

HOGARTH

AN AFTERNOON
WITH
BLAKE



SHORT ONE ACT PLAYS
ON THE LIVES OF FAMOUS
ENGLISH PAINTERS

BY

MARY GREENE

WITH MUSIC BY CECILY MUGGERIDGE

NO. I

PATERSON'S PUBLICATIONS LTD

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AN AFTERNOON WITH BLAKE

A half-hour Play
in one Scene

by

MARY GREENE

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WILLIAM BLAKE
Born 1757; died 1827

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People in the Play

WILLIAM BLAKE, poet, artist and engraver

CATHERINE BLAKE, his wife

HENRY FUSELI, an artist friend

JOHN VARLEY, an artist friend

SIR ANTHONY HONE, a collector of pictures
and prints

A HAWKER

SAM CUTTER, a lodger in the room above
Blake's

Mrs. CUTTER, his wife

*The scene is supposed to take place in Blake's
room in a tenement house off the Strand*

SUGGESTED DRESS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE PLAY.

BLAKE—in black breeches, coat and waistcoat. His suit looks old.

Mrs. BLAKE—a black dress with a white shoulder kerchief, a white cap over which she ties, with strings, a black hat. She has a cape for walking. Indoors she wears a blue apron.

SIR ANTHONY HONE—a dark blue suit with a gold-coloured waistcoat. Though it is a civilian dress of the period it should have a military appearance. He is upright in spite of walking with a limp.

FUSELI—carefully dressed in rich colouring. He is neat in his figure as well as his dress. He uses his hands in a foreign, expressive way but with restraint except when he is excited.

VARLEY—carelessly dressed in brown with a flaring waistcoat. He is very tall and often uncouth in his movements. His charm is his sunny geniality.

HAWKER—a rough dress with a long coat.

SAM CUTTER—breeches, a loose, dirty shirt, no coat. Untidy hair.

Mrs. CUTTER—a limp cotton dress. As long as it is faded it matters little what colour.

SCENE: A plainly furnished room high up in a set of tenement flats overlooking Fountain Court off the Strand.

A fireplace is L.F., with two chairs on each side of it. A trestle table stands under a low window on the R. wall. A form and a small stool are near it. On the table are paints, brushes and engraving tools. A four-post bedstead can be seen as if slightly projecting from a recess L.B. Towards the centre of the room is a small table with a check cloth on it. Two chairs are near it and also a basket in which are sheets to be mended. In the middle of the back wall is an entrance which leads to a landing. On one side of it is a small dresser with a few pieces of glass and china on it, on the other is a chest of drawers. There is another entrance R.B. which leads to the scullery. Everything should look neat and clean.

(CATHERINE BLAKE is taking down a bonnet and a shawl from a hook on the centre door. She puts them on and fetches a basket and a walking stick from the corner near the cupboard, and is preparing to go out when there is a knock at the door. She opens it. A hawker carrying a case stands outside.)

HAWKER: Is this Mr. Blake's room?

CATHERINE: It is.

HAWKER: Is he in, mum?

CATHERINE *(suspiciously)*: What do you want of him?

HAWKER: I am hasking, mum, because the lady in the room hupstairs, who I hunderstand his Mrs. Cutter, told me as you might like to see me. She said as everything in this room wot Mr. and Mrs. Blake lived in was that clean, mum, that you could eat your dinner hoff the floor—as the saying is. You *are* Mrs. Blake, now, aren't you?

CATHERINE: I am. What is your business?

HAWKER: Well, mum, that lady as I said was Mrs. Cutter, told me that I'd better come here. She 'erself couldn't see 'er way to patronise me this morning as 'er 'usband was lying about dead drunk. There 'e was, mum, right enough, sprawling on a harmchair and making a very hunpleasant noise, mum. Mrs. Cutter said as she 'ad no use for soap as 'e would honely dirty things hup, mum, as soon as she 'ad cleaned them.

CATHERINE: What is your business?

HAWKER: Well, madam, to answer your question—hat once—*(opening his case with a flourish)* soap is my business hand other articles—I may say very valuable harticles—that I carry in this case. Pomades and scents and such soap as no shops, no, not even the perfumers in Piccadilly, 'ave as hequal quality. Soap, madam, that will render your still delicate complexion like a fresh rose.

CATHERINE: I do not want any of your articles. Go!

