



# PLAYS VOL. 2

## GEORG KAISER

TRANSLATED BY B.J. KENWORTHY, H.F. GARTEN, ELIZABETH SPRIGGE

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### GEORG KAISER

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Georg Kaiser

*Translated by*

B.J. Kenworthy

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## INTRODUCTION

Georg Kaiser was born in Magdeburg on 25th November 1878. This was a time of rapid industrial and commercial growth in Germany; and it is symptomatic that in the year of Kaiser's birth the great ship-building yards of Blohm and Voß were founded in Hamburg and a liberal commercial policy was replaced by one of protective tariffs. The last quarter of the nineteenth century, when Kaiser was growing up, saw Germany finally change from a predominantly agrarian to an industrial economy, and in the process also becoming a more or less unified national state, rather than a collection of independent territories. The year of Kaiser's birth saw yet another element in the evolution of German capitalism: the introduction by Bismarck of the anti-Socialist laws which were to remain in force until 1890. Concomitant with the upsurge of industry was the creation of an urban proletariat and all that this brought with it: for instance, the population of Berlin rose from 1,122,000 in 1880 to 2,071,000 in 1910 (cf. Heinz Gollwitzer: *Europe in the Age of Imperialism 1880-1914*, London, 1969, p.20).

Such, in broad outline, was the background to Georg Kaiser's youth, though he left Germany between 1898 and 1901 to work for the General Electric Company in the Argentine, where he contracted the malaria that was later to prevent his serving in the German army in the First World War. On his return home he began to devote himself to writing plays, and it is on this genre that his literary reputation rests (although he also wrote two novels and a number of lyric poems). In 1908 he married and thereafter settled to a life of sometimes frenetic dramatic creativity, becoming in the 1920s, beside Gerhart Hauptmann, Germany's most frequently performed dramatist.

It was in the intellectual and emotional atmosphere of German Expressionism (whose heyday lasted from around 1915 to 1925) that Kaiser came to maturity. Virtually unknown until the overnight success of his pacifistic play *The Burgheers of Calais* (*Die Bürger von Calais*, translated in Georg Kaiser: *Five Plays*, Calder & Boyars, London, 1971) in 1917—although it had been begun even before the outbreak of war in 1914—he had been evolving his individual style and diction. This was the time of the Expressionist literary revolt against Naturalism, which Kaiser condemns in the essay *Historical Fidelity* (*Historientreue*, 1923) as 'arid



copying from nature' (öde Abschilderei der Natur). Expressionism, with its accompanying experimentation, its formal innovation and its exuberant pathos was evidently congenial to Kaiser's talent. The aspiration for the regeneration of man, very much in the air at the time, was taken up enthusiastically by Kaiser, especially in the short-lived euphoria of the early days of the Weimar Republic in 1918-1919, when there was at least the chance that Germany might make a new social, political, and economic beginning. In 1918 Kaiser wrote in the essay *Vision and Figure* of this vision of the regeneration of humanity: 'This vision is a dangerous tempter: it arouses passion—which stifles the voice that should speak that it be heard . . . Cool speech advances against impassioned involvement—the hot-blooded must solidify into form!'

Here he anticipates a criticism that was long levelled at him and which is epitomized in the title of Bernhard Diebold's book *Der Denkspieler Georg Kaiser* (1924), which implies that he was a writer who toyed with ideas, that he was coldly noetic and devoid of emotional engagement. It is true that his reason remains in control even where he is concerned to portray the deepest passions and that he shows a propensity for symmetrically tailored dramatic forms; yet this does not invalidate his claim to genuine commitment—though it may be rather to his creative mission as a dramatist than to the immediate material of his plays. His work fluctuates between the apparent objectivity of social criticism in *The Burgbers of Calais*, *From Morn to Midnight*, *The Coral*, and the two parts of *Gas*; and the more overtly subjective treatment in plays such as *One Day in October (Oktobertag)*, which deal with individual human relationships, where love often serves as a kind of insulation against the harshness of the outside world—what Kaiser once called the 'hated reality' (die verhaßte Realität). But frequently his subjectivism supervenes, even when he seems to be pursuing a 'social' theme—the classic example is perhaps *The Coral*; and the ostensibly dispassionate objectivity is often the stalking-horse for a highly personal, subjective preoccupation.

