Burgomaster.

At any rate you have an ingrained propensity to taking your own course. And that, in a well-ordered community, is almost as inadmissible. The individual must subordinate himself to society, or, more precisely, to the authorities whose business it is to watch over the welfare of society.

Dr. Stockmann.

Maybe. But what the devil has that to do with me?

Burgomaster.

Why this is the very thing, my dear Thomas, that it seems you will never learn. But take care; you will have to pay for it—sooner or later. Now I have warned you. Good-bye.

Dr. Stockmann.

Are you stark mad? You're on a totally wrong track——

Burgomaster.

I am not often on the wrong track. Moreover, I must protest against——[*Bowing towards dining-room.*] Good-bye, sister-in-law; good-day to you, gentlemen.

[*He goes.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Entering the sitting-room.*] Has he gone?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, and in a fine temper, too.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Why, my dear Thomas, what have you been doing to him now?

Dr. Stockmann.

Nothing at all. He can't possibly expect me to account to him for everything—before the time comes.

Mrs. Stockmann.

What have you to account to him for?

Dr. Stockmann.

H'm;—never mind about that, Katrina.—It's very odd the postman doesn't come.

[Hovstad, Billing *and* Horster *have risen from table and come forward into the sitting-room.* Eilif *and* Morten *presently follow.*

Billing.

[*Stretching himself.*] Ah! Strike me dead if one doesn't feel a new man after such a meal.

Hovstad.

The Burgomaster didn't seem in the best of tempers this evening.

Dr. Stockmann.

That's his stomach. He has a very poor digestion.

Hovstad.

I fancy it's the staff of the *Messenger* he finds it hardest to stomach.

Mrs. Stockmann.

I thought you got on well enough with him.

Hovstad.

Oh, yes; but it's only a sort of armistice between us.

Billing.

That's it. That word sums up the situation.

Dr. Stockmann.

We must remember that Peter is a lonely bachelor, poor devil! He has no home to be happy in; only business, business. And then all that cursëd weak tea he goes and pours down his throat! Now then, chairs round the table, boys! Katrina, shan't we have the toddy now?

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Going towards the dining-room.*] I am just getting it.

Dr. Stockmann.

And you, Captain Horster, sit beside me on the sofa. So rare a guest as you——. Sit down, gentlemen, sit down.

[*The men sit round the table; Mrs. Stockmann brings in a tray with kettle, glasses, decanters, etc.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

Here you have it: here's arrak, and this is rum, and this cognac. Now, help yourselves.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Taking a glass.*] So we will. [*While the toddy is being mixed.*] And now out with the cigars. Eilif, I think you know where the box is. And Morten, you may fetch my pipe. [*The boys go into the room on the right.*] I have a suspicion that Eilif sneaks a cigar now and then, but I pretend not to notice. [*Calls.*] And my smoking-cap, Morten! Katrina, can't you tell him where I left it. Ah, he's got it. [*The boys bring in the things.*] Now, friends, help yourselves. I stick to my pipe, you know;—this one has been on many a stormy journey with me, up there in the north. [*They clink glasses.*] Your health! Ah, I can tell you it's better fun to sit cosily here, safe from wind and weather.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Who sits knitting.*] Do you sail soon, Captain Horster?

Horster.

I hope to be ready for a start by next week.

Mrs. Stockmann.

And you're going to America?

Horster.

Yes, that’s the intention.

Billing.

But then you’ll miss the election of the new Town Council.

Horster.

Is there to be an election again?

Billing.

Didn’t you know?

Horster.

No, I don’t trouble myself about those things.

Billing.

But I suppose you take an interest in public affairs?

Horster.

No, I don’t understand anything about them.

Billing.

All the same, one ought at least to vote.

Horster.

Even those who don’t understand anything about it?

Billing.

Understand? Why, what do you mean by that? Society is like a ship: every man must put his hand to the helm.

Horster.

That may be all right on shore; but at sea it wouldn’t do at all.

Hovstad.

It’s remarkable how little sailors care about public affairs as a rule.

Billing.

Most extraordinary.

Dr. Stockmann.

Sailors are like birds of passage; they are at home both in the south and in the north. So it behoves the rest of us to be all the more energetic, Mr. Hovstad. Will there be anything of public interest in the *People's Messenger* to-morrow?

Hovstad.

Nothing of local interest. But the day after to-morrow I think of printing your article——

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh confound it, that article! No, you'll have to hold it over.

Hovstad.

Really? We happen to have plenty of space, and I should say this was the very time for it——

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, yes, you may be right; but you must hold it over all the same. I shall explain to you by-and-by.

Petra, *wearing a hat and cloak, and with a number of exercise-books under her arm, enters from the hall.*

Petra.

Good evening.

Dr. Stockmann.

Good evening, Petra. Is that you?

[*General greetings. Petra puts her cloak, hat, and books on a chair by the door.*

Petra.

Here you all are, enjoying yourselves, while I've been out slaving.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well then, you come and enjoy yourself too.

Billing.

May I mix you a little——?

Petra.

[*Coming towards the table.*] Thank you, I'd rather help myself—you always make it too strong. By the way, father, I have a letter for you.

[*Goes to the chair where her things are lying.*

Dr. Stockmann.

A letter! From whom?

Petra.

[*Searching in the pocket of her cloak.*] I got it from the postman just as I was going out——

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Rising and going towards her.*] And you only bring it me now?

Petra.

I really hadn't time to run up again. Here it is.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Seizing the letter.*] Let me see, let me see, child. [*Reads the address.*] Yes; this is it——!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Is it the one you have been so anxious about, Thomas?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes it is. I must go at once. Where shall I find a light, Katrina? Is there no lamp in my study again!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes—the lamp is lighted. It's on the writing-table.

Dr. Stockmann.

Good, good. Excuse me one moment——

[*He goes into the room on the right.*

Petra.

What can it be, mother?

Mrs. Stockmann.

I don't know. For the last few days he has been continually on the look-out for the postman.

Billing.

Probably a country patient——

Petra.

Poor father! He'll soon have far too much to do. [*Mixes her toddy.*] Ah, this will taste good!

Hovstad.

Have you been teaching in the night school as well to-day?

Petra.

[*Sipping from her glass.*] Two hours.

Billing.

And four hours in the morning at the institute——

Petra.

[*Sitting down by the table.*] Five hours.

Mrs. Stockmann.

And I see you have exercises to correct this evening.

Petra.

Yes, a heap of them.

Horster.

It seems to me you have plenty to do, too.

Petra.

Yes; but I like it. You feel so delightfully tired after it.

Billing.

Do you like that?

Petra.

Yes, for then you sleep so well.

Morten.

I say, Petra, you must be a great sinner.

Petra.

A sinner?

Morten.

Yes, if you work so hard. Mr. Rörlund[8] says work is a punishment for our sins.

Eilif.

[*Contemptuously.*] Bosh! What a silly you are, to believe such stuff as that.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Come come, Eilif.

Billing.

[*Laughing.*] Capital, capital!

Hovstad.

Should you not like to work so hard, Morten?

Morten.

No, I shouldn’t.

Hovstad.

Then what will you do with yourself in the world?

Morten.

I should like to be a Viking.

Eilif.

But then you’d have to be a heathen.

Morten.

Well, so I would.

Billing.

There I agree with you, Morten! I say just the same thing.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Making a sign to him.*] No, no, Mr. Billing, I'm sure you don’t.

Billing.

Strike me dead but I do, though. I am a heathen, and I'm proud of it. You’ll see we shall all be heathens soon.

Morten.

And shall we be able to do anything we like then?

Billing.

Well, you see, Morten——

Mrs. Stockmann.

Now run away, boys; I'm sure you have lessons to prepare for to-morrow.

Eilif.

You might let me stay just a little longer——

Mrs. Stockmann.

No, you must go too. Be off, both of you.

[*The boys say good-night and go into the room on the left.*

Hovstad.

Do you really think it can hurt the boys to hear these things?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Well, I don’t know; I don’t like it.

Petra.

Really, mother, I think you are quite wrong there.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Perhaps. But I don’t like it—not here, at home.

Petra.

There’s no end of hypocrisy both at home and at school. At home you must hold your tongue, and at school you have to stand up and tell lies to the children.

Horster.

Have you to tell lies?

Petra.

Yes; do you think we don’t have to tell them many and many a thing we don’t believe ourselves?

Billing.

Ah, that’s too true.

Petra.

If only I could afford it, I should start a school myself, and things should be very different there.

Billing.

Oh, afford it——!

Horster.

If you really think of doing that, Miss Stockmann, I shall be delighted to let you have a room at my place. You know my father’s old house is nearly empty; there’s a great big dining-room on the ground floor——

Petra.

[*Laughing.*] Oh, thank you very much—but I'm afraid it won’t come to anything.

Hovstad.

No, I fancy Miss Petra is more likely to go over to journalism. By the way, have you had time to look into the English novel you promised to translate for us?

Petra.

Not yet. But you shall have it in good time.

Dr. Stockmann *enters from his room, with the letter open in his hand.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Flourishing the letter.*] Here’s news, I can tell you, that will waken up the town!

Billing.

News?

Mrs. Stockmann.

What news?

Dr. Stockmann.

A great discovery, Katrina!

Hovstad.

Indeed?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Made by you?

Dr. Stockmann.

Precisely—by me! [*Walks up and down.*] Now let them go on accusing me of fads and crack-brained notions. But they won’t dare to! Ha-ha! I tell you they won’t dare!

Petra.

Do tell us what it is, father.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, well, give me time, and you shall hear all about it. If only I had Peter here now! This just shows how we men can go about forming judgments like the blindest moles——

Hovstad.

What do you mean, doctor?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Stopping beside the table.*] Isn’t it the general opinion that our town is a healthy place?

Hovstad.

Of course.

Dr. Stockmann.

A quite exceptionally healthy place, indeed—a place to be warmly recommended, both to invalids and people in health——

Mrs. Stockmann.

My dear Thomas——

Dr. Stockmann.

And assuredly we haven’t failed to recommend and belaud it. I've sung its praises again and again, both in the *Messenger* and in pamphlets——

Hovstad.

Well, what then?

Dr. Stockmann.

These Baths, that we have called the pulse of the town, its vital nerve, and—and the devil knows what else——

Billing.

“Our city’s palpitating heart,” I once ventured to call them in a convivial moment——

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, I daresay. Well—do you know what they really are, these mighty, magnificent, belauded Baths, that have cost so much money—do you know what they are?

Hovstad.

No, what are they?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Do tell us.

Dr. Stockmann.

Simply a pestiferous hole.

Petra.

The Baths, father?

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*At the same time.*] Our Baths!

Hovstad.

[*Also at the same time.*] But, Doctor——!

Billing.

Oh, it's incredible!

Dr. Stockmann.

I tell you the whole place is a poisonous whited-sepulchre; noxious in the highest degree! All that filth up there in the Mill Dale—the stuff that smells so horribly—taints the water in the feed-pipes of the Pump-Room; and the same accursëd poisonous refuse oozes out by the beach——

Hovstad.

Where the sea-baths are?

Dr. Stockmann.

Exactly.

Hovstad.

But how are you so sure of all this, Doctor?

Dr. Stockmann.

I've investigated the whole thing as conscientiously as possible. I've long had my suspicions about it. Last year we had some extraordinary cases of illness among the patients—both typhoid and gastric attacks——

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, I remember.

Dr. Stockmann.

We thought at the time that the visitors had brought the infection with them; but afterwards—last winter—I began to question that. So I set about testing the water as well as I could.

Mrs. Stockmann.

It was *that* you were working so hard at!

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, you may well say I've worked, Katrina. But here, you know, I hadn't the necessary scientific appliances; so I sent samples both of our drinking-water and of our sea-water to the University, for exact analysis by a chemist.

Hovstad.

And you have received his report?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Showing letter.*] Here it is! And it proves beyond dispute the presence of putrefying organic matter in the water—millions of infusoria. It's absolutely pernicious to health, whether used internally or externally.

Mrs. Stockmann.

What a blessing you found it out in time.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, you may well say that.

Hovstad.

And what do you intend to do now, Doctor?

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, to set things right, of course.

Hovstad.

You think it can be done, then?

Dr. Stockmann.

It must be done. Else the whole Baths are useless, ruined. But there's no fear. I am quite clear as to what is required.

Mrs. Stockmann.

But, my dear Thomas, why should you have made such a secret of all this?

Dr. Stockmann.

Would you have had me rush all over the town and chatter about it, before I was quite certain? No, thank you; I'm not so mad as that.

Petra.

But to us at home——

Dr. Stockmann.

I couldn't say a word to a living soul. But to-morrow you may look in at the Badger's——

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh, Thomas!

Dr. Stockmann.

Well well, at your grandfather's. The old fellow will be astonished! He thinks I'm not quite right in my head—yes, and plenty of others think the same, I've noticed. But now these good people shall see—yes, they shall see now! [*Walks up and down rubbing his hands.*] What a stir there will be in the town, Katrina! Just think of it! All the water-pipes will have to be relaid.

Hovstad.

[*Rising.*] All the water-pipes——?

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, of course. The intake is too low down; it must be moved much higher up.

Petra.

So you were right, after all.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, do you remember, Petra? I wrote against it when they were beginning the works. But no one would listen to me then. Now, you may be sure, I shall give them my full broadside—for of course I've prepared a statement for the Directors; it has been lying ready a whole week; I've only been waiting for this report. [*Points to letter.*] But now they shall have it at once. [*Goes into his room and returns with a MS. in his hand.*] See! Four closely-written sheets! And I'll enclose the report. A newspaper, Katrina! Get me something to wrap them up in. There—that's it. Give it to—to—[*Stamps.*]—what the devil's her name? Give it to the girl, I mean, and tell her to take it at once to the Burgomaster.

[Mrs. Stockmann *goes out with the packet through the dining-room.*

Petra.

What do you think Uncle Peter will say, father?

Dr. Stockmann.

What should he say? He can't possibly be otherwise than pleased that so important a fact has been brought to light.

Hovstad.

I suppose you will let me put a short announcement of your discovery in the *Messenger*.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, I shall be much obliged if you will.

Hovstad.

It is highly desirable that the public should know about it as soon as possible.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, certainly.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Returning.*] She's gone with it.

Billing.

Strike me dead if you won't be the first man in the town, Doctor!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Walks up and down in high glee.*] Oh, nonsense! After all, I have done no more than my duty. I've been a lucky treasure-hunter, that's all. But all the same——

Billing.

Hovstad, don’t you think the town ought to get up a torchlight procession in honour of Dr. Stockmann?

Hovstad.

I shall certainly propose it.

Billing.

And I'll talk it over with Aslaksen.

Dr. Stockmann.

No, my dear friends; let all such claptrap alone. I won’t hear of anything of the sort. And if the Directors should want to raise my salary, I won’t accept it. I tell you, Katrina, I will not accept it.

Mrs. Stockmann.

You are quite right, Thomas.

Petra.

[*Raising her glass.*] Your health, father!

Hovstad *and* Billing.

Your health, your health, Doctor!

Horster.

[*Clinking glasses with the* Doctor.] I hope you may have nothing but joy of your discovery.

Dr. Stockmann.

Thanks, thanks, my dear friends! I can’t tell you how happy I am—! Oh, what a blessing it is to feel that you have deserved well of your native town and your fellow citizens. Hurrah, Katrina!

[*He puts both his arms round her neck, and whirls her round with him. Mrs. Stockmann screams and struggles. A burst of laughter, applause, and cheers for the Doctor. The boys thrust their heads in at the door.*

ACT SECOND.

The Doctor's sitting-room. The dining-room door is closed. Morning.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Enters from the dining-room with a sealed letter in her hand, goes to the foremost door on the right, and peeps in.*] Are you there, Thomas?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Within.*] Yes, I have just come in. [*Enters.*] What is it?

Mrs. Stockmann.

A letter from your brother. [*Hands it to him.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Aha, let us see. [*Opens the envelope and reads.*] "The MS. sent me is returned herewith——" [*Reads on, mumbling to himself.*] H'm—

Mrs. Stockmann.

Well, what does he say?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Putting the paper in his pocket.*] Nothing; only that he'll come up himself about midday.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Then be sure you remember to stay at home.

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, I can easily manage that; I've finished my morning's visits.

Mrs. Stockmann.

I am very curious to know how he takes it.

Dr. Stockmann.

You'll see he won't be over-pleased that it is I that have made the discovery, and not he himself.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Ah, that's just what I'm afraid of.

Dr. Stockmann.

Of course at bottom he'll be glad. But still—Peter is damnably unwilling that any one but himself should do anything for the good of the town.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Do you know, Thomas, I think you might stretch a point, and share the honour with him. Couldn't it appear that it was he that put you on the track——?

Dr. Stockmann.

By all means, for aught I care. If only I can get things put straight——

Old Morten Kiil *puts his head in at the hall door, and asks slyly:*

Morten Kiil.

Is it—is it true?

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Going towards him.*] Father—is that you?

Dr. Stockmann.

Hallo, father-in-law! Good morning, good morning.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Do come in.

Morten Kiil.

Yes, if it's true; if not, I'm off again.

Dr. Stockmann.

If what is true?

Morten Kiil.

This crazy business about the water-works. Now, is it true?

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, of course it is. But how came you to hear of it?

Morten Kiil.

[*Coming in.*] Petra looked in on her way to the school——

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, did she?

Morten Kiil.

Ay ay—and she told me—. I thought she was only making game of me; but that's not like Petra either.

Dr. Stockmann.

No, indeed; how could you think so?

Morten Kiil.

Oh, you can never be sure of anybody. You may be made a fool of before you know where you are. So it is true, after all?

Dr. Stockmann.

Most certainly it is. Do sit down, father-in-law. [*Forces him down on the sofa.*] Now isn't it a real blessing for the town——?

Morten Kiil.

[*Suppressing his laughter.*] A blessing for the town?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, that I made this discovery in time——

Morten Kiil.

[*As before.*] Ay, ay, ay!—Well, I could never have believed that you would play monkey-tricks with your very own brother.

Dr. Stockmann.

Monkey-tricks!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Why, father dear——

Morten Kiil.

