

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

By Henrik Ibsen (1882)

In a new translation and adaptation by

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© July 2016

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CAST

Dr Henry Gibson, Medical Officer of the Spa Baths.

Mrs. Gibson, his wife.

Petra, their daughter, a teacher.

Peter Gibson, the Doctor's elder brother and Mayor of the Town

Martin Kyle, Mrs. Gibson's father.

Hinchcliffe, editor of the *People's Messenger*.

Armitage, President of the Chamber of Commerce, etc.

Captain Hooper, a Master Mariner.

Men and women comprising the audience at a public meeting.

The action takes place in an unspecified Yorkshire spa town in 1928.

ACT I

SCENE — *The Gibson's sitting room. There is a rectangular table downstage with three chairs and a smaller round table slightly further on the opposite downstage side with three more chairs.*

MRS. GIBSON: *(enters upstage, speaking over her shoulder)* But that's the way it goes, Mr. Hinchcliffe; come late and you have to make do with cold meat.

Mrs Gibson is 'tidying up'. PETER GIBSON enters very quietly. He wears an overcoat, and his official bicorne hat, and carries his stick of office.

PETER GIBSON: And a very good evening to you, sister-in-law.

MRS. GIBSON: *(slightly startled)* Oh mercy, good evening – it's you, Peter? How good of you just to drop in and see us – unannounced!

PETER GIBSON: Well, I happened to be passing, and so . . . *(looks offstage.)* But you have company I see . . . And Henry is not here?

MRS. GIBSON: *(slightly flustered)* Oh, no – it was quite by chance he came in. *(Hurriedly.)* Wouldn't you like to sit down and have something too?

PETER GIBSON: I thank you, no. Good gracious – cooked meat at night! Not with my digestion.

MRS. GIBSON: Oh, but just once in a while . . .

PETER GIBSON: No, no, my dear Katherine; I'll stick to my usual; weak tea with bread and unsalted butter. Much more wholesome in the long run – and rather more economical too.

MRS. GIBSON: Henry's just gone out for his usual little turn after supper. Healthy mind; healthy body!

PETER GIBSON: Walking after food; I doubt if that is a wise thing to do. *(Looks off upstage then backs away as HINCHCLIFFE enters with a napkin tucked into his waistcoat)* Oh, it's you, Mr. Hinchcliffe!

HINCHCLIFFE: Good evening, Mr. Mayor.

PETER GIBSON: *(giving a slightly patronising brief bow)* Good evening. Here on business, no doubt.

HINCHCLIFFE: *(nods then notices his napkin which he whips off. Mrs Gibson obligingly takes it from him and walks briefly off and immediately re-enters)* Partly; it's about an article for the Messenger.

PETER GIBSON: My brother seems to have become rather a frequent contributor.

HINCHCLIFFE: Whenever he feels he has any home truths to impart.

PETER GIBSON: Indeed. I can't blame him in the least, as a writer, for addressing himself to the quarters where he will find the readiest sympathy. And, don't misunderstand me; I personally have no reason to be *particularly* critical of your paper, Mr. Hinchcliffe.

HINCHCLIFFE: Glad to hear it, I'm sure!

PETER GIBSON: Yes, taking one thing with another, I would say there's an excellent spirit of toleration in this town – an admirable *municipal* spirit. Which all springs from the fact of our having a great common interest to unite us – an interest that is the joint concern of every right-minded citizen, or so I should hope.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*with irony*) You couldn't possibly mean the Baths?

PETER GIBSON: Mark my words, the Municipal *Spa* Baths will become *the* driving force of borough life! No doubt about it!

MRS. GIBSON: And that's just what Dr Gibson says in his article.

PETER GIBSON: Fancy! Extraordinary how this modest town has developed within the last year or two! Much more life and business up and doing. And landed properties are going up in value every day. Think on!

HINCHCLIFFE: And unemployment's coming *down*, it would seem.

PETER GIBSON: With the gratifying consequence that the burden on local ratepayers has been lightened. And that relief will be even greater if we can just get a really first-class summer under our belts, with coach-loads of visitors – especially invalids; they're the ones who'll get the Spa Baths talked about.

HINCHCLIFFE: Well then, the doctor's article should come in pretty handy.

PETER GIBSON: Is this something he's been writing lately?

HINCHCLIFFE: As a matter of fact this is one he wrote over the winter; a recommendation of the Baths; a glowing account of the excellent sanitary conditions. At that time I held the article over. I just thought it would be better to wait until the spring because that's the time folk begin to think seriously about summer holidays, or taking a cure, and such like.

PETER GIBSON: How right you are; you were perfectly right, Mr. Hinchcliffe. Excellent civic sense.

HINCHCLIFFE: Glad you think so. Yes, the Doctor's really tireless when it's any question of the Baths.

PETER GIBSON: And that's as it should be for the Medical Officer to the Spa Baths.

HINCHCLIFFE: And not forgetting they owe their very existence to him.

PETER GIBSON: To *him*? Well indeed! I have heard from time to time that certain people hold that opinion. Even so, others might well believe that I took a *modest* part in the whole enterprise.

MRS. GIBSON: Very true, Peter, and that's what Harry's always saying.

HINCHCLIFFE: Who would deny it, Mr. Mayor? It was certainly you got the whole thing up and running; got that, whad'y'call it, arm's length company set up; and what's more organised the public subscription for bonds or shares or whatever. You've made a practical concern of it; everyone knows that. I only meant to say the *idea* came first from the doctor.

PETER GIBSON: The *idea*, oh yes! My brother has plenty of *those*.

MRS. GIBSON: Peter dear!

HINCHCLIFFE: Now don't get me wrong, Mr Mayor.

MRS. GIBSON: (*shooing him out*) Just you go in and have dessert, Mr. Hinchcliffe? The Doctor's sure to be back directly.

HINCHCLIFFE: Ta very much; perhaps just a spoonful. (*Exits.*)

PETER GIBSON: (*lowering his voice a little*) It is a curious fact that people from the working classes never seem to lose their want of tact.

MRS. GIBSON: Peter, please don't get worked up about it! Why can't you and Harry just share the credit, like brothers are supposed to?

PETER GIBSON: I might be willing to do so if my own part is duly acknowledged; but some of us, it seems, are just not satisfied with a *share*.

MRS. GIBSON: Oh what nonsense! You two get on so well together – usually. (*Listens*) Here he is at last, I think.

DR. GIBSON: (*laughing and talking offstage*) Look here Kate – here's another visitor for you. The more the merrier! Come in, Captain Hooper. Come in, come along in! (*GIBSON and CAPTAIN HOOPER enter.*) Come through, Captain Hooper; you must have some roast beef. (*Pushes HOOPER forward.*)

MRS. GIBSON: Harry dear; don't you see who's ...?

DR. GIBSON: (*turning*) Oh, it's you then, Peter? (*Grasping his hand firmly which Peter withdraws and shakes.*) Now isn't this delightful; let's all sit down round the dining-room table.

PETER GIBSON: Alas, I really must get going ...

DR. GIBSON: Stuff and nonsense! We're just about to have a glass of hot toddy. You haven't forgotten it I hope, Kate?

MRS. GIBSON: The kettle's just boiling. (*Exits, Hooper follows.*)

PETER GIBSON: Dear me no. I never care to drink alcohol in the evening.

DR. GIBSON: It won't be a boozing session, Peter; just a glass or two. I don't think you can appreciate it just as keenly as I do. You've spent your entire life in these delightful surroundings and that's bound to have blunted your senses. But me! Buried all these years in a chilly little corner of Scotland, hardly ever seeing a stranger or anyone who might bring some new ideas with him – well, in my case, coming back here has just the same effect as if I'd woken up in Paradise.

PETER GIBSON: This place! Paradise?

DR. GIBSON: I know, I know; this is a pretty small beer borough compared with many another place. (*Calls*) Kate, hasn't the postman been today?

MRS. GIBSON: (*From the dining-room*) No, Harry. There's been nothing at all.

DR. GIBSON: And then to find myself comfortably off at last! That's something one learns to value the hard way, when one's been on the brink of bankruptcy as I have.

PETER GIBSON: Don't let's talk about that.

DR. GIBSON: Now, won't you come and have just a slice? Just let me show you, at any rate? Look here ...

PETER GIBSON: No, no – not for worlds! Consider my digestion!

DR. GIBSON: But just come here then. Don't you think the table looks fine, with our splendid new dinner service *and* a starched linen table-cover?

PETER GIBSON: Yes, yes. I see that. Fancy!

DR. GIBSON: And Kate's got a Tiffany – well Tiffany-style – lampshade too. Do you see it? All out of her household economies, she tells me. It makes the room seem so cosy. Don't you agree? Just stand there for a moment – no, no, not there – here, that's better! Look now, how the light pulls it altogether. I really think it looks charming, don't you think?

PETER GIBSON: (*Pulling away from the Doctor's grasp*) Oh well, if you can *afford* luxuries of that sort ...

DR. GIBSON: Yes, I *can* afford it. Kate told me only yesterday that I'm earning *almost* as much as we spend.

PETER GIBSON: Almost! Fancy that!

DR. GIBSON: At all events I don't think I'm profligate. But I simply won't deny myself the simple pleasure of entertaining friends. After living for so long shut out of it all I really crave that sort of thing. It's a necessity of life for me to mix with young, thrusting men, men with active, inquiring, modern, radical minds; and I'd say that describes both of those fellows who are enjoying their supper in there. (*Pause.*) I wish you got on better with Hinchcliffe.

PETER GIBSON: (*with a dismissive gesture*) And that reminds me, Hinchcliffe was telling me he was going to print yet another article of yours.

DR. GIBSON: An article. Of mine?

PETER GIBSON: Yes, one about the Spa Baths. Something you wrote last winter.

DR. GIBSON: Oh, that one! (*After the slightest of hesitations*) Well, perhaps I don't intend that to appear just for the present.

PETER GIBSON: Why not, may I ask? Wouldn't this be a most opportune moment?

DR. GIBSON: As like as not; other things being equal. (*Crosses right.*)

PETER GIBSON: (*eyeing him suspiciously*) Is there anything *unequal* about the present circumstances?

DR. GIBSON: (*standing still*) To tell you the truth, I just can't say right now; at all events not today, this evening. There may be something a little abnormal but, on the other hand, there may be nothing at all. It's perfectly possible it's all a figment of my imagination.

PETER GIBSON: I must say that all sounds altogether too mysterious. Surely I'm entitled to assume that as Executive Chairman of the Board of the Spa Baths Municipal Partnership Limited ...

