

THE PLAYS

D. H. LAWRENCE

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

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First published 1999

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Ehrhardt 10/12 [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Lawrence, D. H. (David Herbert), 1885–1930.
The plays / D. H. Lawrence; edited by Hans-Wilhelm Schwarze and John Worthen.
p. cm. – (The works of D. H. Lawrence)

ISBN 0 521 24277 0

I. Schwarze, Hans-Wilhelm, 1939– II. Worthen, John. III. Title
IV. Series: Lawrence, D. H. (David Herbert), 1885–1930. Works. 1979.

PR6023/A93A19 1999
882'.912 – dc21 98–8068 CIP

ISBN 0 521 24277 0 hardback

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A COLLIER'S FRIDAY NIGHT

MOTHER, MRS LAMBERT

NELLIE LAMBERT

GERTIE COOMBER

FATHER, MR LAMBERT

5

ERNEST LAMBERT

BARKER

CARLIN

MAGGIE PEARSON

BEATRICE WYLD[☆]

10

A COLLIER'S FRIDAY NIGHT[☆]

Act I.

The kitchen or living room[☆] of a working man's house. At the back, the fireplace, with a large fire burning. On the left, on the oven side of the stove, a woman of some fifty-five years sits in a wooden rocking chair, reading. Behind her and above her, in the recess made by the fireplace, four shelves of books, the shelf-covers being of green serge, with woollen ball fringe, and the books being ill-assorted schoolbooks, with an edition of Lessing,[☆] florid in green and gilt, but tarnished. On the left, a window looking on a garden where the rain is dripping through the first twilight. Under the window, a sofa, the bed covered with red chintz. By the side of the window, on the wall near the ceiling, a quiver-clothes-horse[☆] is outspread with the cotton articles, which have been ironed, hanging to air. Under the outspread clothes[☆] is the door which communicates with the scullery and with the yard. On the right side of the fireplace, in the recess equivalent to that where the bookshelves stand, a long narrow window, and below it, a low brown fixed cupboard, whose top forms a little sideboard on which stand a large black-enamel box of oil-colours, and a similar japanned box of water colours, with Reeve's silver trade mark.[☆] There is also on the cupboard top a tall glass jar containing ragged pink chrysanthemums.[☆] On the right is a book case upon a case of drawers. This piece of furniture is of stained polished wood in imitation of mahogany. The upper case is full of books, seen through the two flimsy glass doors: a large set of the "World's Famous Literature"[☆] in dark green at the top—then on the next shelf prize books in calf and gold, and imitation soft leather poetry books, and a Nuttall's dictionary, and Cassell's French, German and Latin dictionaries. On each side of the book-case are prints from water colours,[☆] large, pleasing, and well framed in oak. Between the little brown cupboard and the book case, an arm-chair, small, round, with many little staves: a comfortable chair such as is seen in many working class kitchens; it has a red chintz cushion. There is another Windsor chair on the other side of the book case. Over the mantel piece, which is high, with brass candle sticks and two 'Coronation'

tumblers* in enamel, hangs a picture of Venice, from one of Stead's Christmas Numbers,*—nevertheless satisfactory enough.

The woman in the rocking chair is dressed in black, and wears a black sateen apron. She wears spectacles, and is reading the 'New Age'.* Now
5 and again she looks over her paper at a piece of bread which stands on a hanging-bar before the fire, propped up by a fork, toasting. There is a little pile of toast on a plate on the boiler hob beside a large saucepan, the kettle and a brown teapot occupying the oven-top near the woman. The table is laid for tea, with four large breakfast cups in dark blue willow
10 pattern, and plates similar. It is an oval mahogany table, large enough to seat eight comfortably. The woman sees the piece of bread smoking, and takes it from the fire. She butters it and places it on the plate on the hob, after which she looks out of the window, then taking her paper, sits down again in her place.

Someone passes the long narrow window, only the head being seen, then quite close to the large window on the left. There is a noise as the outer door opens and is shut, then the kitchen door opens and a girl enters. She is tall and thin, and wears a long grey coat and a large blue hat, quite plain. After glancing at the table, she crosses the room, drops her two
20 exercise books on the wooden chair by the book-case, saying:

"Oh I am weary!"

MOTHER*: —You are late!