HAWKER: But first, madam, let me show you a soap that I am sure will please Mr. Blake. I can see, madam, from the things hon that table that Mr. Blake his an engraver and uses hinks and colours. He will 'ave 'ard work to clean 'is brushes and 'is 'ands. I can assure you, my lady, that with this soap, no stain on 'is 'ands—

CATHERINE (*firmly*): Mr. Blake's skin *don't* dirt. Go!

(*So stern is her expression that the Hawker wavers. He looks round to see if all is clear for him to make a further effort and opens his mouth to speak, but when CATHERINE takes a step towards him, even raising her stick slightly, and repeats her "Go!" he is reduced to an appeal humbly spoken and even that is soon cut short.*)

HAWKER: My lady, won't you look—

(*He is forced back to the doorway and the door is shut in his face. CATHERINE listens for a moment, then walks to the window and peers out. As if satisfied, she continues her preparations. She puts her purse into an inner pocket, picks up her basket and begins to take out the key of the door when there is another knock. She opens it very slightly.*)

FUSELI (*outside*): Will you let me in, Mrs. Blake?

CATHERINE: Oh, Mr. Fuseli, come in! I am glad to see a friend. I have been troubled by a hawker.

(*HENRY FUSELI has entered, followed by SIR ANTHONY HONE, who is slightly lame.*)

FUSELI (*speaking fluently but with a Swiss-German accent*): This is Mrs. Blake, Sir Anthony. Mrs. Blake, this is Sir Anthony Hone. You may know his name, for he was a hero in battle. He is famous, ma'am, famous. He is now home for he was wounded in a battle. He fights no more. He collects prints.

CATHERINE: He would like to see some of my husband's engravings perhaps?

FUSELI: You are right, Mrs. Blake. That is what we have called for, but your husband, I fear, is out.

CATHERINE: He will be back in a short time. He went away to get something for the fire. He thought there would be an early frost.

SIR ANTHONY: I think he was wise, madam.

FUSELI: Ach! wise, did you say? No, no, he has never been that. He was directed, you may be sure. Even when he was a little boy he was not wise as little boys are. He told his father when he came back from a walk that he had seen the prophet Ezekiel sitting under a tree. His father felt obliged to whip him for telling a lie.

SIR ANTHONY: Quite right.

FUSELI: It did no good. He goes on seeing prophets and angels, and he tells people quite as a matter of course that he has seen them. They don't believe it. He will never be wise. He is truthful. But you are content, Mrs. Blake?

CATHERINE: I am happy even though I do not have much of my husband's company. He is so often in Paradise.

FUSELI: Ah, Mrs. Blake, *you* are wise. *You* understand. But you were on the way to go out. We are delaying you. We must not be a drag. We will wait here for him, if you will trust us.

CATHERINE: I shall be glad to feel that you are here and as I want very much to be back before dark I will leave you. Will you look at these prints, sir, while you are waiting? My husband will soon be back and will show you others. (*She turns to the fire.*) I wish the fire were a bit brighter for you but I cannot better it. Now I will go.

(*EXIT CATHERINE.*)

FUSELI: That woman is one in a million, Hone. She is like the hand of a child on the kite string. The child holds it firm and the kite rises and rises against the wind.

(*SIR ANTHONY makes no answer. He is absorbed in looking at the prints. FUSELI joins him.*)

Those prints are wonderful! A new sort of man is William Blake! He is a very great man.

SIR ANTHONY: If indeed he is a great man, he is not honoured as he should be, housed as he is in this little room.

FUSELI: Leetle room, did you say? For him it stretches till it takes in heaven and hell. You'll soon find that out.

SIR ANTHONY: What do you mean?

FUSELI: I mean that I feel sure that he will open out to you. I think he will even tell you of his visions.

SIR ANTHONY (*scornfully*): Visions! (*He takes up some sheets from a packet on the trestle table and turns them over.*) Mr. Blake paints in water colours very prettily.

FUSELI: Hum—"prettily." (*He turns away.*)

SIR ANTHONY (*looking through the sheets with evident amusement*): I thought you called him a great man. Listen to these verses:

"I have no name
I am but two days old.
What shall I call thee?
I happy am
Joy is my name.
Sweet joy befall thee."

Innocent enough. What have we got here?

"Tiger, tiger, burning bright."

Why "burning," I should like to know. Here's another.

"Father! Father, where are you going?

Oh, do not walk so fast.

Speak, Father, speak to your little boy

Or else I shall be lost."

That does not rhyme well.

"Little lamb, who made thee?

Dost thou know who made thee?"