DR. GIBSON: And I should have thought that as its Medical Officer – Oh, come on, we shouldn't be letting fly at one another, Peter.

PETER GIBSON: Heaven forefend! And I for one am not in the habit of letting fly, as you call it. However I am entitled to demand without equivocation that all Spa Baths matters are dealt with in a business-like

manner, through the proper channels, by the new, semi-autonomous company and its Board of Directors. I simply cannot allow anyone going behind our backs or using any roundabout means – not least now that the shares and bonds can be publicly traded.

DR. GIBSON: Have I ever at any time tried to go behind your back?

PETER GIBSON: Let's just say you have an astonishing propensity to go your own way, and to me that's just as unforgivable in a well-ordered community.

DR. GIBSON: I'm sure all that's true, if you say so. But what the devil has any of it to do with me?

PETER GIBSON: Precisely what you seem to be so unwilling to learn, Henry. Some day you'll suffer for it – some day! Just you mark my words. Well I've said all I want to say on the subject so I'll bid you good-night.

DR. GIBSON: Peter, I think you've taken leave of your senses. You're off on the wrong tack altogether.

PETER GIBSON: That doesn't happen often, Henry. Now you must excuse me ... (*Calls into the dining-room*) Good night, Katherine. Good night, gentlemen. (*Exits.*)

MRS. GIBSON: (*entering*) Has he gone?

DR. GIBSON: (*nodding*) And in his usual grouchy mood.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry, what have you done to him this time?

DR. GIBSON: Oh, it's a medical matter, Kate, that's all ... You know, I'm really perplexed the postman hasn't come today.

HINCHCLIFFE and HOOPER enter.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*stretching*) Aye but one feels like a new man after eating like that. Our mayor wasn't in the best of tempers tonight, happen.

DR. GIBSON: It's all in his stomach; his digestion is wretched.

HINCHCLIFFE: And here was me hoping it was the *People's Messenger* he couldn't stomach.

DR. GIBSON: The trouble is, quite frankly, Peter's a lonely man. Poor fellow; he has no home comforts to enjoy. It's nothing but business, business, business and municipal affairs. And then there's all that nauseating weak tea he drinks by the basinful! But talking about drinking, when are we going to have that toddy, Kate?

MRS. GIBSON: (*exiting*) Straight away, straight away.

DR. GIBSON: Sit here beside me, Captain Hooper. We don't often see you. Make yourself at home, Hinchcliffe. (*They sit at the small table as Mrs Gibson brings in a tray, with glasses in holders, a bottle and a kettle. She talks as she pours out the toddies and hands them round.*)

MRS. GIBSON: Sailing off again soon then, Captain Hooper?

HOOPER: Next week, as it happens.

HINCHCLIFFE: Then you won't be taking part in our local elections?

HOOPER: There's going to be an election?

HINCHCLIFFE: You didn't know that? I'm shocked. You take *no* interest in public affairs?

HOOPER: Not me; I've no interest whatsoever in politics.

HINCHCLIFFE: All the same, one ought to vote, don't you think?

HOOPER: Not if one knows nothing about what's going on?

HINCHCLIFFE: Knows nothing! You can't be serious? Besides, I think a community ought to be run like a ship. Everyone ought to take their turn in charge of the helm.

HOOPER: That might be all very well on shore but on board ship it just wouldn't work at all, I'm afraid. The captain stays in charge all the time.

DR. GIBSON: Is there some exciting story in the next *Messenger*?

HINCHCLIFFE: As a matter of fact, I was thinking of printing your article.

DR. GIBSON: Ah yes, damn it – my article! Look here; that had better wait a bit.

HINCHCLIFFE: But why so? I've a convenient space for it and I'd have thought it was near perfect timing.

DR. GIBSON: Yes, yes, true: in one sense you're right; but it must be held over all the same. I can't explain it right now.

PETRA enters with a bundle of exercise books under her arm.

PETRA: Good evening.

DR. GIBSON: My dear Petra; come along in. We have distinguished company.

Mrs Gibson takes Petra's books, gestures to her to stay and exits.

PETRA: So here you all are then, sitting around enjoying yourselves while I've been out working like a galley slave!

DR. GIBSON: Well, come along in and join us now you *are* here.

HINCHCLIFFE: May I mix a glass of toddy for you?

PETRA: (*coming to the table*) Thanks, I would rather do that myself. Wicked man, you always make it far too strong ... (*PETRA and HINCHCLIFFE smile at each other, and then ...*) Oh father, I nearly forgot! I've a letter here for you. (*Takes it from her pocket and holds it out to her father who comes across to her eagerly.*)

DR. GIBSON: A letter? Who from?

PETRA: (*shrugging with little concern*) I don't know. The postman handed it to me at the garden gate just as I was going out this morning.

DR. GIBSON: (*upset*) And you only give to me now!

PETRA: Father, I didn't have the time to run up here again. I was in a frightful hurry.

DR. GIBSON: Petra; oh Petra! (*Mrs Gibson enters.*)

MRS. GIBSON: Is that the thing you've been fretting about, Harry?

DR. GIBSON: It certainly is. Excuse me everyone. I must just pop into my study for just a moment. (*Exits downstage.*)

PETRA: What do you think that's all about, mother?

MRS. GIBSON: I haven't the least idea; but for the past couple of days he's been asking every five minutes if the postman has been.

HINCHCLIFFE: Happen it's a cheque from some wealthy patient.

PETRA: Poor old dad! He's going to work himself to death if he's not careful. (*Mixes a glass for herself.*) Here's mud in your eye, Mr Hinchcliffe!

HINCHCLIFFE: Was it the evening school tonight?

PETRA: Yes, for a couple of hours.

HINCHCLIFFE: *And* four hours of school-teaching this morning, I suppose?

PETRA: Five.

MRS. GIBSON: Five! And you've brought home exercise books to correct.

PETRA: A whole heap, yes. But I don't mind actually. I feel so delightfully tired afterwards.

HINCHCLIFFE: And you like that?

PETRA: Yes, because then I sleep so well. ... I'll tell you what I don't like though. It's the fact there's so much falsehood nowadays; I mean we have to stand there and tell lies to the children.

All are taken aback; Mrs Gibson, hand to mouth, is visibly shocked.

HOOPER: Tell lies?

PETRA: Oh yes, we have to teach them all sorts of things that we don't really believe?

HOOPER: Can this possibly be true?

PETRA: If only I had the money, I'd start my own school and it would be conducted on completely different lines; like a Montessori school perhaps.

HOOPER: Well if you're serious about that, Miss Gibson, I should be delighted to offer you a schoolroom. My big house stands almost empty with my being off at sea so much. There's an immense dining-room downstairs.

Mrs Gibson shakes her head in alarm.

PETRA: (*laughing*) Thank you very much; but I don't think anything will ever come of it.

HINCHCLIFFE: No, I'm hoping Miss Gibson will take up journalism.

DR. GIBSON enters downstage with the opened letter in one hand and some papers in the other.

DR. GIBSON: (*waving the letter*) Well, *now* the town is going to have something interesting to talk about, I can tell you!

MRS. GIBSON: What on earth have you done this time, Harry?

DR. GIBSON: Done? I've made a tremendous discovery, Kate.

HINCHCLIFFE: Fancy?

MRS. GIBSON: A discovery?

DR. GIBSON: A discovery; *my* discovery. (*Pacing up and down.*) Just let them try saying this time it's all the product of my crazy imagination! They'll all have to be more careful what they say, I can tell you!

PETRA: Father, *tell* us! You're keeping us all in the dark.

DR. GIBSON: Just hover a blink or two, Petra. You'll soon know all about it. Oh, if only I had Peter here right now! It just goes to show how some men think they can see everything, when in reality they're as blind as moles ...

HINCHCLIFFE: Just what are you getting at, Doctor?

DR. GIBSON: Let me ask you then: is it or isn't it the universally held belief that our town is a healthy place?

HINCHCLIFFE: It is. Without a shadow of doubt.

DR. GIBSON: An exceptionally healthy place, in fact. A place that deserves to be commended in glowing terms; just as much for invalids as for people who are well. More so for invalids, in fact ...

MRS. GIBSON: Yes, Harry, but what ...

DR. GIBSON: And we've been doing just that; recommending and praising it. I've personally written leaflets, pamphlets, articles for the *People's Messenger*.

HINCHCLIFFE: All of that, Doctor; but what about it?

DR. GIBSON: And those Baths – we've called them things like the "main artery of the town's life-blood", the "nerve-centre of our town" and goodness knows what else besides.

HINCHCLIFFE: I even called them "the town's pulsating heart" in a recent editorial.

DR. GIBSON: So you did. Well, do you know what they really are; these monumental, magnificent and much praised Baths that have cost us all so much money? Do you know what they really are?

HINCHCLIFFE/ MRS GIBSON/ PETRA: (*together*) No/ Yes/ What?

HOOPER: Well then, what are they?

DR. GIBSON: The whole place is a septic tank: a cess-pit!

PETRA/ MRS GIBSON/ HINCHCLIFFE: (*together*) The Baths, father? Our Municipal Baths? But, Doctor surely not!

DR. GIBSON: The whole place is poison-baited trap, I tell you. All the nastiness up at Amberdale tanneries, all that stinking filth, it's polluting the water in the conduit-pipes that lead into the reservoir; and the same vile, filthy poison oozes out into the boating lake too ...

HOOPER: Where everyone goes bathing in the summer?

DR. GIBSON: The very same.

HINCHCLIFFE: But how can you be so certain of this, Doctor?

DR. GIBSON: For a long time I've had my suspicions of something of the kind. Do you remember last year there were some cases of visitors becoming ill – mostly gastro-enteritis and the like . . .

MRS. GIBSON: Yes. That's true.

DR. GIBSON: I began to wonder if there wasn't possibly some local cause.

MRS. GIBSON: So that is what you have been so busy with, and so secretive?

DR. GIBSON: Busy, busy, busy, Kate. But I don't really have the apparatus for precise testing; so I sent my samples over to the laboratories at the University to a qualified bacteriologist.

HINCHCLIFFE: And have you got the results then?

DR. GIBSON: (*smacking the letter*) I certainly have! And they establish beyond a peradventure the presence of a deadly cocktail of decomposing organic matter in the water. It is full of *infusoria*. The water should simply not be taken, internally or externally.

HINCHCLIFFE: But what is to be done *now*, Doctor?

DR. GIBSON: We must get matters put right!

HINCHCLIFFE: But how on earth can that be *done*?