The pacifistic, thoughtfully critical and generally left-wing—though non-doctrinaire—stance of Kaiser made him a natural target for suppression by the Nazis, and after their seizure of power in 1933 his plays were banned in Germany. Between then and 1938 he prudently restricted his dramatic writing to non-political plays dealing chiefly with love between the sexes, until in the latter year he escaped from Germany only hours before his planned arrest. He went first to Holland and from there made his way to Switzerland, where, although living in very straitened circumstances, he was at last able to give free expression to his anti-Nazi views. Some four weeks after the German capitulation that ended the Second World War in Europe he died in Ascona on 4th June 1945.

The five plays translated in the present volume represent Kaiser's work from its earliest phase through the time of his prolific maturity in the 1920s to the years immediately before his death. *David and Goliath* is one of a small group of plays set in Denmark (as they are subtitled 'comedies',

it may be that a German setting seemed unpromising to Kaiser); they all deal with the power of money over men—and *David and Goliath*, for all its lightness, is not without its dash of social criticism. It is a play that must be seen against the background of the time when Kaiser was growing up and embarking on his career as a dramatist: the period from which it springs belongs very much to the days before the First World War. Its motivation depends in no small measure on *laissez-faire* capitalism and the commercial opportunities it offered the small businessman. In a version of the play earlier than that translated here, Sophus Möller proclaims: 'I, the small man, can step outside these walls of our penury and hurl a stone at the brazen giant wealth. It hits him on the head; it lays him low, and he has to yield up his treasure to me, without clemency or mercy, as it is written: And David drew his sword out of its sheath and smote the Philistine.' (Ich, der kleine Mann, kann hinaustreten aus diesen Mauern unserer Dürftigkeit und einen Stein gegen den erznen Riesen Reichtum schleudern. Er trifft ihn vor den Kopf; er schlägt ihn lang nieder und er muß mir von seinen Schätzen abgeben, ohne Gnade und Erbarmen, wie es geschrieben steht: Und David zog sein Schwert aus der Scheide und tötete den Philister.) This is reduced to the less circumstantial reference to the story of David and Goliath at the end of the play, and the signpost to Kaiser's theme thus rendered less obtrusive: '. . . You can conquer with your little finger, if your opponent has a weak spot. Merely to be on the attack is to be half way to defeat—you shall see that it's a dangerous game to make fun of dwarfs!'

In so much of Kaiser's work the plot turns upon the acceptance, occasionally by a whole community, more usually by an individual, of an idea—which can be based on self-deception and can emerge as an obsession, an extremity of subjectivism. Here the business community of the little town accepts as a fact that there is money to be made from the lottery winnings of the Möller family; Sophus accepts the existence of this belief as his working hypothesis: the perennially sensitive plant of 'business confidence' is brought into blossom by a confidence trick. It is revealed as applied avarice defeated by applied psychology and the stratagems of a not entirely disingenuous mind—Sophus, a typical product of his creator, is a master of sophistry.

*The President* (1905/6; revised 1926/7), a comedy—set this time in France—of a more derisively ironical tone, also depends for its plot upon a confidence trick, though one much more deliberately devised than that improvised by Sophus Möller as an answer to an aleatory challenge: the winning of the number once backed by his family in the state lottery. The schemes of the lawyer Blanchonnet are, by contrast, premeditated; the only chance element is the discovery among a deceased client's papers of documents concerning the defunct International Action League Against the White Slave Trade. He is motivated in resuscitating this League solely by the desire for social advancement—one must, as he says, be president of something or other to make one's way in society. What may appear as

altruism is unmasked as arrant self-seeking. The father's deviousness is ironically confounded by the *ingénue*; his own daughter, armed with the unworldliness of her convent-school upbringing which was calculated to be one of her main assets in the marriage market, unwittingly thwarts his schemes, according to which she was to be bartered in marriage in exchange for his entrée into high society—a sardonic bourgeois modification of the very trade in flesh that Blanchonnet is ostensibly engaged in combatting. That Elmire, in her innocence, takes seriously a genuine social evil whose existence her father is exploiting for his own ends, and as a result helps a pair of hotel thieves to escape with all his ready cash, only makes the irony all the harsher. Yet Kaiser ensures that no harm comes to her, so that the end of the comedy remains unclouded and only the schemer is discomfited.