[*Resting his hands and chin on the top of his stick and blinking slyly at the* Doctor.] What was it again? Wasn't it that some animals had got into the water-pipes?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes; infusorial animals.

Morten Kiil.

And any number of these animals had got in, Petra said—whole swarms of them.

Dr. Stockmann.

Certainly; hundreds of thousands.

Morten Kiil.

But no one can see them—isn’t that it?

Dr. Stockmann.

Quite right; no one can see them.

Morten Kiil.

[*With a quiet, chuckling laugh.*] I'll be damned if that isn’t the best thing I've heard of you yet.

Dr. Stockmann.

What do you mean?

Morten Kiil.

But you’ll never in this world make the Burgomaster take in anything of the sort.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, that we shall see.

Morten Kiil.

Do you really think he’ll be so crazy?

Dr. Stockmann.

I hope the whole town will be so crazy.

Morten Kiil.

The whole town! Well, I don’t say but it may. But it serves them right; it’ll teach them a lesson. They wanted to be so much cleverer than we old fellows. They hounded me out of the Town Council. Yes; I tell you they hounded me out like a dog, that they did. But now it’s their turn. Just you keep up the game with them, Stockmann.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, but, father-in-law——

Morten Kiil.

Keep it up, I say. [*Rising.*] If you can make the Burgomaster and his gang eat humble pie, I'll give a hundred crowns straight away to the poor.

Dr. Stockmann.

Come, that’s good of you.

Morten Kiil.

Of course I've little enough to throw away; but if you can manage that, I shall certainly remember the poor at Christmas-time, to the tune of fifty crowns.

Hovstad *enters from hall.*

Hovstad.

Good morning! [*Pausing.*] Oh! I beg your pardon——

Dr. Stockmann.

Not at all. Come in, come in.

Morten Kiil.

[*Chuckling again.*] He! Is he in it too?

Hovstad.

What do you mean?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, of course he is.

Morten Kiil.

I might have known it! It’s to go into the papers. Ah, you’re the one, Stockmann! Do you two lay your heads together; I'm off.

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh no; don’t go yet, father-in-law.

Morten Kiil.

No, I'm off now. Play them all the monkey-tricks you can think of. Deuce take me but you shan’t lose by it.

[*He goes, Mrs. Stockmann accompanying him.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Laughing.*] What do you think—? The old fellow doesn’t believe a word of all this about the water-works.

Hovstad.

Was that what he——?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes; that was what we were talking about. And I daresay you have come on the same business?

Hovstad.

Yes. Have you a moment to spare, Doctor?

Dr. Stockmann.

As many as you like, my dear fellow.

Hovstad.

Have you heard anything from the Burgomaster?

Dr. Stockmann.

Not yet. He'll be here presently.

Hovstad.

I have been thinking the matter over since last evening.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well?

Hovstad.

To you, as a doctor and a man of science, this business of the water-works appears an isolated affair. I daresay it hasn't occurred to you that a good many other things are bound up with it?

Dr. Stockmann.

Indeed! In what way? Let us sit down, my dear fellow.—No; there, on the sofa.

[Hovstad *sits on sofa; the* Doctor *in an easy-chair on the other side of the table.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, so you think——?

Hovstad.

You said yesterday that the water is polluted by impurities in the soil.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, undoubtedly; the mischief comes from that poisonous swamp up in the Mill Dale.

Hovstad.

Excuse me, Doctor, but I think it comes from a very different swamp.

Dr. Stockmann.

What swamp may that be?

Hovstad.

The swamp in which our whole municipal life is rotting.

Dr. Stockmann.

The devil, Mr. Hovstad! What notion is this you've got hold of?

Hovstad.

All the affairs of the town have gradually drifted into the hands of a pack of bureaucrats——

Dr. Stockmann.

Come now, they're not all bureaucrats.

Hovstad.

No; but those who are not are the friends and adherents of those who are. We are entirely under the thumb of a ring of wealthy men, men of old family and position in the town.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, but they are also men of ability and insight.

Hovstad.

Did they show ability and insight when they laid the water-pipes where they are?

Dr. Stockmann.

No; that, of course, was a piece of stupidity. But that will be set right now.

Hovstad.

Do you think it will go so smoothly?

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, smoothly or not, it will have to be done.

Hovstad.

Yes, if the press exerts its influence.

Dr. Stockmann.

Not at all necessary, my dear fellow; I am sure my brother——

Hovstad.

Excuse me, Doctor, but I must tell you that I think of taking the matter up.

Dr. Stockmann.

In the paper?

Hovstad.

Yes. When I took over the *People's Messenger*, I was determined to break up the ring of obstinate old blockheads who held everything in their hands.

Dr. Stockmann.

But you told me yourself what came of it. You nearly ruined the paper.

Hovstad.

Yes, at that time we had to draw in our horns, that's true enough. The whole Bath scheme might have fallen through if these men had been sent about their business. But now the Baths are an accomplished fact, and we can get on without these august personages.

Dr. Stockmann.

Get on without them, yes; but still we owe them a great deal.

Hovstad.

The debt shall be duly acknowledged. But a journalist of my democratic tendencies cannot let such an opportunity slip through his fingers. We must explode the tradition of official infallibility. That rubbish must be got rid of, like every other superstition.

Dr. Stockmann.

There I am with you with all my heart, Mr. Hovstad. If it's a superstition, away with it!

Hovstad.

I should be sorry to attack the Burgomaster, as he is your brother. But I know you think with me—the truth before all other considerations.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, of course. [*Vehemently.*] But still—! but still——!

Hovstad.

You mustn't think ill of me. I am neither more self-interested nor more ambitious than other men.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, my dear fellow—who says you are?

Hovstad.

I come of humble folk, as you know; and I have had ample opportunities of seeing what the lower classes really require. And that is to have a share in the direction of public affairs, Doctor. That is what develops ability and knowledge and self-respect——

Dr. Stockmann.

I understand that perfectly.

Hovstad.

Yes; and I think a journalist incurs a heavy responsibility if he lets slip a chance of helping to emancipate the downtrodden masses. I know well enough that our oligarchy will denounce me as an agitator, and so forth; but what do I care? If only my conscience is clear, I——

Dr. Stockmann.

Just so, just so, my dear Mr. Hovstad. But still—deuce take it——! [*A knock at the door.*] Come in!

Aslaksen, *the printer, appears at the door leading to the hall. He is humbly but respectably dressed in black, wears a white necktie, slightly crumpled, and has a silk hat and gloves in his hand.*

Aslaksen.

[*Bowing.*] I beg pardon, Doctor, for making so bold——

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Rising.*] Hallo! If it isn't Mr. Aslaksen!

Aslaksen.

Yes, it's me, Doctor.

Hovstad.

[*Rising.*] Is it me you want, Aslaksen?

Aslaksen.

No, not at all. I didn’t know you were here. No, it’s the Doctor himself——

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, what can I do for you?

Aslaksen.

Is it true, what Mr. Billing tells me, that you’re going to get us a better set of water-works?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, for the Baths.

Aslaksen.

Of course, of course. Then I just looked in to say that I'll back up the movement with all my might.

Hovstad.

[*To the Doctor.*] You see!

Dr. Stockmann.

I'm sure I thank you heartily; but——

Aslaksen.

You may find it no such bad thing to have us small middle-class men at your back. We form what you may call a compact majority in the town—when we really make up our minds, that’s to say. And it’s always well to have the majority with you, Doctor.

Dr. Stockmann.

No doubt, no doubt; but I can’t conceive that any special measures will be necessary in this case. I should think in so clear and straightforward a matter——

Aslaksen.

Yes, but all the same, it can do no harm. I know the local authorities very well—the powers that be are not over ready to adopt suggestions from outsiders. So I think it wouldn’t be amiss if we made some sort of a demonstration.

Hovstad.

Precisely my opinion.

Dr. Stockmann.

A demonstration, you say? But in what way would you demonstrate?

Aslaksen.

Of course with great moderation, Doctor. I always insist upon moderation; for moderation is a citizen’s first virtue—at least that’s my way of thinking.

Dr. Stockmann.

We all know that, Mr. Aslaksen.

Aslaksen.

Yes, I think my moderation is generally recognised. And this affair of the water-works is very important for us small middle-class men. The Baths bid fair to become, as you might say, a little gold-mine for the town. We shall all have to live by the Baths, especially we house-owners. So we want to support the Baths all we can; and as I am Chairman of the House-owners' Association——

Dr. Stockmann.

Well——?

Aslaksen.

And as I'm an active worker for the Temperance[9] Society—of course you know, Doctor, that I'm a temperance man?

Dr. Stockmann.

To be sure, to be sure.

Aslaksen.

Well, you’ll understand that I come in contact with a great many people. And as I'm known to be a prudent and law-abiding citizen, as you yourself remarked, Doctor, I have a certain influence in the town, and hold some power in my hands—though I say it that shouldn’t.

Dr. Stockmann.

I know that very well, Mr. Aslaksen.

Aslaksen.

Well then, you see—it would be easy for me to get up an address, if it came to a pinch.

Dr. Stockmann.

An address?

Aslaksen.

Yes, a kind of vote of thanks to you, from the citizens of the town, for your action in a matter of such general concern. Of course it will have to be drawn up with all fitting moderation, so as to give no offence to the authorities and parties in power. But so long as we're careful about that, no one can take it ill, I should think.

Hovstad.

Well, even if they didn't particularly like it——

Aslaksen.

No no no; no offence to the powers that be, Mr. Hovstad. No opposition to people that can take it out of us again so easily. I've had enough of that in my time; no good ever comes of it. But no one can object to the free but temperate expression of a citizen's opinion.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Shaking his hand.*] I can't tell you, my dear Mr. Aslaksen, how heartily it delights me to find so much support among my fellow townsmen. I'm so happy—so happy! Come, you'll have a glass of sherry? Eh?

Aslaksen.

No, thank you; I never touch spirituous liquors.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, then, a glass of beer—what do you say to that?

Aslaksen.

Thanks, not that either, Doctor. I never take anything so early in the day. And now I'll be off round the town, and talk to some of the house-owners, and prepare public opinion.

Dr. Stockmann.

It's extremely kind of you, Mr. Aslaksen; but I really cannot get it into my head that all these preparations are necessary. The affair seems to me so simple and self-evident.

Aslaksen.

The authorities always move slowly, Doctor—God forbid I should blame them for it——

Hovstad.

We'll stir them up in the paper to-morrow, Aslaksen.

Aslaksen.

No violence, Mr. Hovstad. Proceed with moderation, or you'll do nothing with them. Take my advice; I've picked up experience in the school of life.—And now I'll say good morning, Doctor. You know now that at least you have us small middle-class men behind you, solid as a wall. You have the compact majority on your side, Doctor.

Dr. Stockmann.

Many thanks, my dear Mr. Aslaksen. [*Holds out his hand.*] Good-bye, good-bye.

Aslaksen.

Are you coming to the office, Mr. Hovstad?

Hovstad.

I shall come on presently. I have still one or two things to arrange.

Aslaksen.

Very well.

[*Bows and goes. Dr. Stockmann accompanies him into the hall.*

Hovstad.

[*As the Doctor re-enters.*] Well, what do you say to that, Doctor? Don't you think it is high time we should give all this weak-kneed, half-hearted cowardice a good shaking up?

Dr. Stockmann.

Are you speaking of Aslaksen?

Hovstad.

Yes, I am. He's a decent enough fellow, but he's one of those who are sunk in the swamp. And most people here are just like him; they are for ever wavering and wobbling from side to side; what with scruples and misgivings, they never dare advance a step.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, but Aslaksen seems to me thoroughly well-intentioned.

Hovstad.

There is one thing I value more than good intentions, and that is an attitude of manly self-reliance.

Dr. Stockmann.

There I am quite with you.

Hovstad.

So I am going to seize this opportunity, and try whether I can't for once put a little grit into their good intentions. The worship of authority must be rooted up in this town. This gross, inexcusable blunder of the waterworks must be brought home clearly to every voter.

Dr. Stockmann.

Very well. If you think it's for the good of the community, so be it; but not till I have spoken to my brother.

Hovstad.

At all events, I shall be writing my leader in the meantime. And if the Burgomaster won't take the matter up——

Dr. Stockmann.

But how can you conceive his refusing?

Hovstad.

Oh, it's not inconceivable. And then——

Dr. Stockmann.

Well then, I promise you—; look here—in that case you may print my paper—put it in just as it is.

Hovstad.

May I? Is that a promise?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Handing him the manuscript.*] There it is; take it with you. You may as well read it in any case; you can return it to me afterwards.

Hovstad.

Very good; I shall do so. And now, good-bye, Doctor.

Dr. Stockmann.

Good-bye, good-bye. You'll see it will all go smoothly, Mr. Hovstad—as smoothly as possible.

Hovstad.

H'm—we shall see.

[*Bows and goes out through the hall.*

*/

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Going to the dining-room door and looking in.*] Katrina! Hallo! are you back, Petra?

Petra.

[*Entering.*] Yes, I've just got back from school.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Entering.*] Hasn't he been here yet?

Dr. Stockmann.

Peter? No; but I have been having a long talk with Hovstad. He's quite enthusiastic about my discovery. It turns out to be of much wider import than I thought at first. So he has placed his paper at my disposal, if I should require it.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Do you think you will?

Dr. Stockmann.

Not I! But at the same time, one cannot but be proud to know that the enlightened, independent press is on one's side. And what do you think? I have had a visit from the Chairman of the House-owners' Association too.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Really? What did he want?

Dr. Stockmann.

To assure me of his support. They will all stand by me at a pinch. Katrina, do you know what I have behind me?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Behind you? No. What have you behind you?

Dr. Stockmann.

The compact majority!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh! Is that good for you, Thomas?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, indeed; I should think it *was* good. [*Rubbing his hands as he walks up and down.*] Great God! what a delight it is to feel oneself in such brotherly unison with one's fellow townsmen?

Petra.

And to do so much that's good and useful, father!

Dr. Stockmann.

And all for one's native town, too!

Mrs. Stockmann.

There's the bell.

Dr. Stockmann.

That must be he. [*Knock at the door.*] Come in!

Enter Burgomaster Stockmann from the hall.

Burgomaster.

Good morning.

Dr. Stockmann.

I'm glad to see you, Peter.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Good morning, brother-in-law. How are you?

Burgomaster.

Oh, thanks, so-so. [*To the Doctor.*] Yesterday evening, after office hours, I received from you a dissertation upon the state of the water at the Baths.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes. Have you read it?

Burgomaster.

I have.

Dr. Stockmann.

And what do you think of the affair?

Burgomaster.

H'm— [*With a sidelong glance.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

Come, Petra.

[*She and Petra go into the room on the left.*

Burgomaster.

[*After a pause.*] Was it necessary to make all these investigations behind my back?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, till I was absolutely certain, I——

Burgomaster.

And are you absolutely certain now?

Dr. Stockmann.

My paper must surely have convinced you of that.

Burgomaster.

Is it your intention to submit this statement to the Board of Directors, as a sort of official document?

Dr. Stockmann.

Of course. Something must be done in the matter, and that promptly.

Burgomaster.

As usual, you use very strong expressions in your statement. Amongst other things, you say that what we offer our visitors is a slow poison.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, Peter, what else can it be called? Only think—poisoned water both internally and externally! And that to poor invalids who come to us in all confidence, and pay us handsomely to cure them!

Burgomaster.

And then you announce as your conclusion that we must build a sewer to carry off the alleged impurities from the Mill Dale, and must re-lay all the water-pipes.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes. Can you suggest any other plan?—I know of none.

Burgomaster.

I found a pretext for looking in at the town engineer's this morning, and—in a half-jesting way—I mentioned these alterations as things we might possibly have to consider, at some future time.

Dr. Stockmann.

At some future time!

Burgomaster.

Of course he smiled at what he thought my extravagance. Have you taken the trouble to think what your proposed alterations would cost? From what the engineer said, I gathered that the expenses would probably mount up to several hundred thousand crowns.

Dr. Stockmann.

So much as that?

Burgomaster.

Yes. But that is not the worst. The work would take at least two years.

Dr. Stockmann.

Two years! Do you mean to say two whole years?

Burgomaster.

At least. And what are we to do with the Baths in the meanwhile? Are we to close them? We should have no alternative. Do you think any one would come here, if it got abroad that the water was pestilential?

Dr. Stockmann.

But, Peter, that's precisely what it is.

Burgomaster.

And all this now, just now, when the Baths are doing so well! Neighbouring towns, too, are not without their claims to rank as health-resorts. Do you think they would not at once set to work to divert the full stream of visitors to themselves? Undoubtedly they would; and we should be left stranded. We should probably have to give up the whole costly undertaking; and so you would have ruined your native town.

Dr. Stockmann.

I—ruined——!

Burgomaster.

It is only through the Baths that the town has any future worth speaking of. You surely know that as well as I do.

Dr. Stockmann.

Then what do you think should be done?

Burgomaster.

I have not succeeded in convincing myself that the condition of the water at the Baths is as serious as your statement represents.

Dr. Stockmann.

I tell you it's if anything worse—or will be in the summer, when the hot weather sets in.

Burgomaster.

I repeat that I believe you exaggerate greatly. A competent physician should know what measures to take—he should be able to obviate deleterious influences, and to counteract them in case they should make themselves unmistakably felt.

Dr. Stockmann.

Indeed—? And then—?

Burgomaster.

The existing water-works are, once for all, a fact, and must naturally be treated as such. But when the time comes, the Directors will probably not be indisposed to consider whether it may not be possible, without unreasonable pecuniary sacrifices, to introduce certain improvements.

Dr. Stockmann.

And do you imagine I could ever be a party to such dishonesty?

Burgomaster.

Dishonesty?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, it would be dishonesty—a fraud, a lie, an absolute crime against the public, against society as a whole!

Burgomaster.

I have not, as I before remarked, been able to convince myself that there is really any such imminent danger.

Dr. Stockmann.

You have! You must have! I know that my demonstration is absolutely clear and convincing. And you understand it perfectly, Peter, only you won't admit it. It was you who insisted that both the Bath-buildings and the water-works should be placed where they now are; and it's *that*—it's that damned blunder that you won't confess. Pshaw! Do you think I don't see through you?