DR. GIBSON: Whatever *needs* to be done must be done, and very soon. Otherwise the Baths will become a total white elephant. But that's not on the cards because I know exactly what is required.

MRS. GIBSON: But you've kept all this so secret, Harry. Why?

DR. GIBSON: I could hardly run round the town blabbing all about it before I had some real proof? No, Kate. Whatever Peter says of me sometimes, medically I'm nobody's fool.

PETRA: Even so, you might have let *us* know.

DR. GIBSON: I couldn't tell a living soul without the proof. But, tomorrow, you can trot round and tell the old Silver Fox ...

MRS. GIBSON: Harry! Harry!

DR. GIBSON: Sorry, Kate, sorry; (*to Petra*) tell your grandfather, then. It'll give the old boy something serious to think about! He's another one that thinks I'm potty, and maybe there are lots of other people who think so. But now these goody-goodies will see. Won't they just see! (*Walks about, rubbing his hands.*) For a start, *all* the conduit-pipes will have to be re-laid.

HINCHCLIFFE: But that's incredible! *All* the conduit-pipes? That'll take a bit of brass!

PETRA: Then you were right after all, father.

DR. GIBSON: There you are; *you* remember, Petra. Well, they are going to have to give me a fair hearing now. I've prepared a detailed report for (*pompously making mock salaams*) the semi-autonomous Board of the Spa Baths Municipal Partnership Limited – not forgetting the growing number of local shareholders and bond holders. (*Waving the letter.*) Now it can go off without a moment's delay. Look; here you are! (*Waves the other hand.*) Four densely packed pages and a copy of the letter to go with them. (*Puts everything into an envelope on the large table and addresses it with a flourish.*) Tan-tan-tara! Now give it to ... to (*stamps his foot*) – what's her name? Give it to the maid, and tell her to take it round to the Mayor's house at the double.

Mrs. Gibson takes the envelope and exits.

PETRA: I can't imagine what Uncle Peter will say?

DR. GIBSON: He *ought* to be very grateful such an important truth has been brought into the light before real harm is done.

HINCHCLIFFE: You *will* let me print a short note about your discovery in next week's *People's Messenger*?

DR. GIBSON: I should be very much obliged if you would, Hinchcliffe.

HINCHCLIFFE: Quite a scoop.

DR. GIBSON: Certainly. The people must have their messenger.

MRS. GIBSON: (*enters*) She's gone off with it.

HINCHCLIFFE: Upon my soul, Doctor Gibson, you are going to be the foremost man in this town, a real man of the people!

DR. GIBSON: (*walking about happily*) Nonsense, nonsense! I just put two and two together and made a lucky find, that's all.

HOOPER: Hinchcliffe, don't you think the town ought to get up some sort of testimonial to Dr Gibson? What's the usual form?

HINCHCLIFFE: Why not? I'll suggest it to Armitage. He's the man for that sort of thing.

DR. GIBSON: No, no, dear friends; don't let us have any of that sort of fiddle-faddle. I wouldn't hear of it. And if the Baths should think of voting an increase in its Medical Officer's salary, I won't accept it. Do you hear me, Kate? I won't accept it!

MRS. GIBSON: I'm sure you're quite right, Henry dear. (*With just a hint of irony*) It's not as if we need the money!

PETRA: (*lifting her glass*) Here's to your own health, father!

HOOPER: Your very good health, Doctor!

HINCHCLIFFE: Good health; yes. That's a very appropriate toast, in the circumstances.

HOOPER: (*touches glasses with DR. GIBSON*) I hope all this will bring you nothing but good luck.

DR. GIBSON: Thank you, thank you all very much! I feel on top of the world! It's quite something for a man to be able to say he's done a real service for his native town and, more especially, the people, his fellow-citizens. Come on Kate, let's have a dance! (*He whirls her round and round, right across the stage, while she protests with laughing cries. Everyone is laughing, clapping, and cheering the DOCTOR.*)

HINCHCLIFFE: We salute you, Doctor! The People's Friend!

End of ACT I

ACT II

SCENE – The same, next morning. MRS. GIBSON, with a sealed letter in her hand, enters; she pauses, looking at the letter, then crosses and looks off-stage.

MRS. GIBSON: Are you there, Harry?

DR. GIBSON: *(off-stage)* Yes, I've just come in. *(Enters)* What is it?

MRS. GIBSON: It's a letter from your brother.

DR. GIBSON: Aha, let's see this then! *(Opens the letter and reads)* "I return herewith the report and enclosures you sent me." *(Reads on for a moment or two in a low murmur)* Ho-hum! ...

MRS. GIBSON: *(after a pause)* Well, what does he say?

DR. GIBSON: *(putting the papers in his pocket)* Precious little, except that he'll come round himself later this morning.

MRS. GIBSON: Well, you'd better be in this time.

DR. GIBSON: I've done all my morning calls.

MRS. GIBSON: I'd dearly love to know how he's taking it all.

DR. GIBSON: One thing's certain – he's not going to like the fact that I made the discovery.

MARTIN KYLE, whose glossy silver hair explains Gibson's nickname for him, puts his head round the door upstage, looks at the Gibson's enquiringly and chuckles.

MARTIN KYLE: Is it ... is it true then?

MRS. GIBSON: *(Going towards him)* Father ... it's you! Don't stand there; come in!

DR. GIBSON: *(not going towards him)* Ah, father-in-law – good morning, good morning!

MRS. GIBSON: But come along in.

MARTIN KYLE: If it is true. Otherwise I'm off.

DR. GIBSON: If *what's* true?

MARTIN KYLE: This fairy-tale about the water supply; can it be true?

DR. GIBSON: Certainly it's true, but how did you come to hear about it though?

MARTIN KYLE: *(comes forward)* Petra popped in to tell me on her way to school ... it seemed such a cock-and-bull story I thought she was only trying to make a fool of me.

MRS. GIBSON: The very idea! How could you imagine she'd do such a thing?

MARTIN KYLE: I trust nobody wi' nowt. That's the way to be made a fool of before you know where you are. So is it really true, all the same?

DR. GIBSON: Well, this time you can depend upon it. Won't you sit down, father-in-law? *(Settles him on a chair at the large table)* It's a stroke of good fortune.

MARTIN KYLE: (*suppressing his laughter*) Good fortune? For the town?

DR. GIBSON: Yes, that I made my discovery in the nick of time.

MARTIN KYLE: (*resting his hands and his chin on the handle of his stick and winking slyly at the DOCTOR*) Give me credit for Heaven's sake. This is just some kind of story. What was it? Some kind of little beasties that have got into the water-pipes?

DR. GIBSON: They're called *Infusoria*.

MARTIN KYLE: They've got a funny name, have they, the little beasties? According to Petra lots and lots of them; and all marching down the pipe from my tanneries. But of course no one can see them. That's very clever!

DR. GIBSON: What do you mean?

MARTIN KYLE: You'll never get the Mayor to believe a thing like that, will you?

DR. GIBSON: We'll see about that, father-in-law; we'll see about that.

MARTIN KYLE: He can't be that much of a fool, surely. (*Pause*) Still!

DR. GIBSON: I'm expecting the whole town to be 'fooled'; as you choose to call it.

MARTIN KYLE: The whole town! My! That would be something. And it would just serve them right; teach them all a lesson. And they deserve it; they deserve it. Well now they might just have to pay for it. Right then! You just go on pulling their legs for a few days more, Harry, please. That's all I ask.

DR. GIBSON: Father-in-law, really! I protest . . .

MARTIN KYLE: You pull their legs! (*Getting half up*) If you can work it so that the Mayor and his fancy friends all swallow the bait, I'll give ten pounds to charity; like a shot!

DR. GIBSON: That's *exceptionally* generous of you.

MARTIN KYLE: You just pull the wool over their eyes and *I'll* pull the rug from under their feet. (*Gets up*)

HINCHCLIFFE enters.

HINCHCLIFFE: Good morning! (*Stops*) Oh, I beg your pardon; you're busy.

MARTIN KYLE: (*with another chuckle*) Aha! So he's in on this too?

HINCHCLIFFE: What do you mean by that, may I ask?

DR. GIBSON: Certainly he is.

MARTIN KYLE: I might have known it! That's the plan then – get it into the papers. You know how to set about it, Harry! Well, I'm off. You've given me plenty to get on with.

MRS. GIBSON: Won't you stay a little while?

MARTIN KYLE: No, no. I must be off. You keep this thing on the boil as long as you can, Harry. You won't regret it. I'll be damned if you will!

He goes out; MRS. GIBSON following him.

DR. GIBSON: (*laughing*) Can you imagine? The old boy doesn't seem to believe a word of all this, about the water supply and the tannery.

HINCHCLIFFE: Oh that was it, then?

DR. GIBSON: Yes, that was it. Is it the same thing that brings you here?

HINCHCLIFFE: It is, as a matter of fact. I wouldn't mind a few words Doctor. I was wondering if you've really seen the wider picture yet.

DR. GIBSON: What's your point, Hinchcliffe?

HINCHCLIFFE: You said yesterday the pollution of the water was due to impurities getting into the supply pipes.

DR. GIBSON: No question – it's all due to the discharges from the tanneries up at Amberdale; that stinking morass.

HINCHCLIFFE: If you'll pardon my saying so, Doctor, I reckon it could really be due to quite a different morass altogether.

DR. GIBSON: Now what on earth are *you* talking about? What other morass is there?

HINCHCLIFFE: The morass that's engulfing the whole town.

DR. GIBSON: Just what are you driving at?

HINCHCLIFFE: Doctor, you *must* be aware that the economic interests of the town, all the municipal undertakings, are getting into the hands of fewer and fewer people over the years.

DR. GIBSON: Well, if it were true then give them their due. They're the ones with the knowledge and the ability; the ones with experience, the ones taking the risk.

HINCHCLIFFE: And did they show any of that ability or knowledge when they laid these conduit pipes where they did?

DR. GIBSON: Well no; I must grant you that.

HINCHCLIFFE: Do you really think it'll work out so easily?

DR. GIBSON: Easy or not, it simply *has* to be done.

HINCHCLIFFE: And it will be, if the *People's Messenger* champions it.

DR. GIBSON: I don't think that'll be necessary now. No, dear chap, my brother ...

HINCHCLIFFE: Forgive me, Doctor; I feel bound to tell you I feel compelled to take the matter up, as an issue of major public importance.

DR. GIBSON: In the paper?

HINCHCLIFFE: Certainly – as editor and what's more as a socialist, in the interests of the majority of the people, I'm set on breaking the grip of the self-interested few on influence and power.

