

MISS TESMAN: Oh, that makes no difference.

TESMAN: You got home all right from the pier? Eh?

MISS TESMAN: Yes, Judge Brack was good enough to see me right to my door.

TESMAN: We were so sorry we couldn't give you a seat in the carriage. But you saw what a pile of boxes Hedda had.

MISS TESMAN: She certainly had plenty of boxes.

BERTA: (*To TESMAN.*) Shall I go in and see if there's anything I can do for the mistress?

TESMAN: No thank you, she said she would ring if she wanted anything.

BERTA: (*Going towards the right.*) Very well.

TESMAN: But look here—take this suitcase with you.

BERTA: (*Taking it.*) I'll put it in the attic.

*She goes out by the hall door.*

TESMAN: Fancy, Auntie—I had the whole of that suitcase chock full of copies of the documents. You wouldn't believe how much I have picked up from all the archives I have been examining—curious old details that no one has had any idea of—

MISS TESMAN: Yes, you don't seem to have wasted you time on your wedding trip, George.

TESMAN: But do take off your bonnet. Let me untie the strings—eh?

MISS TESMAN: (*While he does so.*) Well well—this is just as if you were still at home with us.

TESMAN: (*With the bonnet in his hand, looks at it from all sides.*) Why, what a gorgeous bonnet!

MISS TESMAN: I bought it on Hedda's account. So that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me if we happened to go out together.

TESMAN: (*Patting her cheek.*) You always think of everything, Aunt Julia. (*Lays the bonnet on a chair beside the table.*) And now suppose we sit and have a little chat, till Hedda comes.

*They seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa.*

MISS TESMAN: (*Takes both his hands and looks at him.*) What a delight it is to have you again, before my very eyes! My George—my poor brother's own boy!

TESMAN: And it's a delight for me, too! You, who have been father and mother in one to me.

MISS TESMAN: I know you will always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN: And what about Aunt Rina? No improvement—eh?

MISS TESMAN: There she lies, helpless, as she has lain for all these years. But heaven grant I may not lose her yet awhile! I don't know what I should make of my life, George—especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

TESMAN: (*Patting her back.*) There there—!

MISS TESMAN: (*Suddenly changing her tone.*) And to think that here are you a married man!—And that you should be the one to carry off Hedda Gabler—the beautiful Hedda Gabler, that was so beset with admirers!

TESMAN: (*Hums a little and smiles complacently.*) I fancy I have several good friends about town who would like to stand in my shoes—eh?

MISS TESMAN: And then this fine long wedding-tour, five—nearly six months—

TESMAN: A tour of research as well. I have had to do so much grubbing among old records—and to read no end of books too.

MISS TESMAN: (*More confidentially, and lowering her voice a little.*) But listen now, George,—have you nothing special to tell me?

TESMAN: I don't know of anything—I had a doctor's degree conferred on me—but that I told you.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, yes, but what I mean is—haven't you any expectations—?

TESMAN: Why, of course I have expectations.

MISS TESMAN: Ah!

TESMAN: I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, a professor—

TESMAN: I may say I am certain of it. But you know that already!

MISS TESMAN: (*Laughing to herself.*) I do. (*Changing the subject.*) But about your journey. It must have cost a great deal of money, George?

TESMAN: Well, my handsome travelling-scholarship went a good way.

MISS TESMAN: And especially travelling with a lady—they tell me that makes it ever so much more expensive.

TESMAN: Yes, of course—But Hedda had to have this trip, Auntie! Nothing else would have done.

MISS TESMAN: I suppose not—But tell me, have you gone thoroughly over the house yet?

TESMAN: Yes, I have been afoot ever since daylight.

MISS TESMAN: And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN: I'm delighted! Only I can't think what we are to do with the two empty rooms here.

MISS TESMAN: (*Laughing.*) I daresay you may find some use for them—in the course of time.

TESMAN: You mean as my library increases—eh?

MISS TESMAN: Yes, it was your library I was thinking of.

TESMAN: I am specially pleased on Hedda's account. Before we were engaged, she said that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.<sup>2</sup>

MISS TESMAN: It was lucky that this very house should come into the market.

TESMAN: The luck was on our side, eh?

MISS TESMAN: But the expense, my dear George!

TESMAN: How much do you think?

MISS TESMAN: Oh, I can't even guess until all the accounts come in.

<sup>2</sup> In the original "Statsradinde Falks villa"—showing that it had belonged to the widow of a cabinet minister. [Translator's Note]

TESMAN: Well, Judge Brack has secured the most favourable terms for me, so he said in a letter to Hedda.

MISS TESMAN: Yes, don't be uneasy, --Besides, I have given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

TESMAN: Security? what sort of security could you give?

MISS TESMAN: A mortgage on our annuity.

TESMAN: (*Jumps up.*) What! Have you gone out of your senses, Auntie? Your annuity—it's all that you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

MISS TESMAN: It's only a matter of form you know—Judge Brack assured me. It was he that was kind enough to arrange the whole affair for me.

TESMAN: But nevertheless—

MISS TESMAN: You will have your own salary to depend upon now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to pay up a little—!

TESMAN: Oh Auntie—will you never be tired of making sacrifices for me!

MISS TESMAN: (*Rises and lays her hand on his shoulders.*) Have I any other happiness in this world. You, who have had neither father nor mother to depend on. And now we have reached the goal, George!

TESMAN: It is really marvellous how everything has turned out for the best.

MISS TESMAN: And the people who opposed you—now you have them at your feet. Your most dangerous rival—his fall was the worst.

TESMAN: Have you heard anything of Eilert?

MISS TESMAN: Only that he is said to have published a new book.

TESMAN: What!

MISS TESMAN: Heaven knows whether it can be worth anything! Ah, when your new book appears—that will be another story! What is it about?

TESMAN: The domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN: Fancy—to be able to write on such a subject!