Burgomaster.

And even it were so? If I do watch over my reputation with a certain anxiety, I do it for the good of the town. Without moral authority I cannot guide and direct affairs in the way I consider most conducive to the general welfare. Therefore—and on various other grounds—it is of great moment to me that your statement should not be submitted to the Board of Directors. It must be kept back, for the good of the community. Later on I will bring up the matter for discussion, and we will do the best we can, quietly; but not a word, not a whisper, of this unfortunate business must come to the public ears.

Dr. Stockmann.

But it can't be prevented now, my dear Peter.

Burgomaster.

It must and shall be prevented.

Dr. Stockmann.

It can't be, I tell you; far too many people know about it already.

Burgomaster.

Know about it! Who? Surely not those fellows on the *People's Messenger*——?

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh yes; they know. The liberal, independent press will take good care that you do your duty.

Burgomaster.

[*After a short pause.*] You are an amazingly reckless man, Thomas. Have not you reflected what the consequences of this may be to yourself?

Dr. Stockmann.

Consequences?—Consequences to me?

Burgomaster.

Yes—to you and yours.

Dr. Stockmann.

What the devil do you mean?

Burgomaster.

I believe I have always shown myself ready and willing to lend you a helping hand.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, you have, and I thank you for it.

Burgomaster.

I ask for no thanks. Indeed, I was in some measure forced to act as I did—for my own sake. I always hoped I should be able to keep you a little in check, if I helped to improve your pecuniary position.

Dr. Stockmann.

What! So it was only for your own sake——!

Burgomaster.

In a measure, I say. It is painful for a man in an official position, when his nearest relative goes and compromises himself time after time.

Dr. Stockmann.

And you think I do that?

Burgomaster.

Yes, unfortunately, you do, without knowing it. Yours is a turbulent, unruly, rebellious spirit. And then you have an unhappy propensity for rushing into print upon every possible and impossible occasion. You no sooner hit upon an idea than you must needs write a newspaper article or a whole pamphlet about it.

Dr. Stockmann.

Isn't it a citizen's duty, when he has conceived a new idea, to communicate it to the public!

Burgomaster.

Oh, the public has no need for new ideas. The public gets on best with the good old recognised ideas it has already.

Dr. Stockmann.

You say that right out!

Burgomaster.

Yes, I must speak frankly to you for once. Hitherto I have tried to avoid it, for I know how irritable you are; but now I must tell you the truth, Thomas. You have no conception how much you injure yourself by your officiousness. You complain of the authorities, ay, of the Government itself—you cry them down and maintain that you have been slighted, persecuted. But what else can you expect, with your impossible disposition?

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, indeed! So I am impossible, am I?

Burgomaster.

Yes, Thomas, you are an impossible man to work with. I know that from experience. You have no consideration for any one or any thing; you seem quite to forget that you have me to thank for your position as medical officer of the Baths——

Dr. Stockmann.

It was mine by right! Mine, and no one else's! I was the first to discover the town's capabilities as a watering-place; I saw them, and, at that time, I alone. For years I fought single-handed for this idea of mine; I wrote and wrote——

Burgomaster.

No doubt; but then the right time had not come. Of course, in that out-of-the-world corner, you could not judge of that. As soon as the propitious moment arrived, I—and others—took the matter in hand——

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, and you went and bungled the whole of my glorious plan. Oh, we see now what a set of wiseacres you were!

Burgomaster.

All *I* can see is that you are again seeking an outlet for your pugnacity. You want to make an onslaught on your superiors—that is an old habit of yours. You cannot endure any authority over you; you look askance at any one who holds a higher post than your own; you regard him as a personal enemy—and then you care nothing what kind of weapon you use against him. But now I have shown you how much is at stake for the town, and consequently for me too. And therefore I warn you, Thomas, that I am inexorable in the demand I am about to make of you!

Dr. Stockmann.

What demand?

Burgomaster.

As you have not had the sense to refrain from chattering to outsiders about this delicate business, which should have been kept an official secret, of course it cannot now be hushed up. All sorts of rumours will get abroad, and evil-disposed persons will invent all sorts of additions to them. It will therefore be necessary for you publicly to contradict these rumours.

Dr. Stockmann.

I! How? I don’t understand you?

Burgomaster.

We expect that, after further investigation, you will come to the conclusion that the affair is not nearly so serious or pressing as you had at first imagined.

Dr. Stockmann.

Aha! So you expect that?

Burgomaster.

Furthermore, we expect you to express your confidence that the Board of Directors will thoroughly and conscientiously carry out all measures for the remedying of any possible defects.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, but that you'll never be able to do, so long as you go on tinkering and patching. I tell you that, Peter; and it's my deepest, sincerest conviction——

Burgomaster.

As an official, you have no right to hold any individual conviction.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Starting.*] No right to——?

Burgomaster.

As an official, I say. In your private capacity, of course, it is another matter. But as a subordinate official of the Baths, you have no right to express any conviction at issue with that of your superiors.

Dr. Stockmann.

This is too much! I, a doctor, a man of science, have no right to——!

Burgomaster.

The matter in question is not a purely scientific one; it is a complex affair; it has both a technical and an economic side.

Dr. Stockmann.

What the devil do I care what it is! I will be free to speak my mind upon any subject under the sun!

Burgomaster.

As you please—so long as it does not concern the Baths. With them we forbid you to meddle.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Shouts.*] You forbid——! You! A set of——

Burgomaster.

I forbid it—*I*, your chief; and when I issue an order, you have simply to obey.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Controlling himself.*] Upon my word, Peter, if you weren't my brother——

Petra.

[*Tears open the door.*] Father, you shan't submit to this!

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Following her.*] Petra, Petra!

Burgomaster.

Ah! So we have been listening!

Mrs. Stockmann.

The partition is so thin, we couldn't help——

Petra.

I stood and listened on purpose.

Burgomaster.

Well, on the whole, I am not sorry——

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Coming nearer to him.*] You spoke to me of forbidding and obeying——

Burgomaster.

You have forced me to adopt that tone.

Dr. Stockmann.

And am I to give myself the lie, in a public declaration?

Burgomaster.

We consider it absolutely necessary that you should issue a statement in the terms indicated.

Dr. Stockmann.

And if I do not obey?

Burgomaster.

Then we shall ourselves put forth a statement to reassure the public.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well and good; then I shall write against you. I shall stick to my point and prove that *I* am right, and you wrong. And what will you do then?

Burgomaster.

Then I shall be unable to prevent your dismissal.

Dr. Stockmann.

What——!

Petra.

Father! Dismissal!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Dismissal!

Burgomaster.

Your dismissal from the Baths. I shall be compelled to move that notice be given you at once, and that you have henceforth no connection whatever with the Baths.

Dr. Stockmann.

You would dare to do that!

Burgomaster.

It is you who are playing the daring game.

Petra.

Uncle, this is a shameful way to treat a man like father!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Do be quiet, Petra!

Burgomaster.

[*Looking at Petra.*] Aha! We have opinions of our own already, eh? To be sure, to be sure! [*To Mrs. Stockmann.*] Sister-in-law, you are presumably the most rational member of this household. Use all your influence with your husband; try to make him realise what all this will involve both for his family——

Dr. Stockmann.

My family concerns myself alone!

Burgomaster.

——both for his family, I say, and for the town he lives in.

Dr. Stockmann.

It is I that have the real good of the town at heart! I want to lay bare the evils that, sooner or later, must come to light. Ah! You shall see whether I love my native town.

Burgomaster.

You, who, in your blind obstinacy, want to cut off the town's chief source of prosperity!

Dr. Stockmann.

That source is poisoned, man! Are you mad? We live by trafficking in filth and corruption! The whole of our flourishing social life is rooted in a lie!

Burgomaster.

Idle fancies—or worse. The man who scatters broadcast such offensive insinuations against his native place must be an enemy of society.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Going towards him.*] You dare to——!

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Throwing herself between them.*] Thomas!

Petra.

[*Seizing her father's arm.*] Keep calm, father!

Burgomaster.

I will not expose myself to violence. You have had your warning now. Reflect upon what is due to yourself and to your family. Good-bye.

[*He goes.*

*/

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Walking up and down.*] And I must put up with such treatment! In my own house, Katrina! What do you say to that!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Indeed, it's a shame and a disgrace, Thomas——

Petra.

Oh, if I could only get hold of uncle——!

Dr. Stockmann.

It's my own fault. I ought to have stood up against them long ago—to have shown my teeth—and used them too!—And to be called an enemy of society! Me! I won't bear it; by Heaven, I won't!

Mrs. Stockmann.

But my dear Thomas, after all, your brother has the power——

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, but I have the right.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Ah yes, right, right! What good does it do to have the right, if you haven't any might?

Petra.

Oh, mother—how can you talk so?

Dr. Stockmann.

What! No good, in a free community, to have right on your side? What an absurd idea, Katrina! And besides—haven't I the free and independent press before me—and the compact majority at my back? That is might enough, I should think!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Why, good heavens, Thomas! you're surely not thinking of——?

Dr. Stockmann.

What am I not thinking of?

Mrs. Stockmann.

——of setting yourself up against your brother, I mean.

Dr. Stockmann.

What the devil would you have me do, if not stick to what is right and true?

Petra.

Yes, that's what I should like to know?

Mrs. Stockmann.

But it will be of no earthly use. If they won't, they won't.

Dr. Stockmann.

Ho-ho, Katrina! just wait a while, and you shall see whether I can fight my battles to the end.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, to the end of getting your dismissal; that is what will happen.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well then, I shall at any rate have done my duty towards the public, towards society—I who am called an enemy of society!

Mrs. Stockmann.

But towards your family, Thomas? Towards us at home? Do you think *that* is doing your duty towards those who are dependent on you?

Petra.

Oh, mother, don't always think first of us.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, it's easy for you to talk; you can stand alone if need be.—But remember the boys, Thomas; and think a little of yourself too, and of me——

Dr. Stockmann.

You're surely out of your senses, Katrina! If I were to be such a pitiful coward as to knuckle under to this Peter and his confounded crew—should I ever have another happy hour in all my life?

Mrs. Stockmann.

I don't know about that; but God preserve us from the happiness we shall all of us have if you persist in defying them. There you will be again, with nothing to live on, with no regular income. I should have thought we had had enough of that in the old days. Remember them, Thomas; think of what it all means.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Struggling with himself and clenching his hands.*] And this is what these jacks-in-office can bring upon a free and honest man! Isn't it revolting, Katrina?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, no doubt they are treating you shamefully. But God knows there's plenty of injustice one must just submit to in this world.—Here are the boys, Thomas. Look at them! What is to become of them? Oh no, no! you can never have the heart——

Eilif *and* Morten, *with school-books, have meanwhile entered.*

Dr. Stockmann.

The boys——! [*With a sudden access of firmness and decision.*] Never, though the whole earth should crumble, will I bow my neck beneath the yoke.

[*Goes towards his room.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Following him.*] Thomas—what are you going to do?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*At the door.*] I must have the right to look my boys in the face when they have grown into free men. [*Goes into his room.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Bursts into tears.*] Ah, God help us all!

Petra.

Father is true to the core. He will never give in!

[*The boys ask wonderingly what it all means; Petra signs to them to be quiet.*

ACT THIRD.

The Editor's Room of the "People's Messenger." In the background, to the left, an entrance-door—to the right another door, with glass panes, through which can be seen the composing-room. A door in the right-hand wall. In the middle of the room a large table covered with papers, newspapers, and books. In front, on the left, a window, and by it a desk with a high stool. A couple of arm-chairs beside the table; some other chairs along the walls. The room is dingy and cheerless, the furniture shabby, the arm-chairs dirty and torn. In the composing-room are seen a few compositors at work; further back, a hand-press in operation.

Hovstad *is seated at the desk, writing. Presently* Billing *enters from the right, with the* Doctor's *manuscript in his hand.*

Billing.

Well, I must say——!

Hovstad.

[*Writing.*] Have you read it through?

Billing.

[*Laying the MS. on the desk.*] Yes, I should think I had.

Hovstad.

Don't you think the Doctor comes out strong?

Billing.

Strong! Why, strike me dead if he isn't crushing! Every word falls like a—well, like a sledge-hammer.

Hovstad.

Yes, but these fellows won't collapse at the first blow.

Billing.

True enough; but we'll keep on hammering away, blow after blow, till the whole officialdom comes crashing down. As I sat in there reading that article, I seemed to hear the revolution thundering afar.

Hovstad.

[*Turning round.*] Hush! Don't let Aslaksen hear that.

Billing.

[*In a lower voice.*] Aslaksen’s a white-livered, cowardly fellow, without a spark of manhood in him. But this time you’ll surely carry your point? Eh? You’ll print the Doctor’s paper?

Hovstad.

Yes, if only the Burgomaster doesn’t give in——

Billing.

That would be deuced annoying.

Hovstad.

Well, whatever happens, fortunately we can turn the situation to account. If the Burgomaster won’t agree to the Doctor’s proposal, he’ll have all the small middle-class down upon him—all the House-owners' Association, and the rest of them. And if he does agree to it, he’ll fall out with the whole crew of big shareholders in the Baths, who have hitherto been his main support——

Billing.

Yes, of course; for no doubt they’ll have to fork out a lot of money——

Hovstad.

You may take your oath of that. And then, don’t you see, when the ring is broken up, we’ll din it into the public day by day that the Burgomaster is incompetent in every respect, and that all responsible positions in the town, the whole municipal government in short, must be entrusted to men of liberal ideas.

Billing.

Strike me dead if that isn’t the square truth! I see it—I see it: we are on the eve of a revolution!

[*A knock at the door.*

Hovstad.

Hush! [*Calls.*] Come in!

Dr. Stockmann *enters from the back, left.*

Hovstad.

[*Going towards him.*] Ah, here is the Doctor. Well?

Dr. Stockmann.

Print away, Mr. Hovstad!

Hovstad.

So it has come to that?

Billing.

Hurrah!

Dr. Stockmann.

Print away, I tell you. To be sure it has come to that. Since they will have it so, they must. War is declared, Mr. Billing!

Billing.

War to the knife, say I! War to the death, Doctor!

Dr. Stockmann.

This article is only the beginning. I have four or five others sketched out in my head already. But where do you keep Aslaksen?

Billing.

[*Calling into the printing-room.*] Aslaksen! just come here a moment.

Hovstad.

Four or five more articles, eh? On the same subject?

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh no—not at all, my dear fellow. No; they will deal with quite different matters. But they're all of a piece with the water-works and sewer question. One thing leads to another. It's just like beginning to pick at an old house, don't you know?

Billing.

Strike me dead, but that's true! You feel you can't leave off till you've pulled the whole lumber-heap to pieces.

Aslaksen.

[*Enters from the printing-room.*] Pulled to pieces! Surely the Doctor isn't thinking of pulling the Baths to pieces?

Hovstad.

Not at all. Don't be alarmed.

Dr. Stockmann.

No, we were talking of something quite different. Well, what do you think of my article, Mr. Hovstad?

Hovstad.

I think it’s simply a masterpiece——

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, isn’t it? I'm glad you think so—very glad.

Hovstad.

It’s so clear and to the point. One doesn’t in the least need to be a specialist to understand the gist of it. I am certain every intelligent man will be on your side.

Aslaksen.

And all the prudent ones too, I hope?

Billing.

Both the prudent and imprudent—in fact, almost the whole town.

Aslaksen.

Then I suppose we may venture to print it.

Dr. Stockmann.

I should think so!

Hovstad.

It shall go in to-morrow.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, plague take it, not a day must be lost. Look here, Mr. Aslaksen, this is what I wanted to ask you: won’t you take personal charge of the article?

Aslaksen.

Certainly I will.

Dr. Stockmann.

Be as careful as if it were gold. No printers' errors; every word is important. I shall look in again presently; perhaps you’ll be able to let me see a proof.—Ah! I can’t tell you how I long to have the thing in print—to see it launched——

Billing.

Yes, like a thunderbolt!

Dr. Stockmann.

——and submitted to the judgment of every intelligent citizen. Oh, you have no idea what I have had to put up with to-day. I've been threatened with all sorts of things. I was to be robbed of my clearest rights as a human being——

Billing.

What! Your rights as a human being!

Dr. Stockmann.

——I was to humble myself, and eat the dust; I was to set my personal interests above my deepest, holiest convictions——

Billing.

Strike me dead, but that’s too outrageous!

Hovstad.

Oh, what can you expect from that quarter?

Dr. Stockmann.

But they shall find they were mistaken in me; they shall learn that in black and white, I promise them! I shall throw myself into the breach every day in the *Messenger*, bombard them with one explosive article after another——

Aslaksen.

Yes, but look here——

Billing.

Hurrah! It’s war! War!

Dr. Stockmann.

I shall smite them to the earth, I shall crush them, I shall level their entrenchments to the ground in the eyes of all right-thinking men! That’s what I shall do!

Aslaksen.

But above all things be temperate, Doctor; bombard with moderation——

Billing.

Not at all, not at all! Don’t spare the dynamite!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Going on imperturbably.*] For now it's no mere question of water-works and sewers, you see. No, the whole community must be purged, disinfected——

Billing.

There sounds the word of salvation!

Dr. Stockmann.

All the old bunglers must be sent packing, you understand. And that in every possible department! Such endless vistas have opened out before me to-day. I am not quite clear about everything yet, but I shall see my way presently. It's young and vigorous standard-bearers we must look for, my friends; we must have new captains at all the outposts.

Billing.

Hear, hear!

Dr. Stockmann.

And if only we hold together, it will go so smoothly, so smoothly! The whole revolution will glide off the stocks just like a ship. Don't you think so?

Hovstad.

For my part, I believe we have now every prospect of placing our municipal affairs in the right hands.

Aslaksen.

And if only we proceed with moderation, I really don't think there can be any danger.

Dr. Stockmann.

Who the devil cares whether there's danger or not! What I do, I do in the name of truth and for conscience' sake.

Hovstad.

You are a man to be backed up, Doctor.

Aslaksen.

Yes, there's no doubt the Doctor is a true friend to the town; he's what I call a friend of society.

Billing.