DR. GIBSON: Steady on! You told me yourself what your previous campaign achieved. Practically ruined the paper – and yourself with it.

HINCHCLIFFE: I cannot deny it. We were obliged to backtrack, especially when the Spa Baths scheme was coming to fruition. The public subscription might have been a failure, and with that any chance of putting ownership into a wider circle of people. I even hoped to see a situation developing where

we'd start to dispense with some of these grand old gentlemen that dominate local affairs.

DR. GIBSON: Dispense with them? But didn't they finish up buying most of the bonds? I think we owe them some debt of gratitude.

HINCHCLIFFE: I shall try very hard not to blame the Mayor too much for all of it, seeing as he's your brother but truth's the first consideration, isn't it? You must be with me in that too.

DR. GIBSON: Carried *nem con*. But my dear fellow, I'm not suggesting your motives are in any way impure. I'm just asking what you intend *doing*.

HINCHCLIFFE: As I see it, a journalist has a great deal of responsibility. He can't neglect any favourable opportunity of liberating the masses from serfdom – the humble and the oppressed.

DR. GIBSON: All right! All right, Mr. Hinchcliffe. Just don't get carried away, that's all.

ARMITAGE enters. He has a confusing demeanour, self-assured yet diffident, unctuous yet opinionated. He coughs.

ARMITAGE: You'll excuse my taking the liberty, Doctor, but the door was open ...

DR. GIBSON: Ah, Mr. Armitage, it's you! Do come in. Join us. The more the merrier is the doctor's prescription.

ARMITAGE: Thank you, Doctor.

DR. GIBSON: What can I do for you, sir?

ARMITAGE: Well, it's just that I would be grateful if you could confirm what I've just heard, in confidence I assure you, that you mean to demand, I mean to say *ask* the authorities to further improve our water supply?

DR. GIBSON: Yes.

ARMITAGE: Well then, I have come round to say that I, that *we*, will back you to the hilt, I mean to say with all the reasonable means at our disposal.

HINCHCLIFFE: *(to the DOCTOR)* There you are, you see! *(During the following dialogue he smiles, nods in agreement, and takes notes in his reporter's notebook.)*

DR. GIBSON: I'm very grateful to you, of course ... *(All sit.)*

ARMITAGE: I, that is, *we* feel that in the coming days and in this situation it will be of the greatest importance, that's to say no bad thing, to have us, the town's small tradesmen standing at your shoulder, your back I mean. We represent, as you might say, the solid majority in the town; provided, of course, that we choose to act together. And it's always helpful to be on the side of the majority, isn't it?

DR. GIBSON: Indubitably, Mr Armitage, but I confess I can't imagine why such a formidable army would be required in this case. It seems to me such an open and shut case.

ARMITAGE: Oh, it could be very helpful, just the same. I know the local authorities here so well. Officials are never very keen to take up ideas that come from other people. I don't mean be taken amiss, but if we laid on a

polite but firm little demonstration; perhaps a *slightly* larger than usual presence at the next Council meeting.

DR. GIBSON: (*smiling*) Moderation is a well-known characteristic of yours, Mr. Armitage. You shall inherit the earth!

ARMITAGE: I come into contact with a great many people in the course of my day, and you may imagine that being both a temperate and a law-abiding citizen – like yourself of course, Doctor – I can claim to have a certain influence in the town. So you see it would be an easy matter for me to set in train some sort of public petition too, were that to prove absolutely necessary.

DR. GIBSON: A public petition?

ARMITAGE: Yes, one that would be both a vote of thanks to you for your share in a matter of such significance to the town as well as a quiet but firm call to action for the authorities. If we pay very careful attention to that then who can take it amiss?

HINCHCLIFFE: Never mind if they don't like it ...

ARMITAGE: Dear me, no; there must be no discourtesy expressed or implied, Mr. Hinchcliffe. It is no use upsetting the very people on whom the outcome so closely depends.

DR. GIBSON: (*Rising and shaking his hand.*) I can scarcely find words, Mr. Armitage. I'm delighted to find such whole-hearted support among my fellow-citizens. Will you take a small glass of sherry?

ARMITAGE: No thank you, Doctor. I must go into town now to talk this over with one or two of the Householders Committee and start the ball rolling. (*He and Hinchcliffe stand.*) Public authority is often somewhat slow to get moving, Doctor. Far be it from me to cast aspersions but . . .

HINCHCLIFFE: Well, believe me; I'm going to start casting nasturtiums in the paper.

ARMITAGE: But without extremist rhetoric I trust, Mr. Hinchcliffe. Well, I shall have to be off, Doctor. You know at least that we small tradesmen are backing you up, like a stout wall. You have the solid majority on your side, Doctor.

DR. GIBSON: Much obliged, Mr. Armitage. (*Shakes hands again*) Goodbye, goodbye.

ARMITAGE: Are you heading my way, Mr. Hinchcliffe?

HINCHCLIFFE: Later, Mr Armitage, I've something to deal with here first.

ARMITAGE: Very well. (*GIBSON follows him out while HINCHCLIFFE paces energetically, rubbing his hands with pleasure.*)

HINCHCLIFFE: (*as GIBSON comes in again*) Well now, I think this time we've put a little life into all his indecision, dithering and shilly-shallying?

DR. GIBSON: Hinchcliffe! You can't be referring to Mr Armitage?

HINCHCLIFFE: I certainly am. And most of the people in this town are the very same.

DR. GIBSON: He seems well-intentioned.

HINCHCLIFFE: Maybe, but there's summat I rate a bit higher than that; and that's for a man to be sufficiently self-confident to take action and then to stick to his guns. That's what we need to see.

DR. GIBSON: I know you're of the opinion that your approach is for the good of the community so I won't take issue with you about the end; but let's leave the means until I have had a talk with my brother.

HINCHCLIFFE: Fair 'do's, Doctor, but if the Mayor were to refuse . . .

DR. GIBSON: How could you imagine such a thing!

HINCHCLIFFE: I can *imagine* it, Doctor, and if that were the case . . .

DR. GIBSON: In such a case, I give you my word – yes, in that case you may print my report, every word of it, and all the facts and figures. Here; take this copy with you now. It can't do any harm for you to read it, and you can give it back to me when it isn't needed. Take note, though. It must be accurately typeset and I must proof-read it.

HINCHCLIFFE: I can guarantee that.

DR. GIBSON: You'll see. Everything will work out, Mr. Hinchcliffe, without any bother at all.

HINCHCLIFFE: As to that . . . (*He shakes his head in doubt and exits.*)

DR. GIBSON: (*crosses and looks offstage*) Kate! Oh, Petra, are you back from school then?

PETRA and MRS GIBSON enter.

MRS. GIBSON: Has Peter not been here yet?

DR. GIBSON: Peter? No, but I've been having a chat with the editor of the *People's Messenger*. He's ready to put his paper at my disposal should necessity ever arise.

MRS. GIBSON: And do you think it will?

DR. GIBSON: Not for a moment, Kate. But it makes a man proud to feel he has the liberal-minded, independent press on his side. And I'll tell you who else – I've had a visit from the Chairman of the Householders Association, the President of the Chamber of Commerce and the Secretary of the local Temperance League. All three of him!

PETRA: Mister Meek-and-mild himself?

MRS. GIBSON: Oh yes! And what did Mr Armitage want?

DR. GIBSON: All three bodies will support me if it were ever to be necessary. Do you know the support I have now?

MRS. GIBSON: Tell me then.

DR. GIBSON: The *solid* majority!

MRS. GIBSON: Fancy. And is that a good thing, Harry?

DR. GIBSON: I should say so. (*He paces to and fro rubbing his hands.*) It's a fine thing to feel a bond of brotherhood between oneself and one's fellows!

PETRA: And to be able to do so much with it, surely?

DR. GIBSON: And all for my own home town, Petra. That feels good too.

Off stage left a bell rings.

MRS. GIBSON: That must be Peter

DR. GIBSON: Come in, Peter! Come in!

PETER GIBSON: (*Enters: he is carrying his bicorne hat and baton of office*)
Good day.

DR. GIBSON: Glad to see you, Peter!

MRS. GIBSON: Peter, How are you?

PETRA: Good morning, Uncle Peter.

PETER GIBSON: Only so-so, thank you very much. (*To DR. GIBSON*)
Henry, I received from you yesterday, long after official hours of business, a very detailed report dealing with the alleged condition of the water at the Spa Baths.

DR. GIBSON: And you've read it?

PETER GIBSON: Indeed I have,

DR. GIBSON: What would you like to ask me about it?

PETER GIBSON gives a sidelong glance at the women and coughs discreetly.

MRS. GIBSON: Come along, Petra. (*She and PETRA, reluctantly, go off.*)

PETER GIBSON: Would it be your intention to present this report to the Board as some sort of official communication?

DR. GIBSON: Certainly. Something needs to be done – and quickly.

PETER GIBSON: As ever, you employ the most exaggerated phraseology in your report. You say, for instance, that what we are peddling to our customers is a supply of undiluted poison.

DR. GIBSON: Well, 'undiluted' is a technical error, I agree, but can it really be described in any other way, Peter?

PETER GIBSON: And your tortured logic leads you to assert that we must put in a massive sewer and, over and above this, new water conduits?

DR. GIBSON: Exactly!

PETER GIBSON: Well I have to tell you I went to see the Borough Engineer this morning and asked him, purely hypothetically of course, about proposals such as these; ideas of mine, I told him; that I might put forward at some time in the future.

DR. GIBSON: Some time in the future!

PETER GIBSON: I must say he was amused at the extravagance of my ideas. If the Borough Engineer's estimate is in any way accurate, we are talking in the region of almost ten thousand pounds.

DR. GIBSON: So much!?

PETER GIBSON: Absolutely; and that's not all. The worst part is that the project would take a minimum, a *minimum* mark you, of two years to accomplish.

DR. GIBSON: Two years?

PETER GIBSON: Maybe three. And what, I ask you, do we do with the Baths in the meantime? Would anyone come near the place once it got out that the water was unhealthy?

DR. GIBSON: But Peter, that's what it is *now*.

PETER GIBSON: And right at the very moment when the whole country is beginning to talk about us. And it isn't as if there aren't other towns in the area with all the right qualifications – Harrogate and Ripon – they'd pull out all the stops to take away *our* visitors. You would have ruined your native town.

DR. GIBSON: I – ruined – me? No.

PETER GIBSON: It is wholly and uniquely the Spa Baths that have re-established the local economy.

DR. GIBSON: But what ... what on earth ... what's to be *done* then?