By the time *The Flight to Venice* (*Die Flucht nach Venedig*), was written in 1922 the Expressionist movement was at its height; many of Kaiser's most 'expressionistic' plays had already been completed. In this same year, too, he wrote one of his most 'ecstatic' dramas (the adjective enjoyed considerable favour with the Expressionist writers), *Gilles and Jeanne*, dealing with the moral regeneration and redemption of the sinner Gilles de Rais through the spiritual suasion of the saint, Joan of Arc. If this play has as its theme the beneficent influence of the pure spirit, then *The Flight to Venice* examines the case against the intellect as a life-sapping succubus—a notion already treated by Kaiser in *Alcibiades Saved* (*Der gerettete Alkibiades*, 1919) and, since the turn of the century, a popular literary theme which was given currency by such writers as Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse. Much of the vitalism prevalent at the time derives from Nietzsche's doctrine of the Dionysian release of the instincts and the senses—for instance, in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883) he writes: 'Would that you were at least perfect as animals! But to the animal belongs innocence. Do I counsel you to kill your senses? I commend to you the innocence of the senses.' (Daß ihr doch wenigstens als Thiere vollkommen wäret! Aber zum Thiere gehört die Unschuld. Rathe ich euch, eure Sinne zu tödten? Ich rathe euch zur Unschuld der Sinne. *Von der Keuschheit*.) A further attack on the self-conscious, analytic intellect which undermines the *élan vital*, the life force, was launched by Henri Bergson in his *L'Evolution créatrice* (1907); and it is consonant with this thesis that, in Kaiser's *Alcibiades Saved*, Socrates is condemned to death for subverting the uncomplicated natural vitality of the gymnasia with his debilitating dialectic.

This contemporary concern was also a personal problem of Kaiser's. In his book *The Image of the Artist and the Artist Figure* (*Georg Kaiser: Künstlerbild und Künstlerfigur*, Frankfurt/Main—Munich, 1976, p. 94) Klaus Petersen writes: 'In discussing Kaiser's image of the artist, we have established that, in the Theoretical Writings, the dramatist recognizes two different types of artist: the artist who sets out from the idea and the one who sets out from the sensuous.' (Wir haben bei der Besprechung von

Kaisers Künstlerbild festgestellt, daß der Dramatiker in den Theoretischen Schriften zwei verschiedene Künstlertypen kennt: den Künstler aus der Idee und den Künstler aus der Sinnlichkeit.) While it is clear that Kaiser inclines to the former type, it is also evident that he feels at the same time some kind of moral obligation—arising, perhaps, from the pressures of the intellectual climate of the time—at least to genuflect in the direction of the latter type. Indeed, his essay *The Sensuousness of Thought* (*Die Sinnlichkeit des Gedankens*, 1925) attempts to find a synthesis of the two, as the very title indicates; and, in the year in which *The Flight to Venice* appeared, in a theoretical essay called *The Coming Humanity* (also published, revealingly, as *Poetry and Energy—Dichtung und Energie*, 1922) he seeks to vindicate creative writing as a vitalistic activity, both in its intention and in its practice: 'A form of energy is creative writing. With this affirmation the new aesthetics makes its appearance. The former one of terror and pity for the effect of poetry no longer obtains. Now we judge only according to the strength or weakness of the energy expended by the creator of the work. ' (Form von Energie ist Dichtung. Mit dieser Feststellung tritt die neue Ästhetik auf. Die bisherige von Furcht und Mitleid für Wirkung von Dichtung besteht nicht länger. Wir urteilen nur noch nach Stärke und Schwäche der verausgabten Energie des Schöpfers von Dichtwerk.)