No, indeed, the lamb does not know. (*He puts down the sheets with a hearty laugh.*) Those verses could well have been made by some child.

FUSELI: A great man, sir, can sometimes write like a little child. Remember the Ding Dong Bell song of your Shakespeare.

SIR ANTHONY: Don't talk of Shakespeare in the same breath as this man. I wonder at you, Fuseli.

FUSELI: Well, you wait. You have come here to get prints from William Blake and you will get more than prints. You will get wisdom and new eyes. He will talk to you for he loves a warrior though he hates war like the poison. There. You are taking up those prints again. You can't help looking at them—They are interesting, are they not?

SIR ANTHONY (*laying down the prints*): Do you really think he is sane?

FUSELI: Sane! Of course he is. As sane as you or I.

(*The door C.B. bursts open. ENTER BLAKE carrying in two scuttles full of coal which he puts near the fireplace. He takes a duster from a nail and rubs his hands vigorously.*)

BLAKE: Glad to see you, Fuseli. My service, sir. I have just been wrestling with the devils down below to get these coals.

FUSELI: Damn your vocabulary, Blake. What with your devils and angels—what with your emanations and imaginations which we shall soon hear about—who can understand what you mean? You ought to write a Blake dictionary and then, at last, we might know where we were when we talk to you. I saw Sir Anthony putting his finger to his forehead. If you go on in that way, he will be getting behind me in sheer fright. You may smile but it is true.

SIR ANTHONY: No, no, no, Fuseli! Introduce me properly.

FUSELI: Ach! I ask pardon. General Sir Anthony Hone, famous for bravery in battle. He is now home from the wars and is famous for his collection of prints—Mr. William Blake, not known yet for his songs and his drawings by the blind and foolish people of the earth but at last they will be known the wide world over. He is bound to be famous one day.

BLAKE (*amused*): One day! How long must I wait for that one day?

FUSELI (*suddenly grave*): I should say about a hundred years.

SIR ANTHONY: I admire the originality of your designs, Mr. Blake; and, as they are well cut, I should be glad to possess specimens. I do not understand songs, sir. The world of imagination as shown in poetry is shut to me.

BLAKE: You are a dead man, sir.

SIR ANTHONY (*with a start*): Sir!

BLAKE: The world of imagination in poetry and art is the world of life—eternal life. If you were to possess one of my engravings I fear that you would not be able to comprehend it. Each one is imagination which is poetry. You would look at it with dead eyes—the eyes of a man whose mind is on material things, on science, and on war.

FUSELI: Now, Blake, don't talk about war. Sir Anthony has done with it.

BLAKE: I will pick out some prints and drawings for Sir Anthony's inspection.

SIR ANTHONY: Perhaps, sir, they will be those against war. I saw one begun on your table. Mr. Blake, the horrors of peace can be deeper than those of war. No nation is great unless it is great in war. It is my belief that it cannot even be great in art.

BLAKE: A thoroughly warlike state can never produce art. It will rob and plunder and accumulate into one place and translate and copy and buy and sell and criticise, but it cannot make. War is engineered by man's mind, and mind without imagination is the devil himself.

FUSELI: There goes your word again! He won't understand it—not as you use it.

SIR ANTHONY: If you will hear the opinion of a dead man, sir, it is that you have acquired skill through a struggle and, no matter what the struggle is, it gives strength and manliness.

BLAKE: So you can defend the struggles of a burglar to get into your house or the struggle of an aggressive nation to overpower a weaker one. Not only will war be put down in the end, but all forms of violence. Punishment will be succeeded by forgiveness of sins.

SIR ANTHONY: Dreams! Dreams!

BLAKE: The despised dreamer of one age may be the guide of the next—

SIR ANTHONY: It stands to reason, sir—

BLAKE: Oh, reason! Reason is—

(JOHN VARLEY appears in the doorway, filling it up with his big figure. He throws a benignant smile round the company.)

VARLEY: I heard your voices, friends, so I came in without knocking.

FUSELI: Welcome, Varley! Blake! Blake! Here is Varley.

(BLAKE in a moment becomes present-minded. He shakes his friend warmly by the hand.)

BLAKE: Ah, John! I rejoice to see you.

FUSELI: We are all standing up in your room, Blake. There are just four chairs. Can we use them?

BLAKE (*with a laugh*): Why, yes! How badly I behave! I forget myself sometimes. I see, Sir Anthony, that you know my friend, Varley. No need for an introduction. Please all sit down.