PETER GIBSON: For a start, this report of yours hasn't convinced *me* that the condition of the Spa water is even *half* as bad as you make out.

DR. GIBSON: Peter, it'll get worse ... as soon as the weather warms up.

PETER GIBSON: I think you're guilty of wild exaggeration.

DR. GIBSON: Really! Speaking as the town's self-appointed Public Health Inspector, what would *you* propose?

PETER GIBSON: The water supply for the Spa Baths is an established fact. It can't simply be wished away.

DR. GIBSON: I hear a 'however'.

PETER GIBSON: However ... in its wisdom and at its entire discretion, the Board may well be ready to consider the long-term possibility of a number of modest improvements consistent with the forecast revenue stream.

DR. GIBSON: And do you suppose I'd lend my name to any such jiggery-pokery?

PETER GIBSON: Jiggery-pokery!

DR. GIBSON: Absolutely! It would be a palpable deceit, a downright betrayal of the public; a crime perpetrated on the people.

PETER GIBSON: How dare you! As an intelligent layman, I simply do not see that there is any imminent danger. Your reaction is one of panic.

DR. GIBSON: Peter, it's not me that's panicking, it's you! How can you look me in the eye – you see, you see, you're turning away! I'll tell you what your problem is. It was *your* efforts and *your* finagling that had the water pipes laid where they are; and that's what you're ashamed to admit.

PETER GIBSON: Even if a single word of that were true, which I deny, it's a matter of urgency and importance that not a word of your report should go to the Board – or anyone else. In the common good, you must withhold it, d'you hear. Later on, perhaps, I can carefully broach the issue – privately – but until then not a whisper of this unfortunate business must get out.

DR. GIBSON: I am afraid you simply can't prevent that, Peter.

PETER GIBSON: It must, it *shall* be prevented. I say so!

DR. GIBSON: No use stamping your foot, I tell you. Too many people already know about it.

PETER GIBSON: Already know? Who? Surely you don't mean the *People's Messenger*?

DR. GIBSON: Yes, he knows; and Armitage. The liberal-minded independent press and the town's small businesses are going to see that you do your duty.

PETER GIBSON: (*after a short pause*) You are an extraordinarily naïve man, Henry. (*Another pause*) I have always behaved in a very brotherly way to you, Henry. Put bluntly, I always been ready to oblige you –to help you out, have I not?

DR. GIBSON: (*wary pause*) You have – and I'm grateful.

PETER GIBSON: There is no need to thank me. The truth is I *had* to do it – for my own sake. I had hopes that if I were able to improve your financial position I might somehow keep you in check – prevent you damaging my *own* reputation.

DR. GIBSON: Aha! Then it wasn't only for my sake?

PETER GIBSON: It's awkward for a man in my official position to have his nearest relative compromising himself financially.

DR. GIBSON: Which you think I did?

PETER GIBSON: You have a restless disposition and take no heed for the morrow. But what's worst is that disastrous propensity of yours of wanting to put pen to paper about anything and everything so long as it's preposterous.

DR. GIBSON: It's the duty of any conscientious citizen to let people share in any new ideas that he may have worked out?

PETER GIBSON: The people don't *need* new ideas. The people are best served by the well-tried, well-tested ideas they already have.

DR. GIBSON: You really believe that?

PETER GIBSON: Of course I believe it, and I think it's time for some frank talking. I've been putting this moment off too long. Henry, you just don't know how eccentric and irritating you are, rubbing authority up the wrong way.

DR. GIBSON: Me!

PETER GIBSON: The word cantankerous describes you to a T. What's more you seem to forget completely that it's *me* you have to thank for your being appointed as medical officer of the Spa Baths. There were not a few raised eyebrows, I can tell you.

DR. GIBSON: Damn it Peter, I was entitled to the job! I fought single-handed for years and years; writing letter after letter from up north ...

PETER GIBSON: You certainly did. But things were just not ripe for the scheme then. But, when the opportune moment came, it was I who took the initiative.

DR. GIBSON: Huh!! You took the initiative and made a splendid mess of it.

PETER GIBSON: That's just your style. You want to quarrel with the authorities as you always do. You treat any and every superior as a personal enemy, an enemy, Henry. Well, like it or lump it, now that I've told you bluntly the town's vital interests are at stake here, you're going to have to listen to me and do what I tell you. No ifs or buts.

DR. GIBSON: And what, pray, are you going to tell me, you pompous jack-in-office?

PETER GIBSON: Since you've been so indiscreet as to blab to all and sundry about it, we just can't hush it up now. There will be all kinds of rumours and there will be a few with grudges against authority who'll enjoy embroidering these stories. So – the long and the short of it is that *you*, as Medical Officer, must publicly refute them.

DR. GIBSON: I simply do not understand what you are saying.

PETER GIBSON: And furthermore you will announce that you are undertaking further investigations that will lead you to the soundly-based conclusion that the matter is *nothing like* as serious as it might have seemed at a first cursory glance.

DR. GIBSON: Oho! – So *that's* what you expect me to do!

PETER GIBSON: Exactly so, and what's more I shall look to you to make a public statement of your confidence in the Board of the Spa Baths.

DR. GIBSON: But you simply cannot put matters right by patching and tinkering. I meant what I said in my report. That's my personal and professional opinion.

PETER GIBSON: In your capacity as an employee of the company, you have no right to any *individual* opinion.

DR. GIBSON: No *right*!?

PETER GIBSON: In your official capacity, none. As a subordinate member of the staff you have absolutely no right to a point of view that contradicts your superiors.

DR. GIBSON: This is preposterous! I'm a doctor, a scientist.

PETER GIBSON: The matter is not simply medical or scientific. It is exceedingly delicate and complex, with economic as well as technical implications.

DR. GIBSON: I don't care if it has astrological implications. I shall feel free to express my opinion on anything under the sun.

PETER GIBSON: But not on anything to do with the Spa Baths. That I expressly forbid.

DR. GIBSON: (*shouting*) You *forbid*! You!

PETER GIBSON: I forbid it – and, as your employer and paymaster, if I forbid it, you have to obey.

PETRA: (*bursting in*) Father, don't stand for this!

MRS. GIBSON: (*coming in after her*) Petra, Petra!

PETER GIBSON: Been listening at keyholes, have we?

MRS. GIBSON: You were talking so loudly, both of you, we could hardly help hearing.

PETRA: Of course I was listening.

PETER GIBSON: Well, when all's said and done, it might be just as well. I won't need to repeat myself.

DR. GIBSON: (*going towards him aggressively*) You were saying something about 'forbidding' and 'obeying'?

PETER GIBSON: You force me to take that tack.

DR. GIBSON: You want me to publicise a lie?

PETER GIBSON: I consider it absolutely essential you make some public statement in the terms I have asked for.

DR. GIBSON: And if I decline to obey?

PETER GIBSON: Then the Board will publish a statement itself, as a reassurance to the public.

DR. GIBSON: Go right ahead, damn you, Peter. But, like you said, I'll take up my pen against authority, against my superiors and, by force of argument and logic, I'll show the people who's their *real* friend. Then what will you do?

PETER GIBSON: *Then* Henry – I shall not be able to prevent the Board agreeing that you be dismissed.

DR. GIBSON: What ...?

PETRA: You'd dismiss Father?

MRS. GIBSON: Oh God, no, not again!

PETER GIBSON: I think you can count on instant dismissal and a total ban in any future involvement in the Spa Baths' affairs.

DR. GIBSON: You wouldn't dare!

PETER GIBSON: It's you that seem to be playing a game of dare if you think I'm bluffing.

PETRA: Uncle, what a shameful way to treat an honourable man like father!

MRS. GIBSON: Hold your tongue, Petra!

PETER GIBSON: (*looking at PETRA*) Oh, so we feel free to volunteer our opinions, do we, Miss? (*To MRS. GIBSON*) Katherine, since you are the only sensible person in this house, I beg you, use any influence you may have over your husband. Try to make him see what this will mean for his family as well as ...

DR. GIBSON: You leave my family out of this ...

PETER GIBSON: ... for his own family, as well as for the town he *presently* lives in.

DR. GIBSON: I'll show the people who truly loves his native town.

PETER GIBSON: And yet, in your blind obstinacy, you want to cut off the single most important source of the town's welfare?

DR. GIBSON: The *source* is poisoned, man! The whole of our flourishing municipal life is living on a lie!

PETER GIBSON: That's a figment of your imagination. Any man who can throw out such offensive insinuations about his own town must be seen as an enemy of the community at large.

DR. GIBSON: (*going up to him again*) How dare you say that?

MRS. GIBSON: (*thrusting herself between them*) Harry! Peter!

PETRA: (*catching her father by the arm*) Please don't lose your temper, father!

PETER GIBSON: You've had your warning; so think on. Consider what you owe to your long-suffering wife and child. I bid you all Good Day.
(*Exits*)

DR. GIBSON: (*pacing up and down, waving his arms in the air*) Such treatment! I'm speechless, speechless Kate! I can't believe I heard it. My own brother!

MRS. GIBSON: It was hurtful and quite horrid, Harry, but ...

PETRA: I'd like to give Uncle Peter a piece of my mind.

DR. GIBSON: (*taking a few deep breaths*) Perhaps, it is my fault. Maybe I ought to have let fly at him long ago; bitten his pompous head off! He called me an enemy of my own community. Me! I'm not going to take this lying down, Kate. You mark my words.

MRS. GIBSON: But, Harry, Peter has the power on his side.

DR. GIBSON: He may have might, but I have right.

MRS. GIBSON: Right! Right! What use is it having right on your side if you can't do a thing with it?

PETRA: Oh, mother – how can you say that?

DR. GIBSON: You can't *say* that. It's not just me he's up against. I've got our radical and independent press on my side, to carry the banner, and the backing of the solid majority. That's might enough, I reckon.

MRS. GIBSON: But, Harry, you aren't going to ...

DR. GIBSON: I'm not going to do *what*?

MRS. GIBSON: Set yourself up in opposition to your own brother?

DR. GIBSON: For pity's sake, Kate, what else can I do but take my stand on the side of right and truth?

PETRA: Just what I was going to say, Father. Bravo!

MRS. GIBSON: But what on earth good will it do you?

DR. GIBSON: I'll carry the war into their own camp.

MRS. GIBSON: If you carry the war into their camp, their first counter-attack will be your dismissal and then what will you do – go back up to Scotland?

DR. GIBSON: Whatever happens, I shall have done my duty towards the people.

MRS. GIBSON: But what about your duty towards your family, Harry?

PETRA: Don't always think first about us, Mother.