In the figures of Alfred de Musset and George Sand, Kaiser presents these two types of artist, though with a reservation, however, which makes the play a very personal one; though every artist, whether consciously or unconsciously, must in some measure determine the relationship between experience and imagination, between reality and vision, in his creative work. Musset is essentially the artist of the idea: he isolates himself, much as Kaiser did; his experience—such as his love for Sand—are not to be profaned as mere fodder to be gobbled up and regurgitated by his artistic genius. And his words: 'I lack perspective. I become obsessed with myself' have the ring of a personal avowal on the part of his creator. In this play the contrastive metaphor of cold and hot—which recurs in Kaiser's work, varying in implication from that of impotence as against sexual passion, of chill disillusionment following the chase after a life of fulfilment to the opposition of 'life' and intellect—is synthesized into the elaborate oxymoron addressed by Musset to Sand: 'Are you not frozen beneath your skin that breathes warmth? Touch it with your fingers: it burns—underneath ice is forming. In the mould of your body life and death is fashioned.'

Yet there remains the reservation: Musset, in an action symbolizing his emancipation from the 'vampirism of literary creativity' (*Vampirismus des Dichterischen*, W. Huder) which he perceives in Sand, drops the locks of her hair into the canal. Similarly Sand, resolved to free herself from the inhibiting artist's compulsion to analyze each experience even in the experiencing of it, to overcome the element of objective detachment in her and to surrender herself utterly to the moment, drops her manuscript into

the water—a sort of parallelism typical of Kaiser's work. But both symbolic gestures remain, ironically, gestures—Musset is drawn inescapably to Sand, and at the end Sand is already shaping her latest attempt at self-abandonment to instinct into literature. Neither can maintain the extreme position originally allotted them, but each is impelled into compromise with the other; the distinction becomes blurred. It is as if Kaiser himself is propelled between these two poles of his own artistic temperament, but cannot escape their traction: he is aware that 'words are the death of life', yet remains devoted—equivocally, perhaps, but absolutely—to the production of literature.

In his early plays—*Headmaster Kleist (Rektor Kleist, 1903)*, *The Spirit of Antiquity (Der Geist der Antike, 1905)*—Georg Kaiser had taken up, with quizzical irony, the current concept of the mind/body dichotomy as material for comedy; later he looks at it more seriously, and finally it emerges in more metaphysical garb as the conflict between the outer reality of the physical world and the inner world of the mind. And it is in this sense that he developed a newspaper report of a paternity case in France into his play *One Day in October (Oktobertag, 1927)*. In this play, as in so much of Kaiser's work, the idea triumphs over the crass constraints of mundane reality. This drama of the interplay of outer and inner reality might have taken as its motto the words of the Viennese writer Arthur Schnitzler some thirty years earlier:

More than the truth that **was** and **will be**  
 Is delusion that is . . . the moment reigns supreme!  
 (Mehr als die Wahrheit, die da **war** und **sein wird**,  
 Ist Wahn, der **ist** . . . der Augenblick regiert!)

from *Paracelsus* (1896)

In the play, Catherine, through the force of her own desire, has mentally transmuted a chance series of events into a coherent pattern—her betrothal and wedding to Jean-Marc Marrien and the consummation of their marriage. But Kaiser further set himself the more difficult task of demonstrating how, by a kind of psycho-osmotic process, Catherine's version of the truth implants itself also in Marrien's mind. The catalyst of this process, of course, is love, albeit of a somewhat startling suddenness. That Kaiser recognized the difficulty of his undertaking—and opinions may differ as to his success in it—is evident from Coste's words to Marrien: 'Everything is real and unreal at the same time. I am inclined to call what brought you and Catherine together a mystical union. Doubtless of heavenly origin—doubly difficult, therefore, to establish on the firm ground of reality.' And the perilous seductiveness of surrender to omnipotent fantasy which so readily transforms reality—and, like Sand's genius, feeds upon the transformation—is recognized in Coste's warning: 'Lt. Marrien—there are limits to all transmutations of reality, the deepest dream issues in death . . .' It is through death, through Marrien's brutal killing of Leguerche under the impulsion of his deepest dreams—his

acceptance of Catherine's reality—that he attempts to break out of the limits imposed by the outward reality of the world: the 'objective' world, in the figure of Leguerche, is simply annihilated. *One Day in October* is a monument to its creator's own subjectivity.