NELLIE LAMBERT: I know I am. It's Agatha Kerton—she is a great gaby. There's always something wrong with her register, and old
25 Tommy* gets in such a fever, the great kid.

(She takes off her hat, and going to the door on right, stands in the doorway hanging it up with her coat on the pegs in the passage, just by the doorway.)

—And I'm sure the youngsters have been regular little demons; I could have killed them.

MOTHER: I've no doubt they felt the same towards you, poor little wretches.

NELLIE LAMBERT (with a short laugh): I'll bet they did, for I spanked one or two of 'em well.

MOTHER: Trust you, trust you. You'll be getting the mothers if you're not careful.

NELLIE LAMBERT (contemptuously): I had one old cat this afternoon. But I told her straight. I said: 'If your Johnny or Sammy or whatever he is is a nuisance, he'll be smacked, and there's an end of it.' She was mad, but I told her straight, I didn't care.
40

She can go to Tommy if she likes: I know he'll fuss her round, but I'll tell *him* too. Pah, he fusses the creatures up—!—I *would*!
(She comes towards the table, pushing up her hair with her fingers. It is heavy and brown, and has been flattened by her hat. She glances at herself in the little square mirror which hangs from a nail under the right end of the mantel piece, a mere unconscious glance which betrays no feeling and is just enough to make her negligently touch her hair again. 5
She turns a trifle fretfully to the table.)

Is there only potted meat? You know I can't bear it!

MOTHER (*conciliatorily*): Why I thought you'd like it, a raw day like this—and with toast. 10

NELLIE LAMBERT: You know I don't. Why didn't you get some fruit?—a little tin of apricots—.

MOTHER: I thought you'd be sick of apricots—I know Ernest is.

NELLIE LAMBERT: Well I'm not—you know I'm not. Pappy potted meat—! 15

(She sits down on the sofa wearily. Her MOTHER pours out two cups of tea, and replaces the pot on the hob.)

MOTHER: Won't you have some then?

NELLIE LAMBERT (*petulantly*): No, I don't want it. 20

(The MOTHER stands irresolute a moment, then she goes out. NELLIE LAMBERT reaches over to the bookshelves and takes a copy of 'The Scarlet Pimpernel',[☆] which she opens on the table, and reads, sipping her tea, but not eating. In a moment or two she glances up as the MOTHER passes the window and enters the scullery. There is the sound of the opening of a tin.) 25

Have you fetched some?—Oh, you are a sweetling!

(The MOTHER enters with a little glass dish of small tinned apricots. They begin tea.)

MOTHER: Polly Goddard says her young man got hurt in the pit this morning. 30

NELLIE LAMBERT: Oh—is it much?

(She looks up from her book.)

MOTHER: One of his feet crushed. Poor Polly's very sad. What made her tell me was Ben Goddard going by. I didn't know he was at work again, but he was just coming home, and I asked her about him, and then she went on to tell me of her young man. They're all coming home from Selson,[☆] so I expect your father won't be long. 35

NELLIE LAMBERT: Goodness!—I hope he'll let us get our teas first.

MOTHER: Well, *you* were late. If he once gets seated in the Miner's Arms,[☆] there's no telling when he comes.

5 NELLIE LAMBERT: I don't care when he does so long as he doesn't come yet.

MOTHER: Ah, it's all very well—!

(*They both begin to read as they eat. After a moment another girl runs past the window and enters. She is a plump fair girl, pink and white. She*
10 *has just run across from the next house.*)

GERTIE COOMBER: Hello, my duck, and how are you?

NELLIE LAMBERT (*looking up*): Oh, all right, my bird.

GERTIE COOMBER: Friday tonight! No Eddie for you! Oh poor Nellie! Aren't I glad though!

15 (*She snaps her fingers quaintly. The MOTHER laughs.*)

NELLIE LAMBERT: Mean cat!

GERTIE COOMBER (*giggling*): No I'm not a mean cat. But I like Friday night: we can go jinking off up town and wink at the boys. I like market night.

20 (*She puts her head on one side in a peculiar quaint simple fashion. The MOTHER laughs.*)

NELLIE LAMBERT: *You* wink! If she so much as sees a fellow who'd speak to her, she gets behind me and stands on one foot and then another.