Strike me dead if Dr. Stockmann isn’t a Friend of the People, Aslaksen!

Aslaksen.

I have no doubt the House-owners' Association will soon adopt that expression.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Shaking their hands, deeply moved.*] Thanks, thanks, my dear, faithful friends; it does me good to hear you. My respected brother called me something very different. Never mind! Trust me to pay him back with interest! But I must be off now to see a poor devil of a patient. I shall look in again, though. Be sure you look after the article, Mr. Aslaksen; and, whatever you do, don’t leave out any of my notes of exclamation! Rather put in a few more! Well, good-bye for the present, good-bye, good-bye.

[*Mutual salutations while they accompany him to the door. He goes out.*

Hovstad.

He will be invaluable to us.

Aslaksen.

Yes, so long as he confines himself to this matter of the Baths. But if he goes further, it will scarcely be advisable to follow him.

Hovstad.

H'm—that entirely depends on——

Billing.

You’re always so confoundedly timid, Aslaksen.

Aslaksen.

Timid? Yes, when it’s a question of attacking local authorities, I am timid, Mr. Billing; I have learnt caution in the school of experience, let me tell you. But start me on the higher politics, confront me with the Government itself, and then see if I'm timid.

Billing.

No, you’re not; but that’s just where your inconsistency comes in.

Aslaksen.

The fact is, I am keenly alive to my responsibilities. If you attack the Government, you at least do society no harm; for the men attacked don't care a straw, you see—they stay where they are all the same. But *local* authorities can be turned out; and then we might get some incompetent set into power, to the irreparable injury both of house-owners and other people.

Hovstad.

But the education of citizens by self-government—do you never think of *that*?

Aslaksen.

When a man has solid interests to protect, he can't think of everything, Mr. Hovstad.

Hovstad.

Then I hope I may never have solid interests to protect.

Billing.

Hear, hear!

Aslaksen.

[*Smiling.*] H'm! [*Points to the desk.*] Governor Stensgård[10] sat in that editorial chair before you.

Billing.

[*Spitting.*] Pooh! A turncoat like that!

Hovstad.

I am no weathercock—and never will be.

Aslaksen.

A politician should never be too sure of anything on earth, Mr. Hovstad. And as for you, Mr. Billing, you ought to take in a reef or two, I should say, now that you are applying for the secretaryship to the Town Council.

Billing.

I——!

Hovstad.

Is that so, Billing?

Billing.

Well, yes—but, deuce take it, you understand, I'm only doing it to spite their high-mightinesses.

Aslaksen.

Well, that has nothing to do with me. But if I am to be accused of cowardice and inconsistency, I should just like to point out *this*: My political record is open to every one. I have not changed at all, except in becoming more moderate. My heart still belongs to the people; but I don't deny that my reason inclines somewhat towards the authorities—the local ones, I mean.

[*Goes into the printing-room.*]

Billing.

Don't you think we should try to get rid of him, Hovstad?

Hovstad.

Do you know of any one else that will pay for our paper and printing?

Billing.

What a confounded nuisance it is to have no capital!

Hovstad.

[*Sitting down by the desk.*] Yes, if we only had that——

Billing.

Suppose you applied to Dr. Stockmann?

Hovstad.

[*Turning over his papers.*] What would be the good? He hasn't a rap.

Billing.

No; but he has a good man behind him—old Morten Kiil—"The Badger," as they call him.

Hovstad.

[*Writing.*] Are you so sure he has money?

Billing.

Yes, strike me dead if he hasn't! And part of it must certainly go to Stockmann's family. He's bound to provide for—for the children at any rate.

Hovstad.

[*Half turning.*] Are you counting on *that*?

Billing.

Counting? How should I be counting on it?

Hovstad.

Best not! And that secretaryship you shouldn’t count on either; for I can assure you you won’t get it.

Billing.

Do you think I don’t know that? A refusal is the very thing I want. Such a rebuff fires the spirit of opposition in you, gives you a fresh supply of gall, as it were; and that’s just what you need in a god-forsaken hole like this, where anything really stimulating so seldom happens.

Hovstad.

[*Writing.*] Yes, yes.

Billing.

Well—they shall soon hear from me!—Now I'll go and write the appeal to the House-owners' Association. [*Goes into the room on the right.*

Hovstad.

[*Sits at his desk, biting his penholder, and says slowly*:] H'm—so that’s the way of it.—[*A knock at the door.*] Come in.

Petra *enters from the back, left.*

Hovstad.

[*Rising.*] What! Is it you? Here?

Petra.

Yes; please excuse me——

Hovstad.

[*Offering her an arm-chair.*] Won’t you sit down?

Petra.

No, thanks; I must go again directly.

Hovstad.

Perhaps you bring a message from your father——?

Petra.

No, I have come on my own account. [*Takes a book from the pocket of her cloak.*] Here is that English story.

Hovstad.

Why have you brought it back?

Petra.

Because I won't translate it.

Hovstad.

But you promised——

Petra.

Yes; but then I hadn't read it. I suppose you have not read it either?

Hovstad.

No; you know I can't read English; but——

Petra.

Exactly; and that's why I wanted to tell you that you must find something else. [*Putting the book on the table.*] This will never do for the *Messenger*.

Hovstad.

Why not?

Petra.

Because it flies in the face of all your convictions.

Hovstad.

Well, for that matter——

Petra.

You don't understand me. It makes out that a supernatural power looks after the so-called good people in this world, and turns everything to their advantage at last; while all the so-called bad people are punished.

Hovstad.

Yes, but that's all right. That's the very thing the public like.

Petra.

And would you supply the public with such stuff? You don't believe a word of it yourself. You know well enough that things do not really happen like that.

Hovstad.

Of course not; but an editor can't always do as he likes. He has often to humour people's fancies in minor matters. After all, politics is the chief thing in life—at any rate for a newspaper; and if I want the people to follow me along the path of emancipation and progress, I mustn't scare them away. If they find a moral story like this down in the cellar,[11] they are all the more ready to take in what we tell them above—they feel themselves safer.

Petra.

For shame! You're not such a hypocrite as to set traps like that for your readers. You're not a spider.

Hovstad.

[*Smiling.*] Thanks for your good opinion. It's true that the idea is Billing's, not mine.

Petra.

Mr. Billing's!

Hovstad.

Yes, at least he was talking in that strain the other day. It was Billing that was so anxious to get the story into the paper; I don't even know the book.

Petra.

But how can Mr. Billing, with his advanced views——

Hovstad.

Well, Billing is many-sided. He's applying for the secretaryship to the Town Council, I hear.

Petra.

I don't believe that, Mr. Hovstad. How could he descend to such a thing?

Hovstad.

That you must ask him.

Petra.

I could never have thought it of Billing!

Hovstad.

[*Looking more closely at her.*] No? Is it such a surprise to you?

Petra.

Yes. And yet—perhaps not. Oh, I don't know——

Hovstad.

We journalists are not worth much, Miss Petra.

Petra.

Do you really say that?

Hovstad.

I think so, now and then.

Petra.

Yes, in the little every-day squabbles—that I can understand. But now that you have taken up a great cause——

Hovstad.

You mean this affair of your father's?

Petra.

Of course. I should think you must feel yourself worth more than the general run of people now.

Hovstad.

Yes, to-day I do feel something of the sort.

Petra.

Yes, surely you must. Oh, it's a glorious career you have chosen! To be the pioneer of unrecognised truths and new and daring ways of thought!—even, if that were all, to stand forth fearlessly in support of an injured man——

Hovstad.

Especially when the injured man is—I hardly know how to put it——

Petra.

You mean when he is so upright and true?

Hovstad.

[*In a low voice.*] I mean—especially when he is your father.

Petra.

[*Suddenly taken aback.*] *That?*

Hovstad.

Yes, Petra—Miss Petra.

Petra.

So that is your chief thought, is it? Not the cause itself? Not the truth? Not father's great, warm heart?

Hovstad.

Oh, that too, of course.

Petra.

No, thank you; you said too much that time, Mr. Hovstad. Now I shall never trust you again, in anything.

Hovstad.

Can you be so hard on me because it's mainly for your sake——?

Petra.

What I blame you for is that you have not acted straightforwardly towards father. You have talked to him as if you cared only for the truth and the good of the community. You have trifled with both father and me. You are not the man you pretended to be. And that I will never forgive you—never.

Hovstad.

You shouldn't say that so bitterly, Miss Petra—least of all now.

Petra.

Why not now?

Hovstad.

Because your father cannot do without my help.

Petra.

[*Measuring him from head to foot.*] So you are capable of *that*, too? Oh, shame!

Hovstad.

No, no. I spoke without thinking. You mustn't believe that of me.

Petra.

I know what to believe. Good-bye.

Aslaksen *enters from printing-room, hurriedly and mysteriously.*

Aslaksen.

What do you think, Mr. Hovstad—[*Seeing Petra.*] Ow, that's awkward——

Petra.

Well, there is the book. You must give it to some one else. [*Going towards the main door.*

Hovstad.

[*Following her.*] But, Miss Petra——

Petra.

Good-bye. [*She goes.*

Aslaksen.

I say, Mr. Hovstad!

Hovstad.

Well well; what is it?

Aslaksen.

The Burgomaster's out there, in the printing-office.

Hovstad.

The Burgomaster?

Aslaksen.

Yes. He wants to speak to you; he came in by the back way—he didn't want to be seen, you understand.

Hovstad.

What can be the meaning of this? Stop, I'll go myself——

[*Goes towards the printing-room, opens the door, bows and invites the Burgomaster to enter.*

Hovstad.

Keep a look-out, Aslaksen, that no one——

Aslaksen.

I understand. [*Goes into the printing-room.*

Burgomaster.

You didn't expect to see me here, Mr. Hovstad.

Hovstad.

No, I cannot say that I did.

Burgomaster.

[*Looking about him.*] You are very comfortably installed here—capital quarters.

Hovstad.

Oh——

Burgomaster.

And here have I come, without with your leave or by your leave, to take up your time——

Hovstad.

You are very welcome, Burgomaster; I am at your service. Let me take your cap and stick. [*He does so, and puts them on a chair.*] And won't you be seated?

Burgomaster.

[*Sitting down by the table.*] Thanks. [Hovstad *also sits by the table.*] I have been much—very much worried to-day, Mr. Hovstad.

Hovstad.

Really? Well, I suppose with all your various duties, Burgomaster——

Burgomaster.

It is the Doctor that has been causing me annoyance to-day.

Hovstad.

Indeed! The Doctor?

Burgomaster.

He has written a sort of memorandum to the Directors about some alleged shortcomings in the Baths.

Hovstad.

Has he really?

Burgomaster.

Yes; hasn't he told you? I thought he said——

Hovstad.

Oh yes, by-the-bye, he did mention something——

Aslaksen.

[*From the printing-office.*] I've just come for the manuscript——

Hovstad.

[*In a tone of vexation.*] Oh!—there it is on the desk.

Aslaksen.

[*Finding it.*] All right.

Burgomaster.

Why, *that* is the very thing——

Aslaksen.

Yes, this is the Doctor's article, Burgomaster.

Hovstad.

Oh, is that what you were speaking of?

Burgomaster.

Precisely. What do you think of it?

Hovstad.

I have no technical knowledge of the matter, and I've only glanced through it.

Burgomaster.

And yet you are going to print it!

Hovstad.

I can't very well refuse a signed communication——

Aslaksen.

I have nothing to do with the editing of the paper, Burgomaster——

Burgomaster.

Of course not.

Aslaksen.

I merely print what is placed in my hands.

Burgomaster.

Quite right, quite right.

Aslaksen.

So I must—— [*Goes towards the printing-room.*

Burgomaster.

No, stop a moment, Mr. Aslaksen. With your permission, Mr. Hovstad——

Hovstad.

By all means, Burgomaster.

Burgomaster.

You are a discreet and thoughtful man, Mr. Aslaksen.

Aslaksen.

I am glad you think so, Burgomaster.

Burgomaster.

And a man of very wide influence.

Aslaksen.

Well—chiefly among the lower middle-class.

Burgomaster.

The small taxpayers form the majority—here as everywhere.

Aslaksen.

That's very true.

Burgomaster.

And I have no doubt that you know the general feeling among them. Am I right?

Aslaksen.

Yes, I think I may say that I do, Burgomaster.

Burgomaster.

Well—since our townsfolk of the poorer class appear to be so heroically eager to make sacrifices——

Aslaksen.

How so?

Hovstad.

Sacrifices?

Burgomaster.

It is a pleasing evidence of public spirit—a most pleasing evidence. I admit it is more than I should quite have expected. But, of course, you know public feeling better than I do.

Aslaksen.

Yes but, Burgomaster——

Burgomaster.

And assuredly it is no small sacrifice the town will have to make.

Hovstad.

The town?

Aslaksen.

But I don't understand——. It's the Baths——

Burgomaster.

At a rough provisional estimate, the alterations the Doctor thinks desirable will come to two or three hundred thousand crowns.

Aslaksen.

That's a lot of money; but——

Burgomaster.

Of course we shall be obliged to raise a municipal loan.

Hovstad.

[*Rising.*] You surely can't mean that the town——?

Aslaksen.

Would you come upon the rates? Upon the scanty savings of the lower middle-class?

Burgomaster.

Why, my dear Mr. Aslaksen, where else are the funds to come from?

Aslaksen.

The proprietors of the Baths must see to that.

Burgomaster.

The proprietors are not in a position to go to any further expense.

Aslaksen.

Are you quite sure of that, Burgomaster?

Burgomaster.

I have positive information. So if these extensive alterations are called for, the town itself will have to bear the cost.

Aslaksen.

Oh, plague take it all—I beg your pardon!—but this is quite another matter, Mr. Hovstad.

Hovstad.

Yes, it certainly is.

Burgomaster.

The worst of it is, that we shall be obliged to close the establishment for a couple of years.

Hovstad.

To close it? Completely?

Aslaksen.

For two years!

Burgomaster.

Yes, the work will require that time—at least.

Aslaksen.

But, damn it all! we can't stand that, Burgomaster. What are we house-owners to live on in the meantime?

Burgomaster.

It's extremely difficult to say, Mr. Aslaksen. But what would you have us do? Do you think a single visitor will come here if we go about making them fancy that the water is poisoned, that the place is pestilential, that the whole town——

Aslaksen.

And it's all nothing but fancy?

Burgomaster.

With the best will in the world, I have failed to convince myself that it is anything else.

Aslaksen.

In that case it's simply inexcusable of Dr. Stockmann—I beg your pardon, Burgomaster, but——

Burgomaster.

I'm sorry to say you are only speaking the truth, Mr. Aslaksen. Unfortunately, my brother has always been noted for his rashness.

Aslaksen.

And yet you want to back him up in this, Mr. Hovstad!

Hovstad.

But who could possibly imagine that——?

Burgomaster.

I have drawn up a short statement of the facts, as they appear from a sober-minded standpoint; and I have intimated that any drawbacks that may possibly exist can no doubt be remedied by measures compatible with the finances of the Baths.

Hovstad.

Have you the article with you, Burgomaster?

Burgomaster.

[*Feeling in his pockets.*] Yes; I brought it with me, in case you——

Aslaksen.

[*Quickly.*] Plague take it, there he is!

Burgomaster.

Who? My brother?

Hovstad.

Where? where?

Aslaksen.

He's coming through the composing-room.

Burgomaster.

Most unfortunate! I don't want to meet him here, and yet there are several things I want to talk to you about.

Hovstad.

[*Pointing to the door on the right.*] Go in there for a moment.

Burgomaster.

But——?

Hovstad.

You'll find nobody but Billing there.

Aslaksen.

Quick, quick, Burgomaster; he's just coming.

Burgomaster.

Very well, then. But try to get rid of him quickly.

[*He goes out by the door on the right, which Aslaksen opens, and closes behind him.*

Hovstad.

Pretend to be busy, Aslaksen.

[*He sits down and writes. Aslaksen turns over a heap of newspapers on a chair, right.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Entering from the composing-room.*] Here I am, back again. [*Puts down his hat and stick.*]

Hovstad.

[*Writing.*] Already, Doctor? Make haste with what we were speaking of, Aslaksen. We've no time to lose to-day.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*To Aslaksen.*] No proof yet, I hear.

Aslaksen.

[*Without turning round.*] No; how could you expect it?

Dr. Stockmann.

Of course not; but you understand my impatience. I can have no rest or peace until I see the thing in print.

Hovstad.

H'm; it will take a good while yet. Don't you think so, Aslaksen?

Aslaksen.

I'm afraid it will.

Dr. Stockmann.

All right, all right, my good friend; then I shall look in again. I'll look in twice if necessary. With so much at stake—the welfare of the whole town—one mustn't grudge a little trouble. [*Is on the point of going but stops and comes back.*] Oh, by the way—there's one other thing I must speak to you about.

Hovstad.

Excuse me; wouldn't some other time——?

Dr. Stockmann.

I can tell you in two words. You see it's this when people read my article in the paper tomorrow, and find I have spent the whole winter working quietly for the good of the town——

Hovstad.

Yes but, Doctor——

Dr. Stockmann.

I know what you're going to say. You don't think it was a bit more than my duty—my simple duty as a citizen. Of course I know that, as well as you do. But you see, my fellow townsmen—good Lord! the poor souls think so much of me——

Aslaksen.

Yes, the townspeople have hitherto thought very highly of you, Doctor.

Dr. Stockmann.

That's exactly why I'm afraid that—. What I wanted to say was this: when all this comes to them—especially to the poorer classes—as a summons to take the affairs of the town into their own hands for the future——

Hovstad.

[*Rising.*] H'm, Doctor, I won't conceal from you——

Dr. Stockmann.

Aha! I thought there was something brewing! But I won't hear of it. If they are getting up anything of that sort——

Hovstad.

Of what sort?

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, anything of any sort—a procession with banners, or a banquet, or a subscription for a testimonial, or whatever it may be—you must give me your solemn promise to put a stop to it. And you too, Mr. Aslaksen; do you hear?

Hovstad.

Excuse me, Doctor; we may as well tell you the whole truth first as last——

Mrs. Stockmann *enters from the back, left.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Seeing the Doctor*.] Ah! just as I thought.