In 1940, during his exile in Switzerland, Kaiser wrote to the Swiss dramatist César von Arx suggesting that they co-operate in writing a play; he goes on: 'read the enclosed newspaper report. From this report a play blossoms; in the life-boat are only children. The stage is the surging sea with this unique boat. We learn from the behaviour and the mouths of the children the extreme cruelty of events. The evacuation—the torpedoing . . . Now profound observations about life and the leaving of life . . . Condemnation of adults, who commit such infamies: leaving children to drift in a boat at sea . . .'

This play, then, which was in the end written without Arx's co-operation and which was not finished until 1943, also owed its inspiration to a newspaper report; the way Kaiser developed the account of the wartime torpedoing of a ship carrying evacuee children to Canada is indicated in his own prefatory note to the play, *The Raft of the Medusa*.

Whether it is entirely successful is open to debate—'profound observations about life and the leaving of life' from the lips of ten- and twelve-year-olds present their own problems; but Kaiser is not primarily concerned with naturalistic verisimilitude. That these observations are offered in an only slightly simplified version of Kaiser's stylized diction is a typical legacy of the largely undifferentiated language of the expressionist drama of his earlier days, where all the figures tend to speak with their creator's voice. Nevertheless, it does give rise to a certain tension between the language and the speakers.

The title *The Raft of the Medusa* (*Das Floß der Medusa*) was obviously suggested by Géricault's picture *Le radeau de la Méduse*, depicting the survivors of the French ship *Méduse*, which was wrecked off the African coast early in the nineteenth century. Kaiser, however, avails himself only of the name; his play revives a favourite theme of the Expressionist generation: that of the regeneration of man, of the so-called New Man. Here, however, the theme is overlaid with the misanthropic pessimism of Kaiser's last years; the morally reborn boy, Allan, is used, as the dramatist implies, as a vehicle for the condemnation of the adult world, whose follies and mindless cruelties are embryonic in the distorted and ill-digested superstitions that the children have picked up from their elders.

In the years during which *The Raft of the Medusa* was being written, Kaiser also completed his three 'Greek plays'. In one of them, *Pygmalion*, he formulates explicitly what had all along been latent in his work in connection with the theme of the regeneration of man: the admission that, however desirable it might be, it was nevertheless a utopian dream incapable of realization. The fate of Allan in *The Raft of the Medusa* is a further illustration of the impossibility of the regenerate man's survival in the world of empirical reality.



# DAVID AND GOLIATH

*Comedy in Three Acts*

Translated by B. J. Kenworthy



*Characters*

SOPHUS MÖLLER, Savings Bank clerk  
HELENE, his wife  
DAGMAR, his daughter  
PETER MÖLLER, proprietor of a printing works  
ASMUS EXNER, merchant  
OTTILIE, his wife  
MISS JUEL  
JOCHUM MAGNUSSEN, brewer  
AXEL, his son  
LUNDBERG, book-keeper  
BRANDSTRUP, landlord  
MRS MACKESSPRANG  
MAGNUSSEN'S FOOTMAN  
SOPHUS MÖLLER'S MAID  
GUESTS of the Magnussens

*The action takes place in a small Danish town.*

## ACT ONE

*The top-floor flat of SOPHUS MÖLLER: the cramped room at once living-room and dining-room. A window in the sloping wall right. A glass door at the back. In the centre the table is laid for supper. AXEL MAGNUSSEN is leaning against an armchair and drumming heavily on its wickerwork. DAGMAR at the piano—playing and singing.*

DAGMAR. Stately bird that far above us flies —  
thou art rich but I am poor —  
all thy gold falls from the sun —  
thou art rich but I am poor —  
and silver showers on thee the moon —  
thou art rich but I am poor —  
here below thy darker shadow flies:  
here, where gold and silver lose their lustre —  
I am poor—yet thou so rich!