MRS. GIBSON: (*rounding on her*) It's easy for you to talk, young madam. You're able to shift for yourself, if needs be. But Harry and I will suffer – again.

DR. GIBSON: Kate, please, oh please! If I were to be such a miserable coward as to go on my knees to Peter and his damned Board, would I ever know an hour's peace for the rest of my life?

MRS. GIBSON: God preserve us from the peace of mind we shall have if you go on defying him! You'll find yourself again without anything to live on. I would have thought you'd had enough of that. (*She is very close to tears.*)

DR. GIBSON: (*collecting himself with a struggle and clenching his fists*) I'm a free and honourable man, Kate, and you're asking me to submit to slavery.

MRS. GIBSON: I know, I know, Harry. But look around you; we all have to put up with injustice nowadays. Here, everywhere – I blame the War.

DR. GIBSON: No, Kate, even if the whole world goes to pieces, I will never bow my knee to this injustice.

MRS. GIBSON: But Harry – what are we going to do?

DR. GIBSON: I mean to retain the right to look the world in the face. (*Exits.*)

MRS. GIBSON: (*sinking onto a chair and bursting into tears*) God help us all!

PETRA: Isn't Father splendid? He'll never give in.

End of Act II.

ACT III

SCENE – Early evening the same day in the editorial office of the People's Messenger. A large table with two chairs is downstage and a small round table is downstage opposite. HINCHCLIFFE is sitting at the large table writing. ARMITAGE enters carrying the Doctor's manuscript.

HINCHCLIFFE: *(looking up)* I'd say the Doctor bowls hard and fast.

ARMITAGE: He's not entirely moderate in tone but every word falls into place like the pieces of a jigsaw. Will you be putting this in then?

HINCHCLIFFE: Yes, by heck, as soon as the Doctor gives the word and if the Mayor doesn't like it he can bloody lump it. If the Mayor won't back the Doctor's project, he'll have all the small tradesmen down on his back. If he *does* go for it, he'll upset all the large shareholders and bondholders who've just stumped up a pretty penny. *(Rubbing his hands)* I like it!

ARMITAGE: They see the prospect of a moderate return ...

HINCHCLIFFE: And then in every issue of the paper we'll take issue with the way the Mayor's losing his touch, and make it clear that control of municipal affairs ought to be put in the hands of those who truly care for the people's interests.

ARMITAGE: Maybe we *are* on the brink of a revolution! Oh my goodness!
A knock is heard off-stage.

HINCHCLIFFE: Now who can that be? Come in! *(DR. GIBSON enters.)*
Doctor! And what can this visit betoken?

DR. GIBSON: You can go ahead and print my article, Mr. Hinchcliffe, just as soon as you can.

HINCHCLIFFE: Has it come to that, then?

ARMITAGE: Oh dear me!

DR. GIBSON: Yes, I've made my decision. It's going to be a fight to the finish!

HINCHCLIFFE: We will get them on the run, Doctor!

DR. GIBSON: And that's only a start. I've got more sketched out.
(Acknowledging ARMITAGE) I'm sorry – in my excitement – good evening.

ARMITAGE: Good evening, Doctor – as you say, exciting times, but not *too* exciting, I hope.

HINCHCLIFFE: More articles, Doctor. About the Baths?

DR. GIBSON: They all spring from the question of the water supply and the drainage; public health issues d'you see? One thing leads to another, you know. It's like beginning to pull down an old house.

ARMITAGE: You're not thinking of pulling down the Baths surely, Doctor?

DR. GIBSON: Perish the thought. Anyway, what do you think of my report?

HINCHCLIFFE: First class. I couldn't fault a single syllable.

DR. GIBSON: Do you really say so? Thank you very much.

HINCHCLIFFE: You'll have every red-blooded man who reads it on your side.

ARMITAGE: Every prudent man too, I hope.

HINCHCLIFFE: It can go in tomorrow.

DR. GIBSON: That's the spirit – don't lose a single day. What I wanted to ask you, Mr. Armitage, was if you would supervise the typesetting yourself.

ARMITAGE: With pleasure. I haven't lost touch with my trade now I'm a businessman, in a small way, and I *can* spell, unlike some.

HINCHCLIFFE pulls a face.

DR. GIBSON: Take care of it then! Not a single misprint; every word counts. I'll look in again later this evening to see a proof. You can't imagine what I have gone through today. First I was threatened with one thing and then another; trying to take away my most elementary rights as a man.

HINCHCLIFFE: Doctor, if I didn't know you, I'd say you must be exaggerating.

DR. GIBSON: I tell you my own brother tried to degrade me; tried to make me put personal interests before my most deeply-held convictions.

HINCHCLIFFE: That's too much; damned if it isn't.

DR. GIBSON: Well, they're going to get the worst of it; rest assured of that. With the *People's Messenger* as my flagship, I'll bombard them with one article after another, like bombshells.

ARMITAGE: Bombshells, oh dear! Moderate your tone, please Doctor. Moderate your tone!

HINCHCLIFFE: Not a bit of it! Finish them off with your mortars!

DR. GIBSON: You see, Mr. Armitage, it's not just a question of the water supply or the drains. No, it's the whole social life of the town we have to purge and disinfect.

HINCHCLIFFE: Spoken like a champion!

DR. GIBSON: All the incompetents must be turned out of office.

HINCHCLIFFE: Hear bloody hear!

DR. GIBSON: Just let's stand together and our people's revolution will swing into action like a well-oiled machine.

HINCHCLIFFE: I think we have a damned good chance of getting the Council into the hands of the people; where it should be.

ARMITAGE: Well, given the case you're making, but if only we proceed with moderation. But I wouldn't want us to get carried away exactly.

DR. GIBSON: What I'm doing is in the name of justice, and for the sake of my own conscience.

HINCHCLIFFE: You're bound to be supported, Doctor.

ARMITAGE: Well, well! I can't deny the Doctor comes over as the true friend to the town – a real friend of the people.

HINCHCLIFFE: Take my word for it, Armitage. Dr Gibson is the *real* friend of the people.

DR. GIBSON: (*affected, grasps their hands*) Thank you, thank you, both. It's really encouraging to hear you say that; my brother called me something quite different. Now look, I must be off to see a patient, but I'll come back later. Take care and don't miss out a single exclamation mark! Rather put one or two more in! Splendid, splendid! I'll see myself out. (*Exits*)

HINCHCLIFFE: That man's going to prove invaluable.

ARMITAGE: So long as he sticks to this matter of the Baths, perhaps.

HINCHCLIFFE: You're just too meek and mild, Armitage!

ARMITAGE: I call it moderation. I've learned my lessons in the school of hard knocks, let me tell you. And you've seen it yourself, as I've good reason to know.

HINCHCLIFFE: Your moderation in the matter of my rent is much appreciated.

ARMITAGE: I'm a man with a conscience too, as well as a small businessman. If you attack the national government, you don't do the community any harm. But local authorities are different; they *can* be turned out, and then you never know.

HINCHCLIFFE: Everybody in local government learns on the job. That's the way it goes.

ARMITAGE: People tend to see things from their own point of view. It's only natural.

HINCHCLIFFE: I hope I never have any interests to protect then. I couldn't do my job. I have to see things in the round.

ARMITAGE: Don't you think you may need to exercise a touch of moderation yourself now you're applying for the post of Clerk to the Cottage Hospital Board?

HINCHCLIFFE: But I'll never get it; it would annoy too many of the bigwigs – although the honorarium would come in handy, I don't mind admitting.

ARMITAGE: That's your affair, of course, but if you accuse me of being meek and mild, I need to point out: *my* political past is an open book. I don't chop and change, except perhaps to become a little more moderate

ARMITAGE exits. HINCHCLIFFE throws his hand up in exasperation.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*to himself*) Now, if only I knew someone *else* who'd sub me the cost of paper and printing! If only I had some capital. If only the Hinchcliffe pigs could fly! Well, anyone can dream. (*Pause*). There's the Doctor, though. Now he's hot under the collar, maybe I could rope him in – and there's more than one way to get him on my side, come to that. But where's the point in even thinking that way when *she* tells me they're stony broke. Mind you, they've got her grandfather lurking in the background. The Silver Fox must be worth a few bob. Some of that's bound rub off. Still, as Armitage says, I'd be a right fool if I were counting on something as uncertain as that. (*Pause and he begins to grin.*) Even so. (*Frowns.*) And I doubt I'll get a sniff of the Clerk's job. Not with so many of the Mayor's cronies on the Hospital Board but, by heck, if we could only knock a hole in their defences, who knows what might follow. Power to the People! Happiness for

Hinchcliffe! (*PETRA enters unseen*) Cold brass monkeys of the world unite; what *more* can you lose?

PETRA: Hello! Can I come in?

HINCHCLIFFE: (*embarrassed and surprised*) Of course. Won't you sit down? You've come with a message from your father, no doubt.

They look at each other in silence for a moment. There is something unspoken between them but neither risks acknowledging it.

PETRA: No, I came on my own account. (*Takes a book out of her coat pocket*) Look, here's that French story.

HINCHCLIFFE: You brought it back?

PETRA: I'm not going to translate it now.

HINCHCLIFFE: But you said faithfully you would.

PETRA: I hadn't read it then and I don't suppose you have either.

HINCHCLIFFE: But it's just a story; a piece of fiction.

PETRA: No. The whole premise of the story is that there's some divine power that watches over the good, and sees that the bad get their comeuppance, and makes everything turn out right in the end.

HINCHCLIFFE: Well, that's all right then. Just what the public wants.

PETRA: But you don't believe a word of it. You know perfectly well things don't happen like that in real life.

HINCHCLIFFE: Of course not; but an editor can't always pick and choose. He has to think about public tastes. Politics may be the most important thing in life – for the front page of a newspaper at any rate; but if I want to carry my public with me along the rocky path to liberty and progress, I mustn't frighten them off. Quite frankly, Petra – Miss Gibson – if they find a moral tale at the bottom of the page, they'll be all the more willing to give credence to what's printed above it. It's reassurance, if you will.

PETRA: But that's shameful; setting a snare for innocent readers like that. That's not *you*, surely, Mr Hinchcliffe.

HINCHCLIFFE: Thank you for your good opinion of me. No; it was Armitage's idea in the first place; he's the businessman.

PETRA: But what's happened to those principles, your emancipated views; everything you've told me you *feel* – I mean to say what you *believe*?

HINCHCLIFFE: (*shrugs*) I'm a many-sided man. And you may as well know this too. I'm applying for the post of Clerk to the Hospital Board.