25 GERTIE COOMBER: I don't! No I don't, Nellie Lambert. I go like this 'Oh good evening, *how* are you. I'm sure I'm very pleased —'

(*She says this in a very quaint 'prunes and prisms' manner,[☆] with her chin in the air, and her hand extended. At the end she giggles. The*

30 *MOTHER with her cup in her hand, leans back and laughs. NELLIE LAMBERT, amused in spite of herself, smiles shortly.*)

NELLIE LAMBERT: You are a daft object! What about last week when David Thompson—

(*GERTIE COOMBER puts her hand up and flips the air with affected*
35 *contempt.*)

GERTIE COOMBER: —David Thompson! A bacon sawyer! Ph!

NELLIE LAMBERT: You brazen madam! He's as good as you. And then Johnny Grocock.[☆]

40 GERTIE COOMBER: What a name! Not likely! Mrs Grocock! (*She giggles.*) Oh dear no, nothing short of Mrs Carooso.[☆]

(She holds back the skirts of her long pinafore with one hand, and affects the Gibson bend.)[☆]

MOTHER *(laughing heartily)*: Caruso! Caruso! A great fat fellow—!

GERTIE COOMBER: Besides, a collier! I'm not going to wash stinking pit-things. 5

NELLIE LAMBERT: You don't know what you'll do yet, my girl. I never knew such cheek! I should think you want somebody grand, you do.

GERTIE COOMBER: I do that. Somebody who'll say 'Yes dear! Oh yes dear! Certainly, certainly.' 10

(She simpers across the room, then giggles.)

NELLIE LAMBERT: You soft cat, you! But look here Gert, you'll get paid out treating Bernard Hufton as you do.

GERTIE COOMBER *(suddenly irritated)*: Oh I can't abide him. I always feel as if I could smack his face. He thinks himself so ikey. He always makes my — — 15

(A head passes the narrow side window.)

—Oh glory, there's Mr Lambert! I'm off!

(She draws back against the book case. A man passes the large window. The door opens, and he enters. He is a man of middling stature, a miner, black from the pit. His shoulders are pushed up because he is cold. He has a bushy, iron grey beard. He takes from his pocket a tin bottle and a knotted 'snap' bag—his food bag of dirty calico—and puts them with a bang on the table. Then he drags his heavily shod feet to the door on Right: he limps slightly,[☆] one leg being shorter than the other. He hangs up his coat and cap in the passage, and comes back into the living room. No one speaks. He wears a grey and black neckerchief, and being coatless, his black arms are bare to the elbow, where end the loose dirty sleeves of his flannel 'singlet'. The MOTHER rises, and goes out to the scullery carrying the heavy saucepan. The man gets hold of the table and pulls it nearer the fire, away from his daughter.) 20 25 30

NELLIE LAMBERT: Why can't you leave the table where it was! We don't want it stuck on top of the fire.

FATHER: Ah dun, if you dunna. 35

(He drags up his arm chair and sits down at the table, full in front of the fire.)

—'An yer got a drink for me?

(The MOTHER comes and pours out a cup of tea, then goes back to the scullery.) 40

—It's a nice thing as a man as comes home from th' pit parched up canna ha'e a drink got 'im.

*(He speaks disagreeably.)**

MOTHER: Oh, you needn't begin. I know you've been stopping
5 drinking.

FATHER: Dun yer?—well yer know too much then: you' wiser than them as knows, you are!

(There is a general silence, as if the three listeners were shrugging their shoulders in contempt and anger. The FATHER pours out his tea into his saucer, blows it, and sucks it up. NELLIE LAMBERT looks up from her book and glowers at him with ferocity. GERTIE COOMBER puts her hand before her mouth and giggles behind his back at the noise. He does not drink much, but sets the cup back in the saucer and lays his grimed arms wearily along the table. The MOTHER enters with a plate of cabbage.)
10

MOTHER: Here, that's a clean cloth!

(She does not speak unkindly.)

FATHER *(brutally)*: You should put a dotty *(dirty)** 'un on then.

(The MOTHER takes a newspaper and spreads it over the cloth before him. She kneels at the oven, takes out a stew-jar, and puts meat and gravy on the plate with the cabbage, and sets it before him. He does not begin at once to eat. The MOTHER puts back her chair against the wall, and sits down.)
20

MOTHER: Are your trousers wet?