*AXEL puts the chair noisily in its place and goes to the piano.*

DAGMAR. Haven't you the patience to hear the end of it? Isn't it beautiful, the way the tune is repeated here: thou art rich—I am poor?  
AXEL (*removes the music*). You're wasting your time and your voice on it!

DAGMAR. It's a song I like.

AXEL. How can you like a piece of nonsense that—

DAGMAR (*laughing*). Made the composer world-famous!

AXEL. I'm not bothered about the music—but I am criticizing the words. 'Stately bird that far above us flies—here below thy darker shadow flies!'—Why, it's a soothing shadow the bird casts into this hell-fire that is life. Why does it have to be a dirge? Someone has to sacrifice himself—and bear the burden of wealth for other people. Or do you think that it's any pleasure?

DAGMAR. Songs can't be told in words, Mr Magnussen.

AXEL. But songs **are** words!

DAGMAR. Am I to sing nothing but doh ray me fah soh?

AXEL. Must you always be playing the piano and singing, Miss Dagmar?

MRS HELENE MÖLLER *enters from the left with the lamp, which she puts down on the table.*

HELENE. Dagmar, you'll have to stop now. It's high time you got dressed for the concert.

DAGMAR. I've already stopped, mother—Mr Magnussen was objecting to my going on.

AXEL. I was certainly objecting to—

DAGMAR. Piano, song—the lot!

AXEL. Only just a poem!

DAGMAR *has already gone off left.*

HELENE *(turning up the lamp).* Why didn't you like it?

AXEL. Because—Miss Dagmar was trying to let me know with that silly chorus about 'thou art rich—I am poor' that—*(he hurls the music book down on to the sofa.)*

HELENE. Finish what you were going to say, Mr Magnussen.

AXEL *(in front of her).* Mrs Möller—don't you feel it—as clearly as the blind feel—you and Dagmar—that the air is full of unspoken declarations?!

HELENE. Does your father know that you are a frequent visitor under our roof?

AXEL. I have nothing to confess to him.

HELENE. And if you were to tell him?

AXEL. I'd get a more or less unnecessary answer!

HELENE. No—your father would be right.

AXEL. Mrs Möller!

HELENE. Let me have my say. It's true enough: so rich doesn't belong with so poor. The son of Magnussen of the Royal Brewery doesn't belong with the daughter of Möller, a mere clerk in the municipal savings bank. We don't want to bring fairy-tales into this workaday world. We should wake up with headaches.

*There is a knock on the glass door. HELENE opens it—to*  
MRS MACKESSPRANG, *the charwoman.*

MRS MACKESSPRANG *(notices AXEL—curtsies).* Mr Magnussen junior himself in person—it's enough to take my breath away. I don't suppose Mr Magnussen knows me—I'm Mackessprang the charwoman. But is there anyone in the building who doesn't know young Mr Magnussen? It's a great honour for the stairs I scrub—and when Mr Brandstrup the landlord fusses about the amount of soap I use on the scrubbing, then I tell him the stairs a Mr Magnussen junior walks up have got to be as bright as a new pin!

HELENE. Was there something you wanted to tell me, Mrs Mackessprang?

MRS MACKESSPRANG. I really wanted to ask you something, Mrs Möller. I hope you won't mind, in the presence of—

HELENE. Well, what is it?

MRS MACKESSPRANG. I'm a bit short of money—just until the first of the month. Of course, my wages aren't due for three days yet, but I'm in a bit of a fix. I wonder if I could ask for the money for doing the stairs today? (*With a glance at AXEL*). Maybe it could be arranged.

HELENE (*quickly*). I can't possibly manage it today, Mrs Mackessprang. I pay on time—but not a day earlier or a day later. You'll get what's due to you on the first. It's a waste of time asking me. You've come all the way up here for nothing. (*She edges MRS MACKESSPRANG out and shuts the door.*) I have you to thank for that, Mr Magnussen!