PETRA: I don't believe it. How could you possibly bring yourself to do such a thing; to join the establishment?

HINCHCLIFFE: (*looking more closely at her*) Does it really surprise you so much?

PETRA: Yes! ... No! Or perhaps not altogether. Really, I don't quite know.

HINCHCLIFFE: Journalists aren't up to much, Petra.

PETRA: Do you ... do you really *mean* that?

HINCHCLIFFE: I think it, sometimes.

PETRA: But not when we're talking about really big issues, things that really *matter* ...

HINCHCLIFFE: This matter of your father's, perhaps?

PETRA: *Exactly!* That's when someone like you can be worth ten of the others. Don't you feel that?

HINCHCLIFFE: Something of the sort. Right this moment I can feel it.

PETRA: Of course you do. I ... admire you; because you're ready to stand up fearlessly, and take up the cause of a man who's been wronged.

HINCHCLIFFE: Not least when the injured party happens to be ...

PETRA: Happens to be so upright and honest, you were going to say?

HINCHCLIFFE: (*gently*) When he happens to be your father, I meant.

PETRA: (*suddenly checked*) What?

HINCHCLIFFE: Yes, Petra.

PETRA: So *that's* what's first and foremost with you, is it? Not the issue itself? Not the facts of the matter? Not my father's generous heart?

HINCHCLIFFE: Certainly – of course – that too; what else, I mean ...

PETRA: (*after a pause and a shake of her head*) Well, well; you *have* betrayed yourself, and frankly I shall never trust you again; with anything.

HINCHCLIFFE: But, Petra, can you really take it so badly that a chap wants to do something that's mostly for *your* sake?

PETRA: What I'm angry about is your not being honest with my father, or me. You talked to him as if the truth and the good of the community were all that really mattered. You are not the man I thought you were, George Hinchcliffe. I shall never forgive you – never, never, never!

HINCHCLIFFE: Don't get on your high horse – least of all now.

PETRA: And why now, especially?

HINCHCLIFFE: Because your father is going to *need* my help, if he's to succeed.

PETRA: (*looking him up and down*) Are you that sort of man too? You're despicable!

HINCHCLIFFE: I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. It just sort of burst out.

PETRA: I know what I've heard and seen. Goodbye.

ARMITAGE: (*enters*) Hinchcliffe! (*Sees PETRA.*) Oh, for heaven's sake.

PETRA: Goodbye. (*Exits.*)

ARMITAGE: I say ...

HINCHCLIFFE: Well? What is it?

ARMITAGE: The Mayor is outside in the printing room.

HINCHCLIFFE: What can *he* want? Best have him in. Just see no one else...

ARMITAGE: Quite so. (*Exits as MAYOR enters.*)

PETER GIBSON: Happen you weren't expecting me?

HINCHCLIFFE: Happen so.

PETER GIBSON: (*looking round*) Very snug in here; very snug you've made yourself.

HINCHCLIFFE: Happen.

PETER GIBSON: And now, in I come to take up your time.

HINCHCLIFFE: The Editor of the *People's Messenger* always has time for the Mayor. (*He takes GIBSON's bicorne hat and stick and puts them on the small table.*) Won't you take a seat?

PETER GIBSON: Thank you. (*HINCHCLIFFE sits down too.*) I have had a very upsetting and annoying day, Mr. Hinchcliffe.

HINCHCLIFFE: Really?

PETER GIBSON: And the Medical Officer of the Spa Baths is solely responsible.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*with a smirk*) The Doctor? Fancy!

PETER GIBSON: He has concocted a kind of report to the Board of the Company addressing certain alleged defects.

HINCHCLIFFE: Has he indeed?

PETER GIBSON: Yes. Has he not told you? I'm quite sure he said ...

HINCHCLIFFE: Ah, yes ... Well, true enough he did mention something ...

ARMITAGE: (*coming round Hinchcliffe.*) I ought to have that copy now, for typesetting.

HINCHCLIFFE: Now! Well, there it is on the corner of the table.

ARMITAGE: (*taking it*) I see it.

PETER GIBSON: But that's *it*; that's the very thing I was speaking about!

HINCHCLIFFE: Oh, is *that* what you were speaking about? The Doctor's new article.

PETER GIBSON: That's not the article he wrote last year. That's a copy of his so-called report.

HINCHCLIFFE: Well now, I'm only a layman so of course I've only taken a cursory glance at it.

PETER GIBSON: But you *were* going to print it?

HINCHCLIFFE: I couldn't very well refuse our columns to a distinguished man.

ARMITAGE: It goes without saying I've nothing to do with editing the paper, Mr. Mayor.

PETER GIBSON: Quite so.

ARMITAGE: I'd best be ... (*Moves to exit*)

PETER GIBSON: No, but hover a blink, Mr. Armitage. If you'll allow me, Mr. Hinchcliffe? (*HINCHCLIFFE nods acquiescence.*) You're a sensible and moderate man, Mr. Armitage.

ARMITAGE: I'm glad you think so, Mr. Mayor.

PETER GIBSON: And someone of undoubted influence.

ARMITAGE: Among the small tradesmen, the householders and ratepayers too.

PETER GIBSON: So I've no doubt you are a very good sounding-board of opinion among them, aren't you?

ARMITAGE: I think I might just say so, Mr. Mayor.

PETER GIBSON: Fancy. Well, I *am* impressed that there is such a praiseworthy spirit of self-sacrifice among the less wealthy citizens of the municipality.

HINCHCLIFFE: Self-sacrifice?

PETER GIBSON: I think it is very pleasing evidence of your public spirit. I'll admit, frankly, I hadn't expected it.

ARMITAGE: Public spirit ...

PETER GIBSON: And it's no *small* sacrifice for a town this size to make.

HINCHCLIFFE: Sacrifice?

ARMITAGE: Mr. Mayor, I'm confused. Are we talking about the Baths?

PETER GIBSON: We are indeed; and no doubt you are already aware that the alterations the Medical Officer so confidently asserts to be necessary would cost. (*He pauses deliberately and glances at a piece of paper he draws from his pocket and puts back again*) Upwards of twenty to *thirty* thousand pounds.

ARMITAGE: How much? That's a staggering sum.

PETER GIBSON: We'll have to raise a municipal loan to cover it.

HINCHCLIFFE: But why should the town pay? You've just raked in a small fortune from your fellow-investors.

ARMITAGE: Are you saying the interest on that loan has to come out of the pockets of the ratepayers?

PETER GIBSON: My dear Mr. Armitage, can you tell me where else?

ARMITAGE: I might have thought those who now *own* the Baths would be the ones to stump up.

PETER GIBSON: Given our existing commitments, the proprietors of the Spa Baths are not currently in any position to incur further material expense.

HINCHCLIFFE: Can you be absolutely certain?

PETER GIBSON: I have, this very afternoon, satisfied myself that it is so. If the town really wants these very expensive refinements, it will have to pay for them.

ARMITAGE: Oh, my goodness, oh my giddy aunt – I beg your pardon – this is quite another kettle of fish, Hinchcliffe.

HINCHCLIFFE: Happen it could be.

PETER GIBSON: But that's not the worst part of it. The worst part is that we shall be obliged to close down the Spa for a couple of years.

HINCHCLIFFE: Close down the Baths?

ARMITAGE: For two whole years?

PETER GIBSON: I am assured the works will take at least as long as that. It could even be three.

ARMITAGE: Three years! Well I'm damned, if you'll pardon my language. And what are the town's small businessmen going to live on?

PETER GIBSON: What indeed! I doubt we shall have a single visitor. My brother uses some picturesque imagery to create his mythical monster.

ARMITAGE: Then the whole thing is merely his imagination!?

PETER GIBSON: Making every allowance for his wild enthusiasms, I come to no other conclusion. The Board will certainly want to consult its lawyers when tomorrow's paper is published.

ARMITAGE: Oh my goodness gracious me.

PETER GIBSON: My brother has unfortunately always been a headstrong man.

ARMITAGE: And after this revelation, would you still intend to give the Doctor your support, Mr. Hinchcliffe?

There is a very long pause; almost a tableau.

HINCHCLIFFE: Could you suppose ... for a moment ... that I ... (*He peters out and puts his head in his hands.*)

PETER GIBSON: Now, as it happens, I've drawn up a short press release that deals with the *facts* as they appear from the point of view of a reasonable man.

HINCHCLIFFE: You wouldn't happen to have it with you, Mr. Mayor?

PETER GIBSON: (*reaching into his breast-pocket*) As it happens, I do. I brought it with me just in case.

ARMITAGE: (*staring at the window into the printing room*) Oh, good Lord, oh good Lord; there he is!

PETER GIBSON: My brother?

HINCHCLIFFE: Where? Where?

ARMITAGE: He's just coming through the printing room.

PETER GIBSON: Damnation! I don't want to meet him here, and I've a few other things to speak to you about.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*pointing downstage*) Go in there for the present. It's empty.

ARMITAGE: Quick, quick, Mr. Mayor. He's just coming.

PETER GIBSON: Yes, very well; but get rid of him quickly. (*Exits while ARMITAGE and HINCHCLIFFE hover looking embarrassed.*)

DR. GIBSON: (*entering*) Here I am again.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*writing*) So soon, Doctor? You'd best take that new story, Mr Armitage, and get on with it. We're pressed for time.

DR. GIBSON: (*to ARMITAGE*) Then there's no proof for me to see yet?

ARMITAGE: (*without turning round*) You couldn't expect it so soon, Doctor.

DR. GIBSON: Well, perhaps not. It's just my impatience, I suppose. I won't rest easy until I see it in print, that's all.

HINCHCLIFFE: Just so. But it'll take a good while yet.

ARMITAGE: Yes, yes. I'm afraid it will.

DR. GIBSON: All right, dear friends; I'll come back later. When the welfare of the town is at stake, it's no time to be a shirker. (*He is just about to go out and the other two are looking very relieved when he stops and comes back.*) There is one thing though I need to speak to you about.

HINCHCLIFFE: Forgive me but won't it keep until tomorrow?

DR. GIBSON: Well, the point is – when this gets out it just might ring in their ears like some kind of summons to take the town's affairs into their own hands, and they just might ...

HINCHCLIFFE: (*getting up*) Doctor ... I simply can't conceal from you the fact ...

DR. GIBSON: There you are! I knew there was something in the wind! But I won't hear a word of it. If anything of that sort is being planned ...

HINCHCLIFFE: Anything of what sort?

DR. GIBSON: Well, whatever it is; a public demonstration, or a bean feast; whatever it is, you most promise me solemnly and faithfully to put a stop to it.