VARLEY (*looking at his chair*): Can I venture? Well, I will sit down slowly and with care. No, Blake; there is no need of introduction. Sir Anthony came to my studio yesterday and carried off two of my best watercolours. They seemed to me so good that I had given up all hope of selling them, but he picked them out.

SIR ANTHONY: Those landscapes beautify my wall already, Mr. Blake. I can understand *them*.

BLAKE: Then you have started on the right road.

VARLEY: But I cannot carry you far enough, I fear, to please Blake. I still see with my eyes.

SIR ANTHONY: How else can you see?

VARLEY: Through them. Through them, Sir Anthony. I sit at a master's feet. I may learn in time.

FUSELI: To our master Art is sublime imagination. He will tell you that he does not use his eyes for it.

VARLEY: For me Art is praise and, as I love afternoon glow and sunsets and lakes and mountains and those sorts of things, I praise them with my brush as well as I can.

BLAKE: If Art is only praise it will lead its followers into strange places.

VARLEY: Perhaps History will find it a more faithful mirror for recording the taste of an age than in the old days when subjects were restricted as well as ordered.

FUSELI: Then History will damn the taste of this generation in that it leaves Blake half starving in this narrow room.

BLAKE: This narrow room is so wide that the horizon can shrink in it to the size of the wedding-ring on my wife's finger.

FUSELI: I know! I know! That is when you are in Paradise.

(*SIR ANTHONY looks from one to the other in wonder.*)

FUSELI: Let me tell you, Varley, that when you came in just now, Blake had run up his colours. If it had gone on like that for much longer there would have been a fight between the Peace man and the War man. Which would you have chosen to lay your money on, eh?

VARLEY: Forgive me, Sir Anthony, for saying so, but certainly on the Peace man.

FUSELI: How are the mighty fallen!

SIR ANTHONY: You make the war end before it has begun.

VARLEY: A truce, friends! I want to ask Blake if he has seen any visions lately.

BLAKE: I have seen one.

VARLEY: Ah, one! When? Where? What?

BLAKE: I saw it yesterday. Here. It was the ghost of a flea!

VARLEY: A flea!

FUSELI: Thunder and lightning! I have heard strange things from you but this beats everything. Zounds, Blake! Ha! Ha! The ghost of a flea!

SIR ANTHONY (*rising*): I will take the first five prints of Blair's Grave, Mr. Blake, and wish you good-day. I must take my leave now.

FUSELI: Trust a brave soldier to be frightened and turn tail when real fun begins among us poor civilians.

SIR ANTHONY (*stiffly*): Mr. Blake is among his friends and is no doubt happier amongst them without me.

BLAKE: Sir! Sir! You are wrong. May I beg you to stay. You shall certainly have the prints. Please sit down and I will get them for you. (*As he makes up the parcel of prints he continues to speak.*) I often have visitors from another world. Some come to sit to me, some to talk. I call them visions or ghosts but they are not like visions or ghosts. They have clear outlines and are solid and coloured.

VARLEY: Did you draw the ghost of the flea, Blake?

BLAKE: No. It did not stop with me long.

FUSELI: May it come again!

VARLEY: And may I be here when it comes!

FUSELI: May I be here also. We would all welcome that flea. It would be the first time that I have ever welcomed a flea, I can tell you. Now, Hone, that you have the prints and have paid for them too, you ought to look contented. Why so restless? You can't go yet, you know. Blake, tell him to stop and you must get your pencil and paper ready. A ghost, or a vision, or whatever it is may appear. Ah, here is Mrs. Blake come back. She is always good for the visions. When she is here, you will see them.

(Mrs. BLAKE has entered quietly. VARLEY gets up to offer her his chair. She signs to him not to move. She hangs up her bonnet and shawl and puts her basket and stick into a corner near her husband's chair. She takes her basket of sewing and places it near the table and gets a stool for herself and places it in readiness. She does not at first sit down but, as the men talk, she fetches a tray and puts on it three small glass tumblers. She goes into the next room and comes back with them full of clear water. She offers them to her visitors as if doing the thing that is usual to her. VARLEY and FUSELI take theirs as a matter of course with a smile of thanks. SIR ANTHONY bows his thanks and takes his with a rather puzzled expression. Mrs. BLAKE goes to her stool and starts her sewing putting sides to centre of a sheet. BLAKE puts some paper and pencils on the centre table.)