AXEL. For your charwoman's visit?

HELENE. That and more. Mr Brandstrup is putting the rent up. People think we're well-off—since young Mr Magnussen has been coming here. Now we have to pinch and squeeze even more—we may have to exchange this attic flat for the basement. That's the language of harsh reality which we all have to obey!

AXEL. But—a single word can change all that!

HELENE. In a world of make-believe, where money falls from the sky and rich fathers are angels!

AXEL. I swear to you that I shall marry only the poorest of girls—because that's what I want to do now! That's a binding oath—or I'll go and be a labourer in my father's brewery!

HELENE. That's your fate, Mr Axel—Dagmar's way leads through the conservatory to music teaching. I shall thank the Lord if only Möller can pay for that!

AXEL. Yes—it must be costing him a lot to have her study singing and piano together.

HELENE. Is it expensive?

AXEL. Don't you know anything about it?

HELENE. Möller never mentions it. She is his only daughter, after all.

AXEL. It's a remarkable achievement for a man earning a clerk's salary.

HELENE (*attentive*). How much do you think the lessons are swallowing up?

AXEL. I should reckon at least four-hundred crowns a year.

HELENE. Four hundred crowns? Why, that—that's impossible!

AXEL. Mr Möller is making it possible.

HELENE. Mr Magnussen—are you helping my husband out with money?

AXEL. No, Mrs Möller.

HELENE. Then I can't understand it . . .

AXEL. You're getting quite worked up about it!

HELENE. No—that's not what we were going to talk about. Möller works in the savings bank, so he ought to know about money matters. He'll know where to get the money from—and how to make his money go round!

AXEL. He'll have learnt to account for it in the savings bank!

HELENE (*close to Axel*). Mr Axel—you must say goodbye to Dagmar today, this very evening. She'll have to give up—and she can now—she knows enough to stand on her own feet. She can go to Copenhagen and teach beginners.

AXEL. And what about me?

HELENE. You will find a girl from your own circle.

AXEL. Do you want to make me break my oath?

HELENE. Give Dagmar up—I beg you!

AXEL. The moment Dagmar becomes rich—as rich as I am—I shall be separated from her. We shall be oceans apart, Mrs Möller.

HELENE. Our daughter won't embarrass you by making that come true. Well then—(*DAGMAR enters left—still pulling on her gloves.*)

DAGMAR. Are you bringing me home from the concert?

AXEL. When I've taken you there!

DAGMAR. Let's go!

HELENE. Aren't you going to have something to eat first?

DAGMAR (*by the table*). Cold sausage—cheese—beer?

HELENE. Were you expecting to find something more when you came back from the concert?

DAGMAR. This meal will be completely transformed with the help of the magic of Brahms and Beethoven. That's what music does for me, Mr Magnussen. Then the sausage will become pheasant—the cheese pineapple—and the beer champagne. That's the way we live in the lap of luxury, whenever we want to!

AXEL. I'm sorry not to have been invited too!

DAGMAR. So you see, mother, I'll have a delicious meal today. I'll see you again at suppertime! (*Kisses her quickly on the cheek. Exit with AXEL, who kisses HELENE'S hand.*)

HELENE (*at the table—pressing her hands to her temples—stammering*).  
Four . . . hundred . . . that—that just isn't possible . . . four-hundred  
a year . . .

*The glass door is opened cautiously—BRANDSTRUP'S podgy face under a peaked cap peers into the room.*

BRANDSTRUP. May I?

HELENE (*starting and turning round*). Mr Brandstrup!

BRANDSTRUP. That's right—it's yours truly! (*Sits down at the table.*) Those stairs—those damn awful stairs!

HELENE (*also sits down—staring at BRANDSTRUP*). What—about . . .  
Has anything happened?

BRANDSTRUP (*looks at her, nodding and grinning—pushes his hand across the table and grasps HELENE'S hand*). . . . I congratulated the young lady on the stairs.

HELENE (*with a sigh of relief—deprecatingly*). My daughter is not engaged to the gentleman!