FATHER *(as he eats)*: A bit.

MOTHER: Then why don't you take them off?
25

FATHER: Fetch my breeches an' wascoat down, Nellie. *(In a tone of brutal authority.)*

NELLIE LAMBERT *(continuing to read, her hands pushed in among her hair)*: You can ask me properly.

(The FATHER pushes his beard forward and glares at her with futile ferocity. She reads on. GERTIE COOMBER, at the back, shifts from one foot to the other, then coughs behind her hand as if she had a little cold.)
30

The MOTHER rises and goes out by door on Right.)

FATHER: You lazy idle bitch, you let your mother go.

NELLIE LAMBERT *(shrugging her shoulders)*: You can shut up. *(She speaks with cold contempt.)*
35

(GERTIE COOMBER sighs audibly. The tension of the scene will not let her run home. NELLIE LAMBERT looks up, flushed, carefully avoiding her father.)

NELLIE LAMBERT: Aren't you going to sit down, Gert?
40

GERTIE COOMBER: No, I'm off.

NELLIE LAMBERT: Wait a bit, and I'll come across with you. I don't want to stop *here*.

(The FATHER stirs in his chair with rage at the implication. The MOTHER comes downstairs and enters with a pair of black trousers, from which the braces are trailing, and a black waistcoat lined with cream and red lining. She drops them against her husband's chair.)

MOTHER *(kindly—trying to restore the atmosphere)*: Aren't you going to sit down, Gertie? Go on the stool.

(GERTIE COOMBER takes a small stool on the right side of the fire-place, and sits toying with the bright brass tap of the boiler. The MOTHER goes out again on Right, and enters immediately with five bread tins and a piece of lard paper. She stands on the hearth rug greasing the tins. The FATHER kicks off his great boots and stands warming the trousers before the fire, turning them and warming them thoroughly.)

GERTIE COOMBER: Are they cold, Mr Lambert.

FATHER: They are that! Look you, they steaming like a sweating hoss.

MOTHER: Get away, man, the driest thing in the house would smoke if you held it in front of the fire like that.

FATHER: Ah *(shortly)* I know I'm a liar. I knowed it to begin wi'.

NELLIE LAMBERT *(much irritated)*: Isn't he a nasty-tempered kid?

GERTIE COOMBER: But those front bedrooms are clammy.

FATHER *(gratified)*: They h'are, Gertie, they h'are.

GERTIE COOMBER *(turning to avoid NELLIE LAMBERT's contempt, and pottering the fire)*: I know the things I bring down from ours, they fair damp in a day.

FATHER: They h'are, Gertie, I know it. An' I wonder how 'er'd like to clap 'er 'arce into wet breeches. *(He goes crambling off to door on Right, trailing the breeches.)*

NELLIE LAMBERT *(fiercely)*: Father!

(GERTIE COOMBER puts her face into her hands and laughs with a half audible laugh that shakes her body.)

NELLIE LAMBERT: I can't think what you've got to laugh at, Gert Coomber.

(The MOTHER, glancing at her irate daughter, laughs also. She moves aside the small wooden rocking chair, and, drawing forth a great panchion of dough from the corner under the book shelves, begins to fill the bread tins. She sets them on the hearth—which has no fender, the day being Friday, when the steel fender is put away, after having been carefully

cleaned, to be saved for Saturday afternoon. The FATHER enters, the braces of his trousers dangling, and drops the heavy 'mole-skin' pit-breeches in corner on Right.)

5 NELLIE LAMBERT: I wonder why you can't put them in the scullery; the smell of them's hateful.

FATHER: You mun put up wi' it then. If you were i' th' pit, you'd niver put your nose up at them again.

(He sits down and recommences eating. The sound further irritates his daughter, who again pushes her fingers into her hair, covering her ears with her palms. Her FATHER notices, and his manners become coarser.

NELLIE LAMBERT rises, leaving her book open on the table.)

NELLIE LAMBERT: Come on Gert!

(She speaks with contemptuous impatience. Her FATHER watches them go out. He lays his arms along the newspaper wearily.)

15 FATHER: I'm too tired ter h'eat.

MOTHER *(sniffing, ☆ and hardening a little)*: I wonder why you always have to go and set her off in a tantrum as soon as you come in.