BLAKE: Please sit down, Sir Anthony. I should be very sorry if you left so soon. (*He turns to FUSELI after his glance has lingered on Sir Anthony, who still stands.*) I think a vision will come, Fuseli, but not at your call. No flea will come . . .

FUSELI: I guess not and I don't care. I shan't be able to see that ghost, or whatever comes, and that will be worse luck for me. But the paper will shew it and what is on the paper is what I want to see. I say, Hone, Blake asked you to sit down. A soldier should be able to face—even ghosts.

SIR ANTHONY (*sitting down*): It depends on the ghosts. I face no fleas, not even ghosts of fleas, except to make war on them.

BLAKE (*speaking slowly and mechanically*): Better war on fleas than on men.

SIR ANTHONY: I was wrong in what I said just now. War is too great a word to be used in such a connection. If I fight it is with the enemies of my country.

BLAKE (*still absent-mindedly*): Yes, true. (*He looks into space.*)

FUSELI: Good lord! The ghost has come. I can see it in your eyes!
(*VARLEY jumps up and puts into BLAKE'S hand the pencil and paper.*)

VARLEY: Who is it, master?

BLAKE: Bruce. (*He begins to draw rapidly.*)

SIR ANTHONY: Bruce, the great Scot?

BLAKE: Yes.

SIR ANTHONY (*getting up*): He has always been a hero of mine.

FUSELI (*walking round to the back of BLAKE and looking from the drawing to SIR ANTHONY*): So I should think.

BLAKE: May I ask you to move aside, Sir Anthony? You are standing between me and my sitter.

(*SIR ANTHONY starts and looks round, not knowing which way to go.*)

If you stand behind me with Fuseli, you will be safe. I shall not mind at all if you talk; it will amuse my sitter.

(*SIR ANTHONY moves to FUSELI. When there he puts his finger significantly to his forehead, but is frowned at by VARLEY.*)

SIR ANTHONY: If I venture to talk in such company, I would like to ask you why you draw Bruce—a fighter—since war and violence are wrong? Is not that what you believe?

BLAKE: I draw Bruce because Bruce came. I do certainly believe that war and violence are wrong.

SIR ANTHONY: What about the punishment of evil-doers? Surely you don't call that violence.

BLAKE: There is too much punishment in the world. It is the wrong tool to use. (*He suddenly throws his pencil down in annoyance. Then he gets up, finds another sheet of paper and begins a new drawing, working rapidly but apparently with no pleasure.*)

FUSELI: Hullo, Blake! Whatever are you doing? You are not going to give up that good head that you began of Bruce. It was a wonderful beginning (*He receives no answer.*) Why—who are you doing now?

BLAKE (*shortly*): Edward, the English king.

FUSELI: Edward! He was the enemy of Bruce. Why draw him? Did his ghost come?

BLAKE: He did, and stood between Bruce and me.

FUSELI: Zounds, Blake! What a fierce old fellow he is! Can't you send him off?

BLAKE: No, he won't move until I have taken his portrait.

SIR ANTHONY (*examining the drawing of Bruce*): I like this start of the head of Bruce. He was a man after my own heart in spite of his fighting against our king.

(BLAKE at first does not seem to pay any attention to the remark. He works on every now and then, signing to his invisible sitter to turn his head this way or that as though he had a human sitter before him. At last he speaks.)

BLAKE: Bruce came for that reason, perhaps.

SIR ANTHONY: Why does Edward come?

BLAKE: Perhaps because you in your heart admire this ambitious king. On this earth he was a lover of war for its own sake—a believer in force.

SIR ANTHONY: It seems to me that you wish to undermine authority, to do away with the strong hand of justice. What about the whip of cords that drove evil out of the temple?

BLAKE: That was a mistake. Violence won't cure evil.

VARLEY: Small cords, remember. Those could not hurt anyone very much.

BLAKE: Resist not evil. You can't reconcile that with the use of a whip even of small cords.

SIR ANTHONY (*rising and moving to get his prints*): I am very much pained, Mr. Blake, at hearing such opinions from you. I am sorry that I cannot wait to see the result of that drawing of Edward, and more still that I cannot see the head of Bruce finished. But I must go. Good-day!