Hovstad.

[*Going towards her*.] Mrs. Stockmann, too?

Dr. Stockmann.

What the devil do *you* want here, Katrina?

Mrs. Stockmann.

You know very well what I want.

Hovstad.

Won't you sit down? Or perhaps——

Mrs. Stockmann.

Thanks, please don't trouble. And you must forgive my following my husband here; remember, I am the mother of three children.

Dr. Stockmann.

Stuff and nonsense! We all know that well enough.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Well, it doesn't look as if you thought very much about your wife and children to-day, or you wouldn't be so ready to plunge us all into ruin.

Dr. Stockmann.

Are you quite mad, Katrina! Has a man with a wife and children no right to proclaim the truth? Has he no right to be an active and useful citizen? Has he no right to do his duty by the town he lives in?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Everything in moderation, Thomas!

Aslaksen.

That's just what I say. Moderation in everything.

Mrs. Stockmann.

You are doing us a great wrong, Mr. Hovstad, in enticing my husband away from house and home, and befooling him in this way.

Hovstad.

I am not befooling any one——

Dr. Stockmann.

Befooling! Do you think I should let myself be befooled?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, that's just what you do. I know very well that you are the cleverest man in the town; but you're very easily made a fool of, Thomas. [*To Hovstad.*] Remember that he loses his post at the Baths if you print what he has written——

Aslaksen.

What!

Hovstad.

Well now, really, Doctor——

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Laughing.*] Ha ha! just let them try—! No no, my dear, they'll think twice about that. I have the compact majority behind me, you see!

Mrs. Stockmann.

That's just the misfortune, that you should have such a horrid thing behind you.

Dr. Stockmann.

Nonsense, Katrina;—you go home and look after your house, and let me take care of society. How can you be in such a fright when you see me so confident and happy? [*Rubbing his hands and walking up and down.*] Truth and the People must win the day; you may be perfectly sure of that. Oh! I can see all our free-souled citizens standing shoulder to shoulder like a conquering army——! [*Stopping by a chair.*] Why, what the devil is *that*?

Aslaksen.

[*Looking at it.*] Oh Lord!

Hovstad.

[*The same.*] H'm—

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, here's the top-knot of authority!

[*He takes the* Burgomaster's *official cap carefully between the tips of his fingers and holds it up.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

The Burgomaster's cap!

Dr. Stockmann.

And here's the staff of office, too! But how in the devil's name did they——?

Hovstad.

Well then——

Dr. Stockmann.

Ah, I understand! He has been here to talk you over. Ha, ha! He reckoned without his host that time! And when he caught sight of me in the printing-room—[*Bursts out laughing.*]—he took to his heels, eh, Mr. Aslaksen?

Aslaksen.

[*Hurriedly.*] Exactly; he took to his heels, Doctor.

Dr. Stockmann.

Made off without his stick and——. No, *that* won't do! Peter never left anything behind him. But where the devil have you stowed him? Ah—in here, of course. Now you shall see, Katrina!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Thomas—I implore you——!

Aslaksen.

Take care, Doctor!

[Dr. Stockmann *has put on the* Burgomaster's *cap and grasped his stick; he now goes up to the door, throws it open, and makes a military salute.*

The Burgomaster *enters, red with anger. Behind him comes* Billing.

Burgomaster.

What is the meaning of these antics?

Dr. Stockmann.

Respect, my good Peter! Now, it's I that am in power in this town.

[*He struts up and down.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Almost in tears.*] Oh, Thomas!

Burgomaster.

[*Following him.*] Give me my cap and stick!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*As before.*] You may be Chief of Police, but I am Burgomaster. I am master of the whole town I tell you!

Burgomaster.

Put down my cap, I say. Remember it is an official cap, as by law prescribed!

Dr. Stockmann.

Pshaw! Do you think the awakening lion of the democracy will let itself be scared by a gold-laced cap? There's to be a revolution in the town to-morrow, let me tell you. You threatened me with dismissal; but now *I* dismiss *you*—dismiss you from all your offices of trust—. You think I can't do it?—Oh, yes, I can! I have the irresistible forces of society on my side. Hovstad and Billing will thunder in the *People's Messenger*, and Aslaksen will take the field at the head of the House-owners' Association——

Aslaksen.

No, Doctor, I shall not.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, of course you will——

Burgomaster.

Aha! Perhaps Mr. Hovstad would like to join the agitation after all?

Hovstad.

No, Burgomaster.

Aslaksen.

No, Mr. Hovstad isn't such a fool as to ruin both himself and the paper for the sake of a delusion.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Looking about him.*] What does all this mean?

Hovstad.

You have presented your case in a false light, Doctor; therefore I am unable to give you my support.

Billing.

And after what the Burgomaster has been so kind as to explain to me, I——

Dr. Stockmann.

In a false light! Well, I am responsible for that. Just you print my article, and I promise you I shall prove it up to the hilt.

Hovstad.

I shall not print it. I cannot, and will not, and dare not print it.

Dr. Stockmann.

You dare not? What nonsense is this? You are editor; and I suppose it's the editor that controls a paper.

Aslaksen.

No, it's the subscribers, Doctor.

Burgomaster.

Fortunately.

Aslaksen.

It's public opinion, the enlightened majority, the house-owners and all the rest. It's *they* who control a paper.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Calmly.*] And all these powers I have against me?

Aslaksen.

Yes, you have. It would mean absolute ruin for the town if your article were inserted.

Dr. Stockmann.

So *that* is the way of it!

Burgomaster.

My hat and stick!

[Dr. Stockmann *takes off the cap and lays it on the table along with the stick.*

Burgomaster.

[*Taking them both.*] Your term of office has come to an untimely end.

Dr. Stockmann.

The end is not yet. [*To* Hovstad.] So you are quite determined not to print my article in the *Messenger*?

Hovstad.

Quite; for the sake of your family, if for no other reason.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh, be kind enough to leave his family out of the question, Mr. Hovstad.

Burgomaster.

[*Takes a manuscript from his pocket.*] When this appears, the public will be in possession of all necessary information; it is an authentic statement. I place it in your hands.

Hovstad.

[*Taking the MS.*] Good. It shall appear in due course.

Dr. Stockmann.

And not mine! You imagine you can kill me and the truth by a conspiracy of silence! But it won't be so easy as you think. Mr. Aslaksen, will you be good enough to print my article at once, as a pamphlet? I'll pay for it myself, and be my own publisher. I'll have four hundred copies—no, five—six hundred.

Aslaksen.

No. If you offered me its weight in gold, I dare not lend my press to such a purpose, Doctor. I daren't fly in the face of public opinion. You won't get it printed anywhere in the whole town.

Dr. Stockmann.

Then give it me back.

Hovstad.

[*Handing him the MS.*] By all means.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Taking up his hat and cane.*] It shall be made public all the same. I shall read it at a great mass meeting; all my fellow citizens shall hear the voice of truth!

Burgomaster.

Not a single society in the town would let you their hall for such a purpose.

Aslaksen.

Not one, I'm quite certain.

Billing.

No, strike me dead if they would!

Mrs. Stockmann.

That would be too disgraceful! Why do they turn against you like this, every one of them?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Irritated.*] I'll tell you why. It’s because in this town all the men are old women—like you. They all think of nothing but their families, not of the general good.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Taking his arm.*] Then I'll show them that an—an old woman can be a man for once in a way. For *now* I'll stand by you, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

Bravely said, Katrina! I swear by my soul and conscience the truth shall out! If they won’t let me a hall, I'll hire a drum and march through the town with it; and I'll read my paper at every street corner.

Burgomaster.

You can scarcely be such a raving lunatic as that?

Dr. Stockmann.

I am.

Aslaksen.

You would not get a single man in the whole town to go with you.

Billing.

No, strike me dead if you would!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Don’t give in, Thomas. I'll ask the boys to go with you.

Dr. Stockmann.

That’s a splendid idea!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Morten will be delighted; and Eilif will go too, I daresay.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, and so will Petra! And you yourself, Katrina!

Mrs. Stockmann.

No no, not I. But I'll stand at the window and watch you—that I will.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Throwing his arms about her and kissing her.*] Thank you for that! Now, my good sirs, we're ready for the fight! Now we shall see whether your despicable tactics can stop the mouth of the patriot who wants to purge society!

[*He and his wife go out together by the door in the back, left.*

Burgomaster.

[Shaking his head dubiously.] Now he has turned *her* head too!

ACT FOURTH.

A large old-fashioned room in Captain Horster's house. An open folding-door in the background leads to an anteroom. In the wall on the left are three windows. About the middle of the opposite wall is a platform, and on it a small table, two candles, a water-bottle and glass, and a bell. For the rest, the room is lighted by sconces placed between the windows. In front, on the left, is a table with a candle on it, and by it a chair. In front, to the right, a door, and near it a few chairs.

Large assemblage of all classes of townsfolk. In the crowd are a few women and schoolboys. More and more people gradually stream in from the back until the room is quite full.

First Citizen.

[*To another standing near him.*] So you're here too, Lamstad?

Second Citizen.

I never miss a public meeting.

A Bystander.

I suppose you've brought your whistle?

Second Citizen.

Of course I have; haven't you?

Third Citizen.

I should think so. And Skipper Evensen said he'd bring a thumping big horn.

Second Citizen.

He's a good 'un, is Evensen!

[*Laughter in the group.*

A Fourth Citizen.

[*Joining them.*] I say, what's it all about? What's going on here to-night?

Second Citizen.

Why, it's Dr. Stockmann that's going to lecture against the Burgomaster.

Fourth Citizen.

But the Burgomaster's his brother.

First Citizen.

That makes no difference. Dr. Stockmann’s not afraid of him.

Third Citizen.

But he’s all wrong; the *People’s Messenger* says so.

Second Citizen.

Yes, he must be wrong this time; for neither the House-owners’ Association nor the Citizens' Club would let him have a hall.

First Citizen.

They wouldn’t even lend him the hall at the Baths.

Second Citizen.

No, you may be sure they wouldn’t.

A Man.

[*In another group.*] Now, who’s the one to follow in this business, eh?

Another Man.

[*In the same group.*] Just keep your eye on Aslaksen, and do as he does.

Billing.

[*With a portfolio under his arm, makes his way through the crowd.*] Excuse me, gentlemen. Will you allow me to pass? I'm here to report for the *People’s Messenger*. Many thanks.

[*Sits by the table on the left.*

A Working-man.

Who’s he?

Another Working-man.

Don’t you know him? It’s that fellow Billing, that writes for Aslaksen’s paper.

Captain Horster *enters by the door in front on the right, escorting* Mrs. Stockmann *and* Petra. Eilif *and* Morten *follow them.*

Horster.

This is where I thought you might sit: you can so easily slip out if anything should happen.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Do you think there will be any disturbance?

Horster.

One can never tell—with such a crowd. But there's no occasion for anxiety.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Sitting down.*] How kind it was of you to offer Stockmann this room.

Horster.

Since no one else would, I——

Petra.

[*Who has also seated herself.*] And it was brave too, Captain Horster.

Horster.

Oh, I don't see where the bravery comes in.

Hovstad *and* Aslaksen *enter at the same moment, but make their way through the crowd separately.*

Aslaksen.

[*Going up to* Horster.] Hasn't the Doctor come yet?

Horster.

He's waiting in there.

[*A movement at the door in the background.*

Hovstad.

[*To Billing.*] There's the Burgomaster! Look!

Billing.

Yes, strike me dead if he hasn't put in an appearance after all!

Burgomaster Stockmann *makes his way blandly through the meeting, bowing politely to both sides, and takes his stand by the wall on the left. Soon afterwards,* Dr. Stockmann *enters by the door on the right. He wears a black frock-coat and white necktie. Faint applause, met by a subdued hissing. Then silence.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*In a low tone.*] How do you feel, Katrina?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Quite comfortable, thank you. [*In a low voice.*] Now do keep your temper, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, I shall keep myself well in hand. [*Looks at his watch, ascends the platform, and bows.*] It's a quarter past the hour, so I shall begin——

[*Takes out his MS.*

Aslaksen.

But surely a chairman must be elected first.

Dr. Stockmann.

No, that's not at all necessary.

Several Gentlemen.

[*Shouting.*] Yes, yes.

Burgomaster.

I should certainly say that a chairman ought to be elected.

Dr. Stockmann.

But I've called this meeting to give a lecture, Peter!

Burgomaster.

Dr. Stockmann's lecture may possibly lead to differences of opinion.

Several Voices in the Crowd.

A chairman! A chairman!

Hovstad.

The general voice of the meeting seems to be for a chairman!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Controlling himself.*] Very well then; let the meeting have its way.

Aslaksen.

Will not the Burgomaster take the chair?

Three Gentlemen.

[*Clapping.*] Bravo! Bravo!

Burgomaster.

For reasons you will easily understand, I must decline. But, fortunately, we have among us one whom I think we can all accept. I allude to the president of the House-owners' Association, Mr. Aslaksen.

Many Voices.

Yes, yes! Bravo Aslaksen! Hurrah for Aslaksen!

[Dr. Stockmann *takes his MS. and descends from the platform.*

Aslaksen.

Since my fellow citizens repose this trust in me, *I* cannot refuse——

[*Applause and cheers.* Aslaksen *ascends the platform.*

Billing.

[*Writing.*] So—"Mr. Aslaksen was elected by acclamation——"

Aslaksen.

And now, as I have been called to the chair, I take the liberty of saying a few brief words. I am a quiet, peace-loving man; I am in favour of discreet moderation, and of—and of moderate discretion. Every one who knows me, knows that.

Many Voices.

Yes, yes, Aslaksen!

Aslaksen.

I have learnt in the school of life and of experience that moderation is the virtue in which the individual citizen finds his best advantage——

Burgomaster.

Hear, hear!

Aslaksen.

——and it is discretion and moderation, too, that best serve the community. I could therefore suggest to our respected fellow citizen, who has called this meeting, that he should endeavour to keep within the bounds of moderation.

A Man.

[*By the door.*] Three cheers for the Temperance Society!

A Voice.

Go to the devil!

Voices.

Hush! hush!

Aslaksen.

No interruptions, gentlemen!—Does any one wish to offer any observations?

Burgomaster.

Mr. Chairman!

Aslaksen.

Burgomaster Stockmann will address the meeting.

Burgomaster.

On account of my close relationship—of which you are probably aware—to the present medical officer of the Baths, I should have preferred not to speak here this evening. But my position as chairman of the Baths, and my care for the vital interests of this town, force me to move a resolution. I may doubtless assume that not a single citizen here present thinks it desirable that untrustworthy and exaggerated statements should get abroad as to the sanitary condition of the Baths and of our town.

Many Voices.

No, no, no! Certainly not! We protest!

Burgomaster.

I therefore beg to move, “That this meeting declines to hear the proposed lecture or speech on the subject by the medical officer of the Baths.”

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Flaring up.*] Declines to hear——! What do you mean?

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Coughing.*] H'm! h’m!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Controlling himself.*] So I am not to be heard?

Burgomaster.

In my statement in the *People's Messenger* I have made the public acquainted with the essential facts, so that all well-disposed citizens can easily form their own judgment. From that statement it will be seen that the medical officer's proposal—besides amounting to a vote of censure upon the leading men of the town—at bottom only means saddling the ratepayers with an unnecessary outlay of at least a hundred thousand crowns.

[*Sounds of protest and some hissing.*

Aslaksen.

[*Ringing the bell.*] Order, gentlemen! I must beg leave to support the Burgomaster's resolution. I quite agree with him that there is something beneath the surface of the Doctor's agitation. In all his talk about the Baths, it is really a revolution he is aiming at; he wants to effect a redistribution of power. No one doubts the excellence of Dr. Stockmann's intentions—of course there cannot be two opinions as to that. I, too, am in favour of self-government by the people, if only it doesn't cost the ratepayers too much. But in this case it would do so; and therefore I'll be hanged if—excuse me—in short, I cannot go with Dr. Stockmann upon this occasion. You can buy even gold too dear; that's my opinion.

[*Loud applause on all sides.*

Hovstad.

I, too feel bound to explain my attitude. Dr. Stockmann's agitation seemed at first to find favour in several quarters, and I supported it as impartially as I could. But it presently appeared that we had been misled by a false representation of the facts——

Dr. Stockmann.

False——!

Hovstad.

Well then, an untrustworthy representation. This the Burgomaster's report has proved. I trust no one here present doubts my liberal principles; the attitude of the *Messenger* on all great political questions is well known to you all. But I have learned from men of judgment and experience that in purely local matters a paper must observe a certain amount of caution.

Aslaksen.

I entirely agree with the speaker.

Hovstad.

And in the matter under discussion it is quite evident that Dr. Stockmann has public opinion against him. But, gentlemen, what is an editor's clearest and most imperative duty? Is it not to work in harmony with his readers? Has he not in some sort received a tacit mandate to further assiduously and unweariedly the interests of his constituents? Or am I mistaken in this?

Many Voices.

No, no, no! Hovstad is right!

Hovstad.

It has cost me a bitter struggle to break with a man in whose house I have of late been a frequent guest—with a man who, up to this day, has enjoyed the unqualified goodwill of his fellow citizens—with a man whose only, or, at any rate, whose chief fault is that he consults his heart rather than his head.

A Few Scattered Voices.

That's true! Hurrah for Dr. Stockmann!

Hovstad.

But my duty towards the community has constrained me to break with him. Then, too, there is another consideration that impels me to oppose him, and, if possible, to block the ill-omened path upon which he is entering: consideration for his family——

Dr. Stockmann.

Keep to the water-works and sewers!

Hovstad.

——consideration for his wife and his unprotected[12] children.

Morten.

Is that us, mother?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Hush!

Aslaksen.

I will now put the Burgomaster's resolution to the vote.

Dr. Stockmann.

You need not. I have no intention of saying anything this evening of all the filth at the Baths. No! You shall hear something quite different.

Burgomaster.

[*Half aloud.*] What next, I wonder?

A Drunken Man.

[*At the main entrance.*] I'm a ratepayer, so I've a right to my opinion! And it’s my full, firm, incomprehensible opinion that——

Several Voices.

Silence up there!