20 FATHER: A cheeky bitch, 'er wants a good slap at th' side o' th' mouth!

MOTHER *(incensed)*: If you've no more sense than that, I don't wonder—

25 FATHER: You don't wonder, you don't wonder—! No, I know you don't wonder. It's you as eggs 'em on against me, both on 'em.

MOTHER *(scornfully)*: You set them against yourself. You do your best for it, every time they come in.

FATHER: Do I, do I! I set 'em against me, do I. I'm going to stand 'em orderin' me about, an' turnin' their noses up, am I?

30 MOTHER: You shouldn't make them turn their noses up then. If you do your best for it, what do you expect.

FATHER: —A jumped-up monkey! An' it's you as 'as made 'em like it, the pair on 'em. There's neither of 'em but what treats me like a dog. I'm not daft! I'm not blind! I can see it.

35 MOTHER: If you're so clever at seeing it, I should have thought you'd have sense enough not to begin it, and carry it on as you do.

40 FATHER: Me begin it! When do I begin it? You niver hear me say a word to 'em, till they've snapped at me as if I was a—as if I was a—. No, it's you as puts 'em on it, it's you, you blasted—!

(He bangs the table with his fist. The MOTHER puts the bread in the oven, from which she takes a rice pudding, then she sits down to read. He glares across the table, then goes on eating. After a little while he pushes the plate from him. The MOTHER affects not to notice for a moment.)

'An yer got any puddin'?

5

MOTHER: Have you finished?

(She rises, takes a plate and crouching at the hearth, gives him his pudding. She glances at the clock, and clears the tea-things from her daughter's place. She puts another piece of toast down, there remaining only two pieces on the plate.)

10

FATHER *(looking at the rice pudding)*: Is this what you'n had?

MOTHER: No, we had nothing.

FATHER: No, I'll bet you non 'ad this baby pap.

MOTHER: No, I had nothing, for a change, and Nellie took her dinner.

15

FATHER *(eating unwillingly)*: Is there no other puddin' as you could 'a made?

MOTHER: Goodness, man, are you so mightily particular about your belly? This is the first rice pudding you've had for goodness knows how long, and— —! No, I couldn't make any other. In the first place it's Friday, and in the second, I'd nothing to make it with.

20

FATHER: You wouldna ha'e, not for me. But if you'd 'a wanted— —

MOTHER *(interrupting)*: You needn't say any more. The fact of the matter is, somebody's put you out at the pit, and you come home to vent your spleen on us.

25

FATHER *(shouting)*: You're a liar, you're a liar! A man comes home after a hard day's work to folks as 'as never a word to say to 'im, as shuts up the minute 'e enters the house, as 'ates the sight of 'im as soon as 'e comes in th' room— —!

30

MOTHER *(with fierceness)*: We've had quite enough, we've had quite enough! Our Ernest'll be in in a minute, and we're not going to have this row going on: him coming home all the way from Derby,^{*} trailing from college, to a house like this, tired out with study and all this journey: we're not going to have it, I tell you.

35

(Her husband stares at her dumbly, betwixt anger and shame and sorrow; of which, an undignified rage is predominant. The MOTHER carries out some pots to the scullery, re-enters, takes the slice of toast, and butters it.)

FATHER: It's about time as we had a light on it. I canner see what I'm eatin'.

40

(The MOTHER puts down the toast on the hob, and having fetched a dust-pan from the scullery, goes out on Right to the cellar to turn on the gas and to bring coals. She is heard coming up the steps heavily. She mends the fire, and then lights the gas at a brass pendant hanging over the table.

5 Directly after, there enters a young man of twenty one, tall and broad, pale, clean shaven, with the brownish hair of the 'ginger' class, which is all ruffled when he has taken off his cap, after having pulled various books from his pockets, and put them on the little cupboard top. He takes off his coat at door on Right as his sister has done.)

10 ERNEST LAMBERT (*blowing slightly through pursed lips*): Phww! It is hot in here.

FATHER (*bluntly, but amiably*): Hot! It's non hot! I could do wi' it ten times hotter.

MOTHER: Oh you! You've got, as I've always said, a hide like a
15 hippotamus.* You ought to have been a salamander.

FATHER: Oh ah, I know tha'll ha'e summat ter say.

MOTHER: Is it raining now, Ernest?