(VARLEY goes to the door to open it, but before SIR ANTHONY has reached it a woman's scream is heard. There is a sound of blows and a scuffle. Mr. and Mrs. CUTTER appear on the landing, the man beating his wife with a stick. Mrs. CUTTER struggles to get free from him and seeing the open door, to escape into the room. She manages to drag her husband in. Before any of the others have had time to realise what is happening or what to do, BLAKE has seized his wife's stick and has sprung upon the man. So furious is his onslaught that CUTTER leaves go of his wife, who flies out of the door and disappears, followed at once by CATHERINE who has caught up some strips of her sheet. BLAKE keeps hold of the man whom he has forced into a chair. With stick held threateningly and with his hair standing up wildly from his head he addresses him in no measured terms.)

BLAKE: You dastard! You devil! I know you, Mr. Cutter. Was it for this that a wife was given you? You drunken sot, steeped in liquor till you are ready to kill a woman! You are a monster worse than any brute. Even the tigers do not tear their mates. Do you think you will escape damnation? No, I can tell you that men will damn you and angels will damn you long before you are damned at the last Judgment.

(The man has given BLAKE a stupefied stare; he now buries his face in his hands.)

FUSELI: Why, Blake, you are swearing!

(BLAKE makes no answer. He looks severely at CUTTER who rouses himself and speaks slowly.)

CUTTER: Are you Mr. Blake?

BLAKE: I am.

CUTTER: I thought you were the devil.

BLAKE: The devil won't rescue anyone from your clutches. It was he who set you on to it.

CUTTER: Did I say devil? I meant angel. Your eyes, sir—they were like flames of fire.

FUSELI: Ah, Blake! The whip of little cords was for the animals in the Temple. It was the eyes that drove out the evil sellers. It was the eyes—the eyes that did it!

(Enter Mrs. BLAKE leading Mrs. CUTTER, who has evidently been attended to, bandaged and tidied by Mrs. BLAKE. Mrs. CUTTER goes at once up to her husband. She looks sharply at him before she speaks.)

Mrs. CUTTER: You are sober now, Sam, I can see. Come upstairs with me and I'll attend to you. You *are* in a state! Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, sir. Thank the gentlemen, Sam, and come.

(EXEUNT Mr. and Mrs. CUTTER, the man following his wife obediently and heavily.)

SIR ANTHONY: I congratulate you, Mr. Blake, not only on your imagination but on your action. I take my leave now but I will return to-morrow, as I wish to buy some more of your prints. I would like also to be allowed to read some of your poems. I may not have understood them when I glanced at them just now.

BLAKE *(shaking SIR ANTHONY'S hand warmly)*: You shall, sir.

FUSELI: We will go with you, Hone. Farewell, Blake. If there is at any time reason for a war, the battle will be won by the peace men.

SIR ANTHONY: I believe with all my heart, Mr. Fuseli, that the peace men will be the ones to win the last battle, but the brunt of the conflict will fall on us soldiers. Good-day, Mr. Blake.

(SIR ANTHONY and FUSELI make formal bows to Mrs. Blake, but VARLEY does not leave without giving an affectionate

handshake to CATHERINE as well as WILLIAM. EXEUNT all three.)

(BLAKE goes rather heavily to his chair and sits down. CATHERINE looks at her husband a little anxiously; he remains so silent and motionless. She goes into the scullery and returns with a little pipkin in her hand.)

CATHERINE: Shall I heat you up some soup? It is almost an hour before supper time.

BLAKE (*languidly*): Is it?

(CATHERINE goes to the fireplace and puts the pipkin among the coals, then she stands by her husband's side.)

CATHERINE: You are tired from the struggle, William.

(*A pause.*)

You believe in Peace. We both believe in it. It means love and joy—but . . . (*with her sentence unended, she stands looking puzzled.*)

BLAKE (*a sudden amused smile breaking over his face*): Oh, Kate! There is always a "but"! It seems written over this world of ours. It is one of the devils that afflict us or one of the angels that bless us. We shall know which some day. Get the supper on early. I want to finish that head of Bruce this evening. (*His eyes gaze into space.*) I can see him, Kate, as plainly in my memory as if his spirit were still sitting to me to be drawn.

(CATHERINE has put on the table a snowy tablecloth and sets on it bread, bowls and plates, etc. BLAKE'S eyes rest on her as she works and he rouses himself.)

Ah, my dear! Supper will soon be ready, I see. I'll go and wash. What a filthy fellow was that drunken man. (*He turns at the scullery door.*) There was something fine about Sir Anthony's head, was there not, Kate?

(CATHERINE smiles and nods her assent. BLAKE disappears. CATHERINE puts the pipkin on the table and stands waiting for her husband with folded hands almost as if she were in prayer.)

(CURTAIN)