Others.

He’s drunk! Turn him out!

[*The drunken man is turned out.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Can I speak?

Aslaksen.

[*Ringing the bell.*] Dr. Stockmann will address the meeting.

Dr. Stockmann.

A few days ago, I should have liked to see any one venture upon such an attempt to gag me as has been made here to-night! I would have fought like a lion for my sacred rights! But now I care little enough; for now I have more important things to speak of.

[*The people crowd closer round him.* Morten Kiil *comes in sight among the bystanders.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Continuing.*] I have been pondering a great many things during these last days—thinking such a multitude of thoughts, that at last my head was positively in a whirl——

Burgomaster.

[*Coughing.*] H'm——!

Dr. Stockmann.

But presently things seemed to straighten themselves out, and I saw them clearly in all their bearings. That is why I stand here this evening. I am about to make great revelations, my fellow citizens! I am going to announce to you a far-reaching discovery, beside which the trifling fact that our water-works are poisoned, and that our health-resort is built on pestilential ground, sinks into insignificance.

Many Voices.

[*Shouting.*] Don't speak about the Baths! We won't listen to that! No more of that!

Dr. Stockmann.

I have said I would speak of the great discovery I have made within the last few days—the discovery that all our sources of spiritual life are poisoned, and that our whole society rests upon a pestilential basis of falsehood.

Several Voices.

[*In astonishment and half aloud.*] What's he saying?

Burgomaster.

Such an insinuation——!

Aslaksen.

[*With his hand on the bell.*] I must call upon the speaker to moderate his expressions.

Dr. Stockmann.

I have loved my native town as dearly as any man can love the home of his childhood. I was young when I left our town, and distance, home-sickness and memory threw, as it were, a glamour over the place and its people.

[*Some applause and cries of approval.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Then for years I was imprisoned in a horrible hole, far away in the north. As I went about among the people scattered here and there over the stony wilderness, it seemed to me, many a time, that it would have been better for these poor famishing creatures to have had a cattle-doctor to attend them, instead of a man like me.

[*Murmurs in the room.*

Billing.

[*Laying down his pen.*] Strike me dead if I've ever heard——!

Hovstad.

What an insult to an estimable peasantry!

Dr. Stockmann.

Wait a moment!—I don't think any one can reproach me with forgetting my native town up there. I sat brooding like an eider duck, and what I hatched was—the plan of the Baths.

[*Applause and expressions of dissent.*

Dr. Stockmann.

And when, at last, fate ordered things so happily that I could come home again—then, fellow citizens, it seemed to me that I hadn't another desire in the world. Yes, one desire I had: an eager, constant, burning desire to be of service to my birthplace, and to its people.

Burgomaster.

[*Gazing into vacancy.*] A strange method to select——!

Dr. Stockmann.

So I went about revelling in my happy illusions. But yesterday morning—no, it was really two nights ago—my mind's eyes were opened wide, and the first thing I saw was the colossal stupidity of the authorities——

[*Noise, cries, and laughter.* Mrs. Stockmann *coughs repeatedly.*

Burgomaster.

Mr. Chairman!

Aslaksen.

[*Ringing his bell.*] In virtue of my position——!

Dr. Stockmann.

It's petty to catch me up on a word, Mr. Aslaksen! I only mean that I became alive to the extraordinary muddle our leading men had been guilty of, down at the Baths. I cannot for the life of me abide leading men—I've seen enough of them in my time. They are like goats in a young plantation: they do harm at every point; they block the path of a free man wherever he turns—and I should be glad if we could exterminate them like other noxious animals——

[*Uproar in the room.*

Burgomaster.

Mr. Chairman, are such expressions permissible?

Aslaksen.

[*With his hand on the bell.*] Dr. Stockmann——

Dr. Stockmann.

I can't conceive how it is that I have only now seen through these gentry; for haven't I had a magnificent example before my eyes here every day—my brother Peter—slow of understanding, tenacious in prejudice——

[*Laughter, noise, and whistling.* Mrs. Stockmann *coughs.* Aslaksen *rings violently.*

The Drunken Man.

[*Who has come in again.*] Is it me you're alluding to? Sure enough, my name's Petersen; but devil take me if——

Angry Voices.

Out with that drunken man! Turn him out!

[*The man is again turned out.*

Burgomaster.

Who is that person?

A Bystander.

I don't know him, Burgomaster.

Another.

He doesn't belong to the town.

A Third.

I believe he's a timber-dealer from——

[*The rest is inaudible.*

Aslaksen.

The man was evidently intoxicated.—Continue, Dr. Stockmann; but pray endeavour to be moderate.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, fellow citizens, I shall say no more about our leading men. If any one imagines, from what I have just said, that it's these gentlemen I want to make short work of to-night, he is mistaken—altogether mistaken. For I cherish the comfortable conviction that these laggards, these relics of a decaying order of thought, are diligently cutting their own throats. They need no doctor to hasten their end. And it is not people of *that* sort that constitute the real danger to society; it is not they who are most active in poisoning the sources of our spiritual life and making a plague-spot of the ground beneath our feet; it is not *they* who are the most dangerous enemies of truth and freedom in our society.

Cries from All Sides.

Who, then? Who is it? Name, name!

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, you may be sure I shall name them! For *this* is the great discovery I made yesterday: [*In a louder tone.*] The most dangerous foe to truth and freedom in our midst is the compact majority. Yes, it's the confounded, compact, liberal majority—that, and nothing else! There, I've told you.

[*Immense disturbance in the room. Most of the audience are shouting, stamping, and whistling. Several elderly gentlemen exchange furtive glances and seem to be enjoying the scene.* Mrs. Stockmann *rises in alarm.* Eilif *and* Morten *advance threateningly towards the school-boys, who are making noises.* Aslaksen *rings the bell and calls for order.* Hovstad *and* Billing *both speak, but nothing can be heard. At last quiet is restored.*

Aslaksen.

I must request the speaker to withdraw his ill-considered expressions.

Dr. Stockmann.

Never, Mr. Aslaksen! For it's this very majority that robs me of my freedom, and wants to forbid me to speak the truth.

Hovstad.

The majority always has right on its side.

Billing.

Yes, and truth too, strike me dead!

Dr. Stockmann.

The majority never has right on its side. Never I say! That is one of the social lies that a free, thinking man is bound to rebel against. Who make up the majority in any given country? Is it the wise men or the fools? I think we must agree that the fools are in a terrible, overwhelming majority, all the wide world over. But how in the devil's name can it ever be right for the fools to rule over the wise men? [*Uproar and yells.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, yes, you can shout me down, but you cannot gainsay me. The majority has *might*—unhappily—but *right* it has not. It is I, and the few, the individuals, that are in the right. The minority is always right. [*Renewed uproar.*

Hovstad.

Ha ha! Dr. Stockmann has turned aristocrat since the day before yesterday!

Dr. Stockmann.

I have said that I have no words to waste on the little, narrow-chested, short-winded crew that lie in our wake. Pulsating life has nothing more to do with them. I am speaking of the few, the individuals among us, who have made all the new, germinating truths their own. These men stand, as it were, at the outposts, so far in the van that the compact majority has not yet reached them—and *there* they fight for truths that are too lately born into the world's consciousness to have won over the majority.

Hovstad.

So the Doctor's a revolutionist now!

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, by Heaven, I am, Mr. Hovstad! I am going to revolt against the lie that truth belongs exclusively to the majority. What sort of truths do the majority rally round? Truths so stricken in years that they are sinking into decrepitude. When a truth is so old as that, gentlemen, it's in a fair way to become a lie.

[*Laughter and jeers.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, yes, you may believe me or not, as you please; but truths are by no means the wiry Methusalehs some people think them. A normally-constituted truth lives—let us say—as a rule, seventeen or eighteen years; at the outside twenty; very seldom more. And truths so patriarchal as that are always shockingly emaciated; yet it's not till then that the majority takes them up and recommends them to society as wholesome food. I can assure you there's not much nutriment in that sort of fare; you may take my word as a doctor for that. All these majority-truths are like last year's salt pork; they're like rancid, mouldy ham, producing all the moral scurvy that devastates society.

Aslaksen.

It seems to me that the honourable speaker is wandering rather far from the subject.

Burgomaster.

I beg to endorse the Chairman's remark.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why you're surely mad, Peter! I'm keeping as closely to my text as I possibly can; for my text is precisely this—that the masses, the majority, this devil's own compact majority—it's that, I say, that's poisoning the sources of our spiritual life, and making a plague-spot of the ground beneath our feet.

Hovstad.

And you make this charge against the great, independent majority, just because they have the sense to accept only certain and acknowledged truths?

Dr. Stockmann.

Ah, my dear Mr. Hovstad, don't talk about certain truths! The truths acknowledged by the masses, the multitude, were certain truths to the vanguard in our grandfathers' days. We, the vanguard of to-day, don't acknowledge them any longer; and I don't believe there exists any other certain truth but this—that no society can live a healthy life upon truths so old and and marrowless.

Hovstad.

But instead of all this vague talk, suppose you were to give us some specimens of these old marrowless truths that we are living upon.

[*Approval from several quarters.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, I could give you no end of samples from the rubbish-heap; but, for the present, I shall keep to one acknowledged truth, which is a hideous lie at bottom, but which Mr. Hovstad, and the *Messenger*, and all adherents of the *Messenger*, live on all the same.

Hovstad.

And that is——?

Dr. Stockmann.

That is the doctrine you have inherited from your forefathers, and go on thoughtlessly proclaiming far and wide—the doctrine that the multitude, the vulgar herd, the masses, are the pith of the people—that they *are* the people—that the common man, the ignorant, undeveloped member of society, has the same right to sanction and to condemn, to counsel and to govern, as the intellectually distinguished few.

Billing.

Well, now, strike me dead——!

Hovstad.

[*Shouting at the same time.*] Citizens, please note this!

Angry Voices.

Ho-ho! Aren't we the people? Is it only the grand folks that are to govern?

A Working Man.

Out with the fellow that talks like that!

Others.

Turn him out!

A Citizen.

[*Shouting.*] Blow your horn, Evensen.

[*The deep notes of a horn are heard; whistling, and terrific noise in the room.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*When the noise has somewhat subsided.*] Now do be reasonable! Can't you bear even for once in a way to hear the voice of truth? I don't ask you all to agree with me on the instant. But I certainly should have expected Mr. Hovstad to back me up, as soon as he had collected himself a bit. Mr. Hovstad sets up to be a freethinker——

Several Voices.

[*Subdued and wondering.*] Freethinker, did he say? What? Mr. Hovstad a freethinker?

Hovstad.

[*Shouting.*] Prove it, Dr. Stockmann. When have I said so in print?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Reflecting.*] No, upon my soul, you're right there; you've never had the frankness to do that. Well, well, I won't put you on the rack, Mr. Hovstad. Let me be the freethinker then. And now I'll make it clear to you all, and on scientific grounds too, that the *Messenger* is leading you shamefully by the nose, when it tells you that you, the masses, the crowd, are the true pith of the people. I tell you that's only a newspaper lie. The masses are nothing but the raw material that must be fashioned into a People.

[*Murmurs, laughter, and disturbance in the room.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Is it not so with all other living creatures? What a difference between a cultivated and an uncultivated breed of animals! Just look at a common barn-door hen. What meat do you get from such a skinny carcase? Not much, I can tell you! And what sort of eggs does she lay? A decent crow or raven can lay nearly as good. Then take a cultivated Spanish or Japanese hen, or take a fine pheasant or turkey—ah! then you'll see the difference! And now look at the dog, our near relation. Think first of an ordinary vulgar cur—I mean one of those wretched, ragged, plebeian mongrels that haunt the gutters, and soil the sidewalks. Then place such a mongrel by the side of a poodle-dog, descended through many generations from an aristocratic stock, who have lived on delicate food, and heard harmonious voices and music. Do you think the brain of the poodle isn't very differently developed from that of the mongrel? Yes, you may be sure it is! It's well-bred poodle-pups like this that jugglers train to perform the most marvellous tricks. A common peasant-cur could never learn anything of the sort—not if he tried till doomsday.

[*Noise and laughter are heard all round.*

A Citizen.

[*Shouting.*] Do you want to make dogs of us now?

Another Man.

We're not animals, Doctor!

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, on my soul, but we *are* animals, my good sir! We're one and all of us animals, whether we like it or not. But truly there are few enough aristocratic animals among us. Oh, there's a terrible difference between poodle-men and mongrel-men! And the ridiculous part of it is, that Mr. Hovstad quite agrees with me so long as it's four-legged animals we're talking of——

Hovstad.

Oh, beasts are only beasts.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well and good—but no sooner do I apply the law to two-legged animals, than Mr. Hovstad stops short; then he daren't hold his own opinions, or think out his own thoughts; then he turns the whole principle upside down, and proclaims in the *People's Messenger* that the barn-door hen and the gutter-mongrel are precisely the finest specimens in the menagerie. But that's always the way, so long as the commonness still lingers in your system, and you haven't worked your way up to spiritual distinction.

Hovstad.

I make no pretence to any sort of distinction. I come of simple peasant folk, and I am proud that my root should lie deep down among the common people, who are here being insulted.

Workmen.

Hurrah for Hovstad. Hurrah! hurrah!

Dr. Stockmann.

The sort of common people I am speaking of are not found among the lower classes alone; they crawl and swarm all around us—up to the very summits of society. Just look at your own smug, respectable Burgomaster! Why, my brother Peter belongs as clearly to the common people as any man that walks on two legs——

[*Laughter and hisses.*

Burgomaster.

I protest against such personalities.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Imperturbably.*]——and that not because, like myself, he's descended from a good-for-nothing old pirate from Pomerania, or thereabouts—for that's our ancestry——

Burgomaster.

An absurd tradition! Utterly groundless.

Dr. Stockmann.

——but he is so because he thinks the thoughts and holds the opinions of his official superiors. Men who do that, belong, intellectually-speaking, to the common people; and that is why my distinguished brother Peter is at bottom so undistinguished,—and consequently so illiberal.

Burgomaster.

Mr. Chairman——!

Hovstad.

So that the distinguished people in this country are the Liberals? That's quite a new light on the subject. [*Laughter.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, that is part of my new discovery. And *this*, too, follows: that liberality of thought is almost precisely the same thing as morality. Therefore I say it's absolutely unpardonable of the *Messenger* to proclaim, day out, day in, the false doctrine that it's the masses, the multitude, the compact majority, that monopolise liberality and morality,—and that vice and corruption and all sorts of spiritual uncleanness ooze out of culture, as all that filth oozes down to the Baths from the Mill Dale tan-works!

[*Noise and interruptions.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Goes on imperturbably, smiling in his eagerness.*] And yet this same *Messenger* can preach about elevating the masses and the multitude to a higher level of well-being! Why, deuce take it, if the *Messenger's* own doctrine holds good, the elevation of the masses would simply mean hurling them straight to perdition! But, happily, the notion that culture demoralises is nothing but an old traditional lie. No it's stupidity, poverty, the ugliness of life, that do the devil's work! In a house that isn't aired and swept every day—my wife maintains that the floors ought to be scrubbed too, but perhaps that is going too far;—well,—in such a house, I say, within two or three years, people lose the power of thinking or acting morally. Lack of oxygen enervates the conscience. And there seems to be precious little oxygen in many and many a house in this town, since the whole compact majority is unscrupulous enough to want to found its future upon a quagmire of lies and fraud.

Aslaksen.

I cannot allow so gross an insult to be levelled against a whole community.

A Gentleman.

I move that the Chairman order the speaker to sit down.

Eager Voices.

Yes, yes! That's right! Sit down! Sit down!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Flaring up.*] Then I shall proclaim the truth at every street corner! I shall write to newspapers in other towns! The whole country shall know how matters stand here!

Hovstad.

It almost seems as if the Doctor's object were to ruin the town.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, so well do I love my native town that I would rather ruin it than see it flourishing upon a lie.

Aslaksen.

That's plain speaking.

[*Noise and whistling.* Mrs. Stockmann *coughs in vain; the* Doctor *no longer heeds her.*

Hovstad.

[*Shouting amid the tumult.*] The man who would ruin a whole community must be an enemy to his fellow citizens!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*With growing excitement.*] What does it matter if a lying community is ruined! Let it be levelled to the ground, say I! All men who live upon a lie ought to be exterminated like vermin! You'll end by poisoning the whole country; you'll bring it to such a pass that the whole country will deserve to perish. And if ever it comes to that, I shall say, from the bottom of my heart: Perish the country! Perish all its people!

A Man.

[*In the crowd.*] Why, he talks like a regular enemy of the people!

Billing.

Strike me dead but there spoke the people's voice!

The Whole Assembly.

[*Shouting.*] Yes! yes! yes! He's an enemy of the people! He hates his country! He hates the whole people!

Aslaksen.

Both as a citizen of this town and as a human being, I am deeply shocked at what it has been my lot to hear to-night. Dr. Stockmann has unmasked himself in a manner I should never have dreamt of. I must reluctantly subscribe to the opinion just expressed by some estimable citizens; and I think we ought to formulate this opinion in a resolution. I therefore beg to move, "That this meeting declares the medical officer of the Baths, Dr. Thomas Stockmann, to be an enemy of the people."

[*Thunders of applause and cheers. Many form a circle round the* Doctor *and hoot at him.* Mrs. Stockmann *and* Petra *have risen.* Morten *and* Eilif *fight the other school-boys, who have also been hooting. Some grown-up persons separate them.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*To the people hooting.*] Ah, fools that you are! I tell you that——

Aslaksen.

[*Ringing.*] The Doctor is out of order in speaking. A formal vote must be taken; but out of consideration for personal feelings, it will be taken in writing and without names. Have you any blank paper, Mr. Billing?

Billing.

Here's both blue and white paper——

Aslaksen.

Capital; that will save time. Cut it up into slips. That's it. [*To the meeting.*] Blue means no, white means aye. I myself will go round and collect the votes.

[*The* Burgomaster *leaves the room.* Aslaksen *and a few others go round with pieces of paper in hats.*

A Gentleman.

[*To Hovstad.*] What can be the matter with the Doctor? What does it all mean?

Hovstad.