ERNEST LAMBERT: Just a drizzle in the air, like a thick mist.

MOTHER: Ay, isn't it sickening! You'd better take your boots off.

20 ERNEST LAMBERT (*sitting in his sister's place on the sofa*): Oh they're not wet.

MOTHER: They must be damp.

ERNEST LAMBERT: No they're not. There's a pavement all the way.
25 Here, look at my rose! One of the girls in Coll. gave it me, and the tan-yard girls tried to beg it. They are brazen hussies! 'Gie's thy flower, Sorry, gie's thy buttonhole'—and one of them tried to snatch it. They have a bobby down by the tanyard brook every night now. Their talk used to be awful, and it's so dark down there under the trees. Where's Nellie?

30 MOTHER: In Coomber's.

ERNEST LAMBERT: Give me a bit of my paper father. You know the leaf I want: that with the reviews of books on.

FATHER: Nay, I know nōwt about reviews o' böwks. Here t'art. Ta'e it.

35 (*He hands the newspaper to his son, who takes out two leaves and hands the rest back.*)

ERNEST LAMBERT: Here you are, I only want this.

FATHER: Nay, I non want it. I mun get me weshed. We s'll ha'e th' men here directly.

ERNEST LAMBERT: I say Mater,[☆] another seven and six up your sleeve.

MOTHER: I'm sure! And in the middle of the term[☆] too. What's it for *this* time?

ERNEST LAMBERT: Piers the Ploughman, that piffle, and two books of Horace: Quintus Horatius Flaccius,[☆] dear old chap. 5

MOTHER: And when have you to pay for them?

ERNEST LAMBERT: Well, I've ordered them, and they'll come on Tuesday. I'm sure I don't know what we wanted that Piers Ploughman for, it's sheer rot, and old Beasley could have gassed on it without making us buy it, if he'd liked.—Yes, I did feel wild, seven and sixpence! 10

FATHER: I should non get 'em then. You nedna buy 'em unless you like — — dunna get 'em then.

ERNEST LAMBERT: Well, I've ordered them. 15

FATHER: If you 'anna got the money, you canna 'a'e 'em, whether or not.

MOTHER: Don't talk nonsense, if he has to have them, he has. But the money you have to pay for books, and they're no good when you've done with them!—I'm sure it's really sickening, it is! 20

ERNEST LAMBERT: Oh never mind, Little, I s'll get 'em for six shillings. Is it a worry, Mutterchen?[☆]

MOTHER: It is, but I suppose if it has to be it has.

ERNEST LAMBERT: Old Beasley is an old chough. While he was lecturing this afternoon Arnold and Hinrich were playing nap:[☆] and the girls always write letters, and I went fast asleep. 25

FATHER: So that's what you go'n to collige for, is it?

ERNEST LAMBERT (*nettled*): No it isn't. Only old Beasley's such a dry old ass, with his lectures on Burke.[☆] He's a mumbling parson, so what do you expect. 30

(*The FATHER grunts, rises, and fetches a clean new bucket from the scullery. He hangs this on the brass tap of the boiler, and turns on the water. Then he pulls off his flannel singlet, or vest, and stands stripped to the waist, watching the hot water dribble into the bucket. The pail half-filled, he goes out to the scullery on left.*) 35

ERNEST LAMBERT: Do you know what Professor Staynes[☆] said this morning, mother? He said I'd got an instinct for Latin—and you know he's one of the best fellows in England on the classics: edits Ovid and what not. An instinct for Latin, he said.

MOTHER (*smiling, gratified*): Well, it's a funny thing to have an instinct for.

ERNEST LAMBERT: I generally get alpha plus. That's the highest, you know, Mater. Prof. Staynes generally gives me that.

5 MOTHER: Your grandfather was always fond of dry reading: economics and history. But I don't know where an instinct for Latin comes from—not from the Lamberts, that's a certainty. Your Aunt Ellen would say, from the Vernons.

(*She smiles ironically, as she rises to pour him another cup of tea, taking the teapot from the hob, and standing it, empty, on the father's plate.*)

ERNEST LAMBERT: Who are the Vernons?

MOTHER (*smiling*): It's a wonder your Aunt Ellen or your Aunt Eunice has never told you. . . .