HINCHCLIFFE: Forgive me, Doctor, but sooner or later we're going to have to tell you the plain truth ...

He is interrupted by the entrance of MRS. GIBSON.

MRS. GIBSON: (*seeing her husband*) Just as I thought!

HINCHCLIFFE: You here too, Mrs. Gibson?

DR. GIBSON: What on earth brings *you* here, Kate?

MRS. GIBSON: You know very well what it is.

HINCHCLIFFE: Won't you take a seat? Or perhaps you were both leaving?

MRS. GIBSON: I hope we are. Please don't be offended at my coming to fetch my husband. I have to take responsibility for my family.

DR. GIBSON: What nonsense is this, Kate?

MRS. GIBSON: Harry, it's not at all obvious that *you* are prepared to take your family's fortunes into account, dragging us all into this.

DR. GIBSON: Are you out of your senses, Kate! Because a man has a wife and child, is he not to speak the truth?

MRS. GIBSON: Anything you like, Harry, within reason.

ARMITAGE: Just what I say. Moderation at all times.

MRS. GIBSON: And that is why you wrong us, Mr. Hinchcliffe, in encouraging my husband, and making a dupe of my daughter in all this.

HINCHCLIFFE: I deny any and every such imputation.

DR. GIBSON: How could you imagine I would allow myself to be duped?

MRS. GIBSON: Mr. Hinchcliffe, do you realise that he'll lose his post at the Baths if you print what he has written.

ARMITAGE: *(sensing deliverance)* Aha!

HINCHCLIFFE: *(with a gasp of relief)* I can't have that on my conscience, Doctor!

DR. GIBSON: *(laughing)* Ha-ha! Just let them try! I'll call their bluff. I've got the solid majority of the townsfolk behind me.

MRS. GIBSON: I think that's the worst part of it; being at the head of a rabble.

DR. GIBSON: But that's still more nonsense! What are you so afraid of when I am so confident and happy? *(Walks up and down, rubbing his hands.)* The honest truth and the will of the people will triumph; count on it! I see the public marching like some victorious army to the Town Hall. *(Stops at the small table.)* And what the very devil might those be?

ARMITAGE: Good Lord! Oh, good Lord.

DR. GIBSON: Just lying here, the symbols of ultimate municipal authority! *(Picks up the Mayor's official hat and holds it up in the air.)*

MRS. GIBSON: The Mayor's hat!

DR. GIBSON: And here's his staff of office too. *(Puts the hat on the end of the staff and holds it aloft, beginning to swing it round and round.)* Just how in the name of all that's wonderful do these happen to be here? No, let me guess!

HINCHCLIFFE: It's like this you see ...

DR. GIBSON: Oh, you needn't explain. It's as plain as a pikestaff of office. He's been round here trying to talk you over. Ha-ha! Didn't he make a big mistake this time! And as soon as you caught sight of me in the printing room he skedaddled, didn't he, Mr. Armitage?

ARMITAGE: *(hurriedly)* I fear he did, Doctor.

DR. GIBSON: Ran away without his stick or his ... No, I don't believe so! The Emperor Peter doesn't parade naked in the street. Where the devil have you hidden him? *(Looks downstage)* Ah, in there, of course.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry – please don't! Come home, Harry, just come home.

ARMITAGE: Don't do anything rash, Doctor.

DR. GIBSON puts on the Mayor's hat and takes his stick in his hand. He goes downstage and strikes the "door" with the staff.

DR. GIBSON: Rat-a-tat-tat! Come out; come out, wherever you are!

PETER GIBSON enters, red with anger. DR GIBSON salutes mockingly.

PETER GIBSON: Stop this tomfoolery at once!

DR. GIBSON: Show some respect there. I have taken over as the chief authority in the town now. *(Marches up and down.)*

MRS. GIBSON: *(almost in tears)* Really, Harry! Stop it at once.

PETER GIBSON: *(following him about)* Give me my hat and stick.

DR. GIBSON: *(in the same tone as before)* I'll make you chief constable if you like, but I'm the master of this town now Peter and you'd better get used to it.

PETER GIBSON: Take off my hat. It's an official uniform. Treat it with respect.

DR. GIBSON: Stuff and nonsense! Do you think the newly awakened solid majority of the people are going to be frightened by a hat? You thought you could turn *me* out; but now I shall turn you out – turn you out of *all* your multifarious offices and sinecures. I have everyone behind me. Hinchcliffe will thunder in the *People's Messenger* and Armitage will take the field at the head of the Householders ...

ARMITAGE: I certainly will not, Doctor.

DR. GIBSON: Of course you will, dear chap.

PETER GIBSON: And might I ask if Mr. Hinchcliffe intends to join in this agitation?

All eyes are on HINCHCLIFFE in another tableau. There is as long a pause as anyone can imagine.

HINCHCLIFFE: *(finally, defeated)* No, Mr. Mayor.

ARMITAGE: No; Mr. Hinchcliffe isn't such a fool as to go and ruin himself for the sake of ... *(He too pauses)* ... an imaginary grievance.

DR. GIBSON: *(looking round him)* Might I ask you both what is the meaning of this?

HINCHCLIFFE: I realise now that you've misrepresented your case, Doctor, and the *People's Messenger* cannot any longer lend you its support.

ARMITAGE: After what the Mayor has been kind enough to explain to us about the costs involved ...

DR. GIBSON: Misrepresented my case? Let the world be the judge of that. Print my article and they'll find I can justify every word of it.

HINCHCLIFFE: *(boldly)* I am not going to print it. I cannot and will not and *(another pause)* dare not print it.

DR. GIBSON: Dare not? You're the editor; and an editor controls his own paper. Well, doesn't he?

ARMITAGE: Not really; it's the subscribers, Doctor, the paying customers you might say.

PETER GIBSON: And quite right too!

ARMITAGE: It's public opinion, enlightened public opinion I should say: householders and people of that kind.

DR. GIBSON: And have all these influences now turned against me?

ARMITAGE: Oh dear, I fear they have. What you are alleging would mean the absolute ruin of the community.

DR. GIBSON: Is that a fact?

PETER GIBSON: My hat and stick, if you please. *(DR. GIBSON takes off the hat and lays it on the large table with the stick. PETER GIBSON snatches*

them up.) Your brief authority has come to a swift end. The *coup d'état* has failed; in five minutes flat.

DR. GIBSON: (*To HINCHCLIFFE*) You're saying it's impossible to print my article in tomorrow's *People's Messenger*?

HINCHCLIFFE: It's out of the question – out of regard for your family as well.

MRS. GIBSON: (*fired up by what has just happened*) Don't concern yourself about my family. You've done quite enough damage to it already.

PETER GIBSON: (*picking it up from the large table*) This will be sufficient for the guidance of the public, I suggest. From the office of the Mayor.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*taking the paper*) I'll see that it's printed.

DR. GIBSON: But not mine, eh? Do you imagine that you can all silence me and stifle the truth? Mr. Armitage, kindly take my manuscript at once and print it for me as a pamphlet at my own expense. I'll need four hundred copies – no, five or six hundred.

ARMITAGE: Even if you offered me a pound a copy, I would not undertake it, Doctor. It would be flying in the face of public opinion. And you won't get it printed anywhere else in *this* town.

DR. GIBSON: Then give it back to me, at once. (*Hinchcliffe, not looking him in the eye, hands him the MS.*) I'll make it public all the same. I shall read it out at a public meeting. My fellow-citizens shall hear the truth!

PETER GIBSON: You won't find any public hall in the town that'll give you the use of their premises.

ARMITAGE: Not a single one. You can count on that, Mr. Mayor.

MRS. GIBSON: But this is too shameful! The Doctor may have his faults but he's an honest man. Why should every one of you turn against him like this?

DR. GIBSON: I will tell you, Kate: because all the men in this town think of nothing but their wallets and never of the community.

MRS. GIBSON: (*putting her arm into his*) Then I will show them that a woman can be a man for once. I am going to stand by you, Harry!

DR. GIBSON: That's the spirit, Kate! As I live and breathe, if I can't hire a hall then I'll borrow a drum and march round the town reading my article at every street corner.

PETER GIBSON: You are surely not such a fool as that! Besides, that's a public order offence.

DR. GIBSON: Then *be* offended.

ARMITAGE: You won't find a single man in the whole town to listen to you.

MRS. GIBSON: Don't give in to them, Harry. Petra and I will listen to you.

DR. GIBSON: (*puts his arms round her and kisses her*) Thank you, my dear! Now my fine fair-weather friends! I am going to see whether a pack of cowards like you can succeed in gagging an honest man who wants to cleanse society! (*The GIBSONS exit*)

PETER GIBSON: My own sister! She's been driven completely out of her senses.

End of Act III

ACT IV

SCENE – A curtain downstage across the stage. There is a low platform with four chairs facing downstage. In front of the two centre chairs is a simple table on which sits a small hand bell. The GIBSONS are standing at one end below the stage. PETER GIBSON, wearing his hat and carrying his staff of office and ARMITAGE confer at the other. HINCHCLIFFE stands at the same end of the front row of the audience while HOOPER stands at the other side of the front row beside the three GIBSONS. MARTIN KYLE enters as the scene gets underway and crosses to stand behind HOOPER. There is a quiet hubbub of voices. The house lights stay up until the end of this Act.

HINCHCLIFFE: *(at a discreet nod from the Mayor, rises and raises his voice)* I would just like to say that a public meeting like this ought to have a chairman, to keep us all in order. I propose the Mayor take the chair. All those in favour!

PETER GIBSON: No, no, I must ask you to excuse me. However, we do have here with us tonight the very person. I refer, of course, to the distinguished president of the Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the Householders' Association, Mr Josiah Armitage.

SEVERAL VOICES: *(together)* Yes. Let's have Armitage! Bravo Armitage! Propose Armitage!

DR. GIBSON takes his manuscript from his wife and mounts the platform, walking up and down showing mounting irritation.

ARMITAGE: *(stepping up onto the stage)* If my fellow-citizens demand that I undertake this duty, I can hardly refuse.

Loud applause and ARMITAGE moves to one of the chairs behind the table. PETER GIBSON then takes the chair beside him and places his hat and staff on the end of the table. MRS GIBSON steps onto the platform and shepherds DOCTOR GIBSON into the chair on the other side of ARMITAGE and gently but firmly pulls him down into it, sitting herself beside him. She speaks urgently to him sotto voce. HOOPER stands and ushers PETRA to a seat beside him.

HINCHCLIFFE: *(writing with a flourish in his notebook)* "Mr. Armitage was elected by