Why, you know what a hare-brained creature he is.

Another Gentleman.

[*To Billing.*] I say, you're often at his house. Have you ever noticed if the fellow drinks?

Billing.

Strike me dead if I know what to say. The toddy's always on the table when any one looks in.

A Third Gentleman.

No, I should rather say he went off his head at times.

First Gentleman.

I wonder if there's madness in the family?

Billing.

I shouldn't be surprised.

A Fourth Gentleman.

No, it's pure malice. He wants to be revenged for something or other.

Billing.

He was certainly talking about a rise in his salary the other day; but he didn’t get it.

All the Gentlemen.

[*Together.*] Aha! That explains everything.

The Drunken Man.

[*In the crowd.*] I want a blue one, I do! And I'll have a white one too.

Several People.

There’s the tipsy man again! Turn him out.

Morten Kiil.

[*Approaching the Doctor.*] Well, Stockmann, you see now what such monkey-tricks lead to?

Dr. Stockmann.

I have done my duty.

Morten Kiil.

What was that you said about the Mill Dale tanneries?

Dr Stockmann.

You heard what I said—that all the filth comes from them.

Morten Kiil.

From my tannery as well?

Dr. Stockmann.

I'm sorry to say yours is the worst of all.

Morten Kiil.

Are you going to put *that* in the papers, too?

Dr. Stockmann.

I can’t gloze anything over.

Morten Kiil.

This may cost you dear, Stockmann!

[*He goes out.*

A Fat Gentleman.

[*Goes up to Horster, without bowing to the ladies.*] Well, Captain, so you lend your house to enemies of the people.

Horster.

I suppose I can do as I please with my own property, Sir.

The Gentleman.

Then of course you can have no objection if I follow your example?

Horster.

What do you mean, Sir?

The Gentleman.

You shall hear from me to-morrow.

[*Turns away and goes out.*

Petra.

Wasn't that the owner of your ship, Captain Horster?

Horster.

Yes, that was Mr. Vik.

Aslaksen.

[*With the voting papers in his hands, ascends the platform and rings.*] Gentlemen! I have now to announce the result of the vote. All the voters, with one exception——

A Young Gentleman.

That's the tipsy man!

Aslaksen.

With the exception of one intoxicated person, this meeting of citizens unanimously declares the medical officer of the Baths, Dr. Thomas Stockmann, to be an enemy of the people. [*Cheers and applause.*] Three cheers for our fine old municipality! [*Cheers.*] Three cheers for our able and energetic Burgomaster, who has so loyally set family prejudice aside! [*Cheers.*] The meeting is dissolved. [*He descends.*]

Billing.

Three cheers for the Chairman!

All.

Hurrah for Aslaksen.

Dr. Stockmann.

My hat and coat, Petra. Captain, have you room for passengers to the new world?

Horster.

For you and yours, Doctor, we'll make room.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*While Petra helps him to put on his coat.*] Good. Come Katrina, come boys!

[*He gives his wife his arm.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*In a low voice.*] Thomas, dear, let us go out by the back way.

Dr. Stockmann.

No back ways, Katrina! [*In a loud voice.*] You shall hear from the enemy of the people, before he shakes the dust from his feet! I am not so forbearing as a certain person; I don't say: I forgive you, for you know not what you do.

Aslaksen.

[*Shouts.*] That is a blasphemous comparison, Dr. Stockmann!

Billing.

Strike me——! This is more than a serious man can stand!

A Coarse Voice.

And he threatens us into the bargain!

Angry Cries.

Let's smash his windows! Duck him in the fiord!

A Man.

[*In the crowd.*] Blow your horn, Evensen! Blow man, blow!

[*Horn-blowing, whistling, and wild shouting. The* Doctor, *with his family, goes towards the door.* Horster *clears the way for them.*

All.

[*Yelling after them as they go out.*] Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people!

Billing.

Strike me dead if I'd care to drink toddy at Stockmann’s to-night!

[*The people throng towards the door; the shouting is taken up by others outside; from the street are heard cries of “Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people!”*

ACT FIFTH.

Dr. Stockmann's *Study. Bookshelves and glass cases with various collections along the walls. In the back, a door leading to the hall; in front, on the left, a door to the sitting-room. In the wall to the right are two windows, all the panes of which are smashed. In the middle of the room is the* Doctor's *writing-table, covered with books and papers. The room is in disorder. It is forenoon.*

Dr. Stockmann, *in dressing-gown, slippers, and skull-cap, is bending down and raking with an umbrella under one of the cabinets; at last he rakes out a stone.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Speaking through the sitting-room doorway.*] Katrina, I've found another!

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*In the sitting-room.*] Oh, I'm sure you'll find plenty more.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Placing the stone on a pile of others on the table.*] I shall keep these stones as sacred relics. Eilif and Morten shall see them every day, and when I die they shall be heirlooms. [*Raking under the bookcase.*] Hasn't—what the devil is her name?—the girl—hasn't she been for the glazier yet?

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Coming in.*] Yes, but he said he didn't know whether he would be able to come to-day.

Dr. Stockmann.

I believe, if the truth were told, he daren't come.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Well, Randina, too, had an idea he was afraid to come, because of the neighbours. [*Speaks through the sitting-room doorway.*] What is it, Randina?—Very well. [*Goes out, and returns immediately.*] Here is a letter for you, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

Let me see. [*Opens the letter and reads.*] Aha!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Who is it from?

Dr. Stockmann.

From the landlord. He gives us notice.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Is it possible? He is such a nice man——

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Looking at the letter.*] He daren't do otherwise, he says. He is very unwilling to do it; but he daren't do otherwise—on account of his fellow citizens—out of respect for public opinion—is in a dependent position—doesn't dare to offend certain influential men——

Mrs. Stockmann.

There, you see, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, yes, I see well enough; they are all cowards, every one of them, in this town; no one dares do anything for fear of all the rest. [*Throws the letter on the table.*] But it's all the same to us, Katrina. We will shape our course for the new world, and then——

Mrs. Stockmann.

But are you sure this idea of going abroad is altogether wise, Thomas?

Dr. Stockmann.

Would you have me stay here, where they have pilloried me as an enemy of the people, branded me, smashed my windows! And look here, Katrina, they've torn a hole in my black trousers, too.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh dear; and these are the best you have!

Dr. Stockmann.

A man should never put on his best trousers when he goes out to battle for freedom and truth. Well, I don't care so much about the trousers; them you can always patch up for me. But that the mob, the rabble, should dare to attack me as if they were my equals—*that* is what I can't, for the life of me, stomach!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, they have behaved abominably to you here, Thomas; but is that any reason for leaving the country altogether?

Dr. Stockmann.

Do you think the plebeians aren't just as insolent in other towns? Oh yes, they are, my dear; it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. Well, never mind; let the curs yelp; *that's* not the worst; the worst is that every one, all over the country, is the slave of his party. Not that I suppose—very likely it's no better in the free West either; the compact majority, and enlightened public opinion, and all the other devil's trash is rampant there too. But you see the conditions are larger there than here; they may kill you, but they don't slow-torture you; they don't screw up a free soul in a vice, as they do at home here. And then, if need be, you can keep out of it all. [*Walks up and down.*] If I only knew of any primeval forest, or a little South Sea island to be sold cheap——

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, but the boys, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Comes to a standstill.*] What an extraordinary woman you are, Katrina! Would you rather have the boys grow up in such a society as ours? Why, you could see for yourself yesterday evening that one half of the population is stark mad, and if the other half hasn't lost its wits, that's only because they are brute beasts who haven't any wits to lose.

Mrs. Stockmann.

But really, my dear Thomas, you do say such imprudent things.

Dr. Stockmann.

What! Isn't it the truth that I tell them? Don't they turn all ideas upside down? Don't they stir up right and wrong into one hotch-potch? Don't they call lies everything that I know to be the truth? But the maddest thing of all is to see crowds of grown men, calling themselves Liberals, go about persuading themselves and others that they are friends of freedom! Did you ever hear anything like it, Katrina?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, yes, no doubt. But——

Petra *enters from the sitting-room.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

Back from school already?

Petra.

Yes; I have been dismissed.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Dismissed?

Dr. Stockmann.

You too!

Petra.

Mrs. Busk gave me notice, and so I thought it best to leave there and then.

Dr. Stockmann.

You did perfectly right!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Who could have thought Mrs. Busk was such a bad woman!

Petra.

Oh mother, Mrs. Busk isn't bad at all; I saw clearly how sorry she was. But she dared not do otherwise, she said; and so I am dismissed.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Laughing and rubbing his hands.*] She dared not do otherwise—just like the rest! Oh, it's delicious.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh well, after that frightful scene last night——

Petra.

It wasn't only that. What do you think, father——?

Dr. Stockmann.

Well?

Petra.

Mrs. Busk showed me no fewer than three letters she had received this morning——

Dr. Stockmann.

Anonymous, of course?

Petra.

Yes.

Dr. Stockmann.

They never dare give their names, Katrina!

Petra.

And two of them stated that a gentleman who is often at our house said at the club last night that I held extremely advanced opinions upon various things——

Dr. Stockmann.

Of course you didn't deny it.

Petra.

Of course not. You know Mrs. Busk herself is pretty advanced in her opinions when we're alone together; but now that this has come out about me, she dared not keep me on.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Some one that is often at our house, too. There, you see, Thomas, what comes of all your hospitality.

Dr. Stockmann.

We won't live any longer in such a pig-sty! Pack up as quickly as you can, Katrina; let's get away—the sooner the better.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Hush! I think there is some one in the passage. See who it is, Petra.

Petra.

[*Opening the door.*] Oh, is it you, Captain Horster? Please come in.

Horster.

[*From the hall.*] Good morning. I thought I might just look in and ask how you are.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Shaking his hand.*] Thanks; that's very good of you.

Mrs. Stockmann.

And thank you for helping us through the crowd last night, Captain Horster.

Petra.

How did you ever get home again?

Horster.

Oh, that was all right. I am tolerably able-bodied, you know; and those fellows' bark is worse than their bite.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, isn't it extraordinary, this piggish cowardice? Come here, and let me show you something! Look, here are all the stones they threw in at us. Only look at them? Upon my soul there aren't more than two decent-sized lumps in the whole heap; the rest are nothing but pebbles—mere gravel. They stood down there, and yelled, and swore they'd half kill me;—but as for really doing it—no, there's mighty little fear of *that* in this town!

Horster.

You may thank your stars for that this time, Doctor.

Dr. Stockmann.

So I do, of course. But it's depressing all the same; for if ever it should come to a serious national struggle, you may be sure public opinion would be for taking to its heels, and the compact majority would scamper for their lives like a flock of sheep, Captain Horster. *That* is what's so melancholy to think of; it grieves me to the heart.—But deuce take it—it's foolish of me to feel anything of the sort! They have called me an enemy of the people; well then, let me be an enemy of the people!

Mrs. Stockmann.

That you'll never be, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

You'd better not take your oath of it, Katrina. A bad name may act like a pin-scratch in the lung. And that confounded word—I can't get rid of it; it has sunk deep into my heart; and there it lies gnawing and sucking like an acid. And no magnesia can cure me.

Petra.

Pooh; you should only laugh at them, father.

Horster.

People will think differently yet, Doctor.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, Thomas, that's as certain as that you are standing here.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, perhaps, when it is too late. Well, as they make their bed so they must lie! Let them go on wallowing here in their pig-sty, and learn to repent having driven a patriot into exile. When do you sail, Captain Horster?

Horster.

Well—that's really what I came to speak to you about——

Dr. Stockmann.

What? Anything wrong with the ship?

Horster.

No; but the fact is, I shan't be sailing in her.

Petra.

Surely you have not been dismissed?

Horster.

[*Smiling*.] Yes, I have.

Petra.

You too!

Mrs. Stockmann.

There, you see, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

And for the truth's sake! Oh, if I could possibly have imagined such a thing——

Horster.

You mustn't be troubled about this; I shall soon find a berth with some other company, elsewhere.

Dr. Stockmann.

And this is that man Vik! A wealthy man, independent of every one! Faugh!

Horster.

Oh, for that matter, he's a very well-meaning man. He said himself he would gladly have kept me on if only he dared——

Dr. Stockmann.

But he didn’t dare? Of course not!

Horster.

It’s not so easy, he said, when you belong to a party——

Dr. Stockmann.

My gentleman has hit it there! A party is like a sausage-machine; it grinds all the brains together in one mash; and that’s why we see nothing but porridge-heads and pulp-heads all around!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Now really, Thomas!

Petra.

[*To Horster.*] If only you hadn’t seen us home, perhaps it would not have come to this.

Horster.

I don’t regret it.

Petra.

[*Gives him her hand.*] Thank you for that!

Horster.

[*To Dr. Stockmann.*] And then, too, I wanted to tell you this: if you are really determined to go abroad, I've thought of another way——

Dr. Stockmann.

That’s good—if only we can get off quickly——

Mrs. Stockmann.

Hush! Isn’t that a knock?

Petra.

I believe it is uncle.

Dr. Stockmann.

Aha! [*Calls.*] Come in!

Mrs. Stockmann.

My dear Thomas, now do promise me——

The Burgomaster enters from the hall.

Burgomaster.

[*In the doorway.*] Oh, you are engaged. Then I'd better——

Dr. Stockmann.

No no; come in.

Burgomaster.

But I wanted to speak to you alone.

Mrs. Stockmann.

We can go into the sitting-room.

Horster.

And I shall look in again presently.

Dr. Stockmann.

No no; go with the ladies, Captain Horster; I must hear more about——

Horster.

All right, then I'll wait.

[*He follows* Mrs. Stockmann *and* Petra *into the sitting-room. The* Burgomaster *says nothing, but casts glances at the windows.*

Dr. Stockmann.

I daresay you find it rather draughty here today? Put on your cap.

Burgomaster.

Thanks, if I may. [*Does so.*] I fancy I caught cold yesterday evening. I stood there shivering——

Dr. Stockmann.

Really. On my soul, now, I found it quite warm enough.

Burgomaster.

I regret that it was not in my power to prevent these nocturnal excesses.

Dr. Stockmann.

Have you anything else in particular to say to me?

Burgomaster.

[*Producing a large letter.*] I have this document for you from the Directors of the Baths.

Dr. Stockmann.

My dismissal?

Burgomaster.

Yes; dated from to-day. [*Places the letter on the table.*] We are very sorry—but frankly, we dared not do otherwise, on account of public opinion.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Smiling.*] Dared not? I've heard that phrase already to-day.

Burgomaster.

I beg you to realise your position clearly. For the future, you cannot count upon any sort of practice in the town.

Dr. Stockmann.

Devil take the practice! But how can you be so sure of that?

Burgomaster.

The House-owners' Association is sending round a circular from house to house, in which all well-disposed citizens are called upon not to employ you; and I dare swear that not a single head of a family will venture to refuse his signature; he simply *dare* not.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well well; I don’t doubt that. But what then?

Burgomaster.

If I might advise, I would suggest that you should leave the town for a time——

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, I've had some such idea in my mind already.

Burgomaster.

Good. And when you have had six months or so for mature deliberation, if you could make up your mind to acknowledge your error, with a few words of regret——

Dr. Stockmann.

I might perhaps be reinstated, you think?

Burgomaster.

Perhaps it’s not quite out of the question.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, but how about public opinion? You daren’t, on account of public opinion.

Burgomaster.

Opinion is extremely variable. And, to speak candidly, it is of the greatest importance for us to have such an admission under your own hand.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, I daresay it would be mightily convenient for you! But you remember what I've said to you before about such foxes' tricks!

Burgomaster.

At that time your position was infinitely more favourable; at that time you thought you had the whole town at your back——

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, and now I have the whole town on my back——[*Flaring up.*] But no—not if I had the devil and his dam on my back—! Never—never, I tell you!

Burgomaster.

The father of a family has no right[13] to act as you are doing. You have no right to do it, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

I have no right! There’s only one thing in the world that a free man has no right to do; and do you know what that is?

Burgomaster.

No.

Dr. Stockmann.

Of course not; but *I* will tell you. A free man has no right to wallow in filth like a cur; he has no right to act so that he ought to spit in his own face!

Burgomaster.

That sounds extremely plausible; and if there were not another explanation of your obstinacy—but we all know there is——

Dr. Stockmann.

What do you mean by that?

Burgomaster.

You understand well enough. But as your brother, and as a man who knows the world, I warn you not to build too confidently upon prospects and expectations that may very likely come to nothing.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, what on earth are you driving at?

Burgomaster.

Do you really want me to believe that you are ignorant of the terms of old Morten Kiil's will?

Dr. Stockmann.

I know that the little he has is to go to a home for old and needy artizans. But what has that got to do with me?

Burgomaster.

To begin with, "the little he has" is no trifle. Morten Kiil is a tolerably wealthy man.

Dr. Stockmann.

I have never had the least notion of that!

Burgomaster.

H'm—really? Then I suppose you have no notion that a not inconsiderable part of his fortune is to go to your children, you and your wife having a life-interest in it. Has he not told you that?

Dr. Stockmann.

No, I'll be hanged if he has! On the contrary, he has done nothing but grumble about being so preposterously over-taxed, But are you really sure of this, Peter?

Burgomaster.

I have it from a thoroughly trustworthy source.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, good heavens, then Katrina's provided for—and the children too! Oh, I must tell her——[*Calls.*] Katrina, Katrina!

Burgomaster.

[*Holding him back.*] Hush! don't say anything about it yet.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Opening the door.*] What is it?

Dr. Stockmann.

Nothing my dear; go in again.

[Mrs. Stockmann *closes the door*.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Pacing up and down.*] Provided for! Only think—all of them provided for! And for life! After all, it's a grand thing to feel yourself secure!

Burgomaster.

Yes, but that is just what you are not. Morten Kiil can revoke his will any day or hour he chooses.

Dr. Stockmann.

But he won't, my good Peter. The Badger is only too delighted to see me fall foul of you and your wiseacre friends.

Burgomaster.

[*Starts and looks searchingly at him.*] Aha! That throws a new light on a good many things.

Dr. Stockmann.

What things?

Burgomaster.