15 ERNEST LAMBERT: Well they haven't. What is it, Mutter?

MOTHER (*sniffing*): A parcel of nonsense. . . .

ERNEST LAMBERT: Oh go on, Ma, you are tantalising! You hug it like any blessed[☆] girl.

20 MOTHER: Yes, your Aunt Ellen always said she would claim the peacock and thistle for her crest if ever—

ERNEST LAMBERT (*delighted*): The Peacock and Thistle!—It sounds like the name of a pub—

MOTHER: My great-great-grandfather married a Lady Vernon:—so they say. As if it made any matter—a mere tale.

25 ERNEST LAMBERT: Is it a fact though, Matoushka? Why didn't you tell us before?

MOTHER (*sniffing*): What should I repeat such—[☆]

FATHER (*shouting from the scullery, whence has come the noise of his washing*): 'An yer put that towel ter dry!

30 MOTHER (*muttering*): The towel's dry enough.

(*She goes out, and is heard taking the roller towel from behind the outer door. She returns, and stands before the fire holding up the towel to dry.*)

ERNEST LAMBERT, *having frowned and shrugged his shoulders, is reading.*)

35 MOTHER: I suppose you won't have that bit of rice pudding?

(*Her son looks up, reaches over and takes the brown dish from the hearth. He begins to eat from the dish.*)

ERNEST LAMBERT: I went to the 'Savoy'[☆] today.

40 MOTHER: I shouldn't go to that vegetable place. I don't believe there's any substance in it.

ERNEST LAMBERT: Substance: Oh Lord! I had an asparagus omelette,—I believe they called it. It was too much for me—! A great stodgy thing—! But I like the Savoy generally. It was—

(*Somebody comes running across the yard. NELLIE LAMBERT enters with a rush.*) 5

NELLIE LAMBERT: Hello. Have you done.

FATHER (*shouting from scullery*): Are you going to shut that doo-ar?

NELLIE LAMBERT (*with a quick shrug of the shoulders*): It is shut. (*Brightly, to her brother*): Who brought this rose? It'll just do for me. Who gave it you—Lois?☆ 10

ERNEST LAMBERT (*flushing*): What do you want to know for? You're always saying 'Lois'. I don't care a button about Lois.

NELLIE LAMBERT: Keep cool, dear boy, keep cool.

(*She goes flying lightly round, clearing the table. Her FATHER, dripping, bending forward almost double, comes hurrying from the scullery to the fire. NELLIE LAMBERT whisks by him, her long pinafore rustling.*) 15

FATHER (*taking the towel*): Öw (*she*) goes rushin' about, draughtin'. (*He rubs his head, sitting on his heels very close to the fire.*)

NELLIE LAMBERT (*smiling contemptuously,—to herself*): Poor kid. 20

FATHER (*having wiped his face*): An' there isn't another man i' th' kingdom as 'ud stan' i' that scullery stark naked. It's like standin' i' cöwd watter.

MOTHER (*calmly*): Many a man stands in a colder.

FATHER (*shortly*): Ah, I'll back: I'll back there is! Other men's wives brings th' panchion onto th' 'arthstone, an' gets the watter for 'em, an'—. 25

MOTHER: Other men's wives may do: more fools them: you won't catch me.

FATHER: No, you wunna: you may back your life o' that! An' what if you 'ad to? 30

MOTHER: Who'd make me?

FATHER (*blustering*): Me!

MOTHER (*laughing shortly*): Not half a dozen such.

(*The FATHER grunts. NELLIE LAMBERT, having cleared the table, pushes him aside a little, and lets the crumbs fall into hearth.*) 35

FATHER: A lazy idle stinkin' trick!

(*She whisks the table cloth away without speaking.*)

An' tha doesna come waftin' in again when I'm weshin' me, tha remembers. 40

ERNEST LAMBERT (*to his mother, who is turning the bread*): Fancy, Swinburne's dead!*

MOTHER: Yes, so I saw. But he was getting on.

FATHER (*to NELLIE LAMBERT, who has come to the boiler and is kneeling getting a lading-can full of water*): Here Nellie, gie my back a wesh!

(*She goes out and comes immediately with flannel and soap. She claps the flannel on his back.*)

FATHER (*wincing*): OOO! Tha nasty bitch!

(NELLIE LAMBERT *bubbles with laughter: the MOTHER turns aside to laugh.*)

NELLIE LAMBERT: You great baby, afraid of a cold flannel!

(*She finishes washing his back and goes into the scullery to wash the pots. The FATHER takes his flannel shirt from the book-case cupboard, and puts it on, letting it hang over his trousers. Then he takes a little blue-striped cotton bag from his pit-trousers' pocket and throws it on the table to his wife.*)

FATHER: Count it.*

(*He shuffles upstairs. The MOTHER counts the money, putting it in little piles, checking it from two white papers. She leaves it on the table.*

ERNEST LAMBERT *goes into the scullery to wash his hands, and is heard talking to his sister, who is wiping the pots. A knock at the outer door.*)

ERNEST LAMBERT'S VOICE: Good Evening, Mr Barker!

A VOICE: Good Evenin', Ernest.

(*A miner enters, pale, short, but well-made. He has a hard-looking head with short black hair. He lays his cap on a chair.*)

Good Evenin', Missis! 'Asn't Carlin come? Mester up stairs?

MOTHER: Yes, he'll be down in a minute. I don't expect Mr Carlin will be many minutes. Sit down, Mr Barker. How's that lad of yours?

BARKER: Well, 'e seems to be goin' on nicely, thank yer. Dixon* took th' splints off last wik.

MOTHER: Oh, well that's better! He'll be all right directly. I should think he doesn't want to go in the pit again—.

BARKER: 'E doesna. 'E says 'e shall go farmin' wi' Jakes, but I shanna let 'im. It's nöwt o' a sort o' job, that.

MOTHER: No, it isn't. (*Lowering her voice.*) And how's Mrs?

BARKER (*also lowering his voice*): Well—I don't know. I want ter get back, as soon as I'n got a few groceries an' stuff in. I sent for

Mrs Smalley afore I com'n out. An' I'n come an' forgot th' market bag— —.

MOTHER (*going into the scullery*): Have mine, have mine. Nay, I've got another. (*She brings him a large carpet bag with leather handles.*)

BARKER: Thank yer, Missis. I can bring it back next wik: you sure you wunna want it?

(*Another knock. Enter another man, fair, pale, smiling: an inconsiderable man.*)

CARLIN: Hgh! Tha's bested me then? Good evenin' Missis!

BARKER: Yes, I'n bet thee.

(*Enter FATHER. He has put on a turndown collar and a black tie, and his black waistcoat is buttoned, but he wears no coat. The other men take off the large neckerchiefs, grey and white silk, in fine check, and show similar collars. The FATHER assumes a slight tone of superiority.*)

FATHER: Well, you'n arrived then! An' 'ow's th' Missis by now, Joe?

BARKER: Well, I dun know, George. It might be any minnit.

FATHER (*sympathetically*): Hu! We may as well set to then, an' ger it done.

(*They sit at the table, on the side of the fire. ERNEST LAMBERT comes in, and takes an exercise book from the shelves, and begins to do algebra, using a text book. He writes with a fountain pen.*)

CARLIN: They gran' things them fountain pens.

BARKER: They are that!

CARLIN: What's th' mek on it, Ernest?

ERNEST LAMBERT: It's an Onoto.[☆]

BARKER: Oh ah! An' 'ow *dun* yer fill it? They sayn as it hold it wi' a vackum.

ERNEST LAMBERT: It's like this—you push this down, put the nib in th' ink, and then pull it out. It's a sort of a pump.

BARKER: Um! It's a canny thing that!

CARLIN: It is an' a'!

FATHER: Yes, it's a very good idea.

(*He is slightly condescending.*)

MOTHER: Look at the bread Ernest.

ERNEST: All right, Mater.

(*She goes upstairs, it being tacitly understood that she shall not know how much money falls to her husband's share, as chief "butty",[☆] in the weekly reckoning.*)

BARKER: Is it counted?

FATHER: Yes. It's all right Ernest?

ERNEST (*not looking up*): —Yes.

5 (*They begin to reckon, first putting aside the wages of their day men, then the FATHER and BARKER take four and threepence, as equivalent to Carlin's rent, which has been stopped, then the FATHER gives a coin each, dividing the money in that way. It is occasionally a puzzling process, and needs the Ready Reckoner,[☆] from the shelf behind.*)

(*Curtain*)