So the whole affair has been a carefully-concocted intrigue. Your recklessly violent onslaught—in the name of truth—upon the leading men of the town——

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, what of it?

Burgomaster.

It was nothing but a preconcerted requital for that vindictive old Morten Kiil's will.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Almost speechless.*] Peter—you are the most abominable plebeian I have ever known in all my born days.

Burgomaster.

All is over between us. Your dismissal is irrevocable—for now we have a weapon against you. [*He goes out.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Shame! shame! shame! [*Calls.*] Katrina! The floor must be scrubbed after him! Tell her to come here with a pail—what's her name? confound it—the girl with the smudge on her nose——

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*In the sitting-room doorway.*] Hush, hush Thomas!

Petra.

[*Also in the doorway.*] Father, here's grandfather; he wants to know if he can speak to you alone.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, of course he can. [*By the door.*] Come in, father-in-law.

Morten Kiil *enters.* Dr. Stockmann *closes the door behind him.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, what is it? Sit down.

Morten Kiil.

I won't sit down. [*Looking about him.*] It looks cheerful here to-day, Stockmann.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, don't you think so?

Morten Kiil.

Sure enough. And you've plenty of fresh air too; you've got your fill of that oxygen you were talking about yesterday. You must have a rare good conscience to-day, I should think.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, I have.

Morten Kiil.

So I should suppose. [*Tapping himself on the breast.*] But do you know what *I* have got here?

Dr. Stockmann.

A good conscience too, I hope.

Morten Kiil.

Pooh! No; something far better than that.

[*Takes out a large pocket-book, opens it, and shows* Stockmann *a bundle of papers.*

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Looking at him in astonishment.*] Shares in the Baths!

Morten Kiil.

They weren't difficult to get to-day.

Dr. Stockmann.

And you've gone and bought these up——?

Morten Kiil.

All I had the money to pay for.

Dr. Stockmann.

Why, my dear sir,—just when things are in such a desperate way at the Baths——

Morten Kiil.

If you behave like a reasonable being, you can soon set the Baths all right again.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, you can see for yourself I'm doing all I can. But the people of this town are mad!

Morten Kiil.

You said yesterday that the worst filth came from my tannery. Now, if that's true, then my grandfather, and my father before me, and I myself, have for ever so many years been poisoning the town with filth, like three destroying angels. Do you think I'm going to sit quiet under such a reproach?

Dr. Stockmann.

Unfortunately, you can’t help it.

Morten Kiil.

No, thank you. I hold fast to my good name, I've heard that people call me “the Badger.” A badger’s a sort of a pig, I know; but I'm determined to give them the lie. I will live and die a clean man.

Dr. Stockmann.

And how will you manage *that*?

Morten Kiil.

You shall make me clean, Stockmann.

Dr. Stockmann.

I!

Morten Kiil.

Do you know what money I've used to buy these shares with? No, you can’t know; but now I'll tell you. It’s the money Katrina and Petra and the boys are to have after my death. For, you see, I've laid by something after all.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Flaring up.*] And you’ve taken Katrina’s money and done *this* with it!

Morten Kiil.

Yes; the whole of it is invested in the Baths now. And now I want to see if you’re really so stark, staring mad; after all, Stockmann. If you go on making out that these beasts and other abominations dribble down from my tannery, it’ll be just as if you were to flay broad stripes of Katrina’s skin—and Petra’s too, and the boys'. No decent father would ever do that—unless he were a madman.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Walking up and down.*] Yes, but I *am* a madman; I *am* a madman!

Morten Kiil.

You surely can’t be so raving, ramping mad where your wife and children are concerned.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Stopping in front of him.*] Why couldn't you have spoken to me before you went and bought all that rubbish?

Morten Kiil.

What's done can't be undone.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Walking restlessly about.*] If only I weren't so certain about the affair——! But I am absolutely convinced that I'm right.

Morten Kiil.

[*Weighing the pocket book in his hand.*] If you stick to this lunacy, these aren't worth much.

[*Puts the book into his pocket.*

Dr. Stockmann.

But, deuce take it! surely science ought to be able to hit upon some antidote, some sort of prophylactic——

Morten Kiil.

Do you mean something to kill the beasts?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, or at least to make them harmless.

Morten Kiil.

Couldn't you try ratsbane?

Dr. Stockmann.

Oh, nonsense, nonsense!—But since every one declares it's nothing but fancy, why fancy let it be! Let them have it their own way! Haven't the ignorant, narrow-hearted curs reviled me as an enemy of the people?—and weren't they on the point of tearing the clothes off my back?

Morten Kiil.

And they've smashed all your windows for you too!

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, and then there's one's duty to one's family! I must talk that over with Katrina; such things are more in her line.

Morten Kiil.

That’s right! You just follow the advice of a sensible woman.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Turning upon him angrily.*] How could you act so preposterously! Risking Katrina’s money, and putting me to this horrible torture! When I look at you, I seem to see the devil himself——!

Morten Kiil.

Then I'd better be off. But I must, hear from you, yes or no, by two o’clock. If it’s no, all the shares go to the Hospital—and that this very day.

Dr. Stockmann.

And what will Katrina get?

Morten Kiil.

Not a rap.

[*The door leading to the hall opens. Hovstad and Aslaksen are seen outside it.*

Morten Kiil.

Hullo! look at these two.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Staring at them.*] What! Do you actually venture to come here?

Hovstad.

Why, to be sure we do.

Aslaksen.

You see, we’ve something to discuss with you.

Morten Kiil.

[*Whispers.*] Yes or no—by two o’clock.

Aslaksen.

[*With a glance at Hovstad.*] Aha!

[Morten Kiil *goes out.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, what do you want with me? Be brief.

Hovstad.

I can quite understand that you resent our attitude at the meeting yesterday——

Dr. Stockmann.

Your attitude, you say? Yes, it was a pretty attitude! I call it the attitude of cowards—of old women——Shame upon you!

Hovstad.

Call it what you will; but we *could* not act otherwise.

Dr. Stockmann.

You *dared* not, I suppose? Isn't that so?

Hovstad.

Yes, if you like to put it so.

Aslaksen.

But why didn't you just say a word to us beforehand? The merest hint to Mr. Hovstad or to me——

Dr. Stockmann.

A hint? What about?

Aslaksen.

About what was really behind it all.

Dr. Stockmann.

I don't in the least understand you?

Aslaksen.

[*Nods confidentially.*] Oh yes, you do, Dr. Stockmann.

Hovstad.

It's no good making a mystery of it any longer.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Looking from one to the other.*] Why, what in the devil's name——!

Aslaksen.

May I ask—isn't your father-in-law going about the town buying up all the Bath stock?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, he has been buying Bath stock to-day but——

Aslaksen.

It would have been more prudent to let somebody else do that—some one not so closely connected with you.

Hovstad.

And then you ought not to have appeared in the matter under your own name. No one need have known that the attack on the Baths came from you. You should have taken me into your counsels, Dr. Stockmann.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Stares straight in front of him; a light seems to break in upon him, and he says as though thunderstruck.*] Is this possible? Can such things be?

Aslaksen.

[*Smiling.*] It's plain enough that they can. But they ought to be managed delicately, you understand.

Hovstad.

And there ought to be more people in it; for the responsibility always falls more lightly when there are several to share it.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Calmly.*] In one word, gentlemen—what is it you want?

Aslaksen.

Mr. Hovstad can best——

Hovstad.

No, you explain, Aslaksen.

Aslaksen.

Well, it's this: now that we know how the matter really stands, we believe we can venture to place the *People's Messenger* at your disposal.

Dr. Stockmann.

You can venture to *now*, eh? But how about public opinion? Aren't you afraid of bringing down a storm upon us?

Hovstad.

We must manage to ride out the storm.

Aslaksen.

And you must be ready to put about quickly, Doctor. As soon as your attack has done its work——

Dr. Stockmann.

As soon as my father-in-law and I have bought up the shares at a discount, you mean?

Hovstad.

I presume it is mainly on scientific grounds that you want to take the management of the Baths into your own hands.

Dr. Stockmann.

Of course; it was on scientific grounds that I got the old Badger to stand in with me. And then we'll tinker up the water-works a little, and potter about a bit down at the beach, without its costing the town sixpence. That ought to do the business? Eh?

Hovstad.

I think so—if you have the *Messenger* to back you up.

Aslaksen.

In a free community the press is a power, Doctor.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, indeed; and so is public opinion. And you, Mr. Aslaksen—I suppose you will answer for the House-owners' Association?

Aslaksen.

Both for the House-owners' Association and the Temperance Society. You may make your mind easy.

Dr. Stockmann.

But, gentlemen—really I'm quite ashamed to mention such a thing—but—what return——?

Hovstad.

Of course, we should prefer to give you our support for nothing. But the *Messenger* is not very firmly established; it's not getting on as it ought to; and I should be very sorry to have to stop the paper just now, when there's so much to be done in general politics.

Dr. Stockmann.

Naturally; that would be very hard for a friend of the people like you. [*Flaring up.*] But I—I am an enemy of the people! [*Striding about the room.*] Where's my stick? Where the devil is my stick?

Hovstad.

What do you mean?

Aslaksen.

Surely you wouldn't——

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Standing still.*] And suppose I don't give you a single farthing out of all my shares? You must remember we rich folk don't like parting with our money.

Hovstad.

And you must remember that this business of the shares can be represented in two ways.

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, you are the man for that; if I don't come to the rescue of the *Messenger*, you'll manage to put a vile complexion on the affair; you'll hunt me down, I suppose—bait me—try to throttle me as a dog throttles a hare!

Hovstad.

That's a law of nature—every animal fights for its own subsistence.

Aslaksen.

And must take its food where it can find it, you know.

Dr. Stockmann.

Then see if you can't find some out in the gutter; [*Striding about the room*] for now, by heaven! we shall see which is the strongest animal of us three. [*Finds his umbrella and brandishes it.*] Now, look here——!

Hovstad.

You surely don’t mean to assault us!

Aslaksen.

I say, be careful with that umbrella!

Dr. Stockmann.

Out at the window with you, Mr. Hovstad!

Hovstad.

[*By the hall door.*] Are you utterly crazy?

Dr. Stockmann.

Out at the window, Mr. Aslaksen! Jump I tell you! Be quick about it!

Aslaksen.

[*Running round the writing-table.*] Moderation, Doctor; I'm not at all strong; I can’t stand much——[*Screams.*] Help! help!

Mrs. Stockmann, Petra, *and* Horster *enter from sitting-room.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

Good heavens, Thomas! what *can* be the matter?

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Brandishing the umbrella.*] Jump, I tell you! Out into the gutter!

Hovstad.

An unprovoked assault! I call you to witness, Captain Horster.

[*Rushes off through the hall.*

Aslaksen.

[*Bewildered.*] If one only knew the local situation——![14]

[*He slinks out by the sitting-room door.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Holding back the Doctor.*] Now, do restrain yourself, Thomas!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Throwing down the umbrella.*] I'll be hanged if they haven’t got off after all.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Why, what can they have wanted with you?

Dr. Stockmann.

I'll tell you afterwards; I have other things to think of now. [*Goes to the table and writes on a visiting-card.*] Look here, Katrina: what's written here?

Mrs. Stockmann.

Three big *Noes*; what does that mean?

Dr. Stockmann.

That I'll tell you afterwards, too. [*Handing the card.*] There, Petra; let smudgy-face run to the Badger's with this as fast as she can. Be quick!

[Petra *goes out through the hall with the card.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, if I haven't had visits to-day from all the emissaries of the devil! But now I'll sharpen my pen against them till it becomes a goad; I'll dip it in gall and venom; I'll hurl my inkstand straight at their skulls.

Mrs. Stockmann.

You forget we are going away, Thomas.

Petra *returns.*

Dr. Stockmann.

Well?

Petra.

She has gone.

Dr. Stockmann.

Good. Going away, do you say? No, I'll be damned if we do; we stay where we are, Katrina!

Petra.

Stay!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Here in the town?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, here; the field of battle is here; here the fight must be fought; here I will conquer! As soon as my trousers are mended, I shall go out into the town and look for a house; we must have a roof over our heads for the winter.

Horster.

That you can have in my house.

Dr. Stockmann.

Can I?

Horster.

Yes, there’s no difficulty about that. I have room enough, and I'm hardly ever at home myself.

Mrs. Stockmann.

Oh, how kind of you, Captain Horster.

Petra.

Thank you!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Shaking his hand.*] Thanks, thanks! So that is off my mind. And this very day I shall set to work in earnest. Oh, there’s no end of work to be done here, Katrina! It’s a good thing I shall have all my time at my disposal now; for you must know I've had notice from the Baths——

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Sighing.*] Oh yes, I was expecting that.

Dr. Stockmann.

——And now they want to take away my practice as well. But let them! The poor I shall keep anyhow—those that can’t pay; and, good Lord! it’s they that need me most. But by heaven! I'll make them listen to me; I'll preach to them in season and out of season, as the saying goes.

Mrs. Stockmann.

My dear Thomas, I should have thought you had learnt what good preaching does.

Dr. Stockmann.

You really are absurd, Katrina. Am I to let myself be beaten off the field by public opinion, and the compact majority, and all that sort of devilry? No, thank you! Besides, my point is so simple, so clear and straightforward. I only want to drive it into the heads of these curs that the Liberals are the craftiest foes free men have to face; that party-programmes wring the necks of all young and living truths; that considerations of expediency turn justice and morality upside down, until life here becomes simply unlivable. Come, Captain Horster, don't you think I shall be able to make the people understand that?

Horster.

Maybe; I don't know much about these things myself.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, you see—this is the way of it! It's the party-leaders that must be exterminated. For a party-leader is just like a wolf, you see—like a ravening wolf; he must devour a certain number of smaller animals a year, if he's to exist at all. Just look at Hovstad and Aslaksen! How many small animals they polish off—or at least mangle and maim, so that they're fit for nothing else but to be house-owners and subscribers to the *People's Messenger*! [*Sits on the edge of the table.*] Just come here, Katrina—see how bravely the sun shines to-day! And how the blessed fresh spring air blows in upon me!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Yes, if only we could live on sunshine and spring air, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

Well, you'll have to pinch and save to eke them out—and then we shall get on all right. That's what troubles me least. No, what does trouble me is that I don't see any man free enough and high-minded enough to dare to take up my work after me.

Petra.

Oh, don't think about that, father; you have time enough before you.—Why, see, there are the boys already.

Eilif *and* Morten *enter from the sitting-room.*

Mrs. Stockmann.

Have you a holiday to-day?

Morten.

No; but we had a fight with the other fellows in play-time—-

Eilif.

That’s not true; it was the other fellows that fought us.

Morten.

Yes, and then Mr. Rörlund said we had better stop at home for a few days.

Dr. Stockmann.

[*Snapping his fingers and springing down from the table.*] Now I have it! Now I have it, on my soul! You shall never set foot in school again!

The Boys.

Never go to school!

Mrs. Stockmann.

Why, Thomas——

Dr. Stockmann.

Never, I say! I shall teach you myself—that’s to say, I won’t teach you any mortal thing——

Morten.

Hurrah!

Dr. Stockmann.

——but I shall help you to grow into free, high-minded men.—Look here, you’ll have to help me, Petra.

Petra.

Yes, father, you may be sure I will.

Dr. Stockmann.

And we’ll have our school in the room where they reviled me as an enemy of the people. But we must have more pupils. I must have at least a dozen boys to begin with.

Mrs. Stockmann.

You’ll never get them in this town.

Dr. Stockmann.

We shall see. [*To the boys.*] Don't you know any street urchins—any regular ragamuffins——?

Morten.

Yes, father, I know lots!

Dr. Stockmann.

That's all right; bring me a few of them. I shall experiment with the street-curs for once in a way; there are sometimes excellent heads amongst them.

Morten.

But what are we to do when we've grown into free and high-minded men?

Dr. Stockmann.

Drive all the wolves out to the far west, boys!

[Eilif *looks rather doubtful;* Morten *jumps about shouting "Hurrah!"*

Mrs. Stockmann.

If only the wolves don't drive you out, Thomas.

Dr. Stockmann.

Are you quite mad, Katrina! *Drive me out!* Now that I am the strongest man in the town?

Mrs. Stockmann.

The strongest—now?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, I venture to say this: that now I am one of the strongest men in the whole world.

Morten.

I say, what fun!

Dr. Stockmann.

[*In a subdued voice.*] Hush; you mustn't speak about it yet; but I have made a great discovery.

Mrs. Stockmann.

What, another?

Dr. Stockmann.

Yes, of course! [*Gathers them about him, and speaks confidentially.*] This is what I have discovered, you see: the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.

Mrs. Stockmann.

[*Shakes her head, smiling.*] Ah, Thomas dear——!

Petra.

[*Grasping his hands cheerily.*] Father!

THE END.

Notes

1. *Samliv med Ibsen*, p. 173.

2. See article by Julius Elias in *Die neue Rundschau*, December 1906, p. 1461.

5. “Burgomaster” is the most convenient substitute for “Byfogd,” but “Town Clerk” would perhaps be more nearly equivalent. It is impossible to find exact counterparts in English for the different grades of the Norwegian bureaucracy.

6. Pronounce: *Keel*.

7. *Amtmand*, the chief magistrate of an *Amt* or county: consequently a high dignitary in the official hierarchy.

8. See *Pillars of Society*.

9. The word “mådehold,” in Norwegian, means both “moderation” and “temperance.”

10. It will be remembered that Aslaksen figures in *The League of Youth*, of which Stensgård is the central character. Stensgård, we see, has justified Lundestad’s prophecy by attaining the high administrative dignity of “Stiftamtmand,” here roughly translated “Governor.”

11. The reference is to the continental feuilleton at the foot of the page.

12. Literally, “unprovided-for.”

13. “Has no right” represents the Norwegian “tör ikke”—the phrase which, elsewhere in this scene, is translated “dare not.” The latter rendering should perhaps have been adhered to throughout; but in this passage the Norwegian words convey a shade of meaning which is best represented by “has no right.”

14. “De lokale forholde”—the local conditions, or the circumstances of the locality, a phrase constantly in Aslaksen’s mouth in *The League of Youth*. In the present context it is about equivalent to “the lie of the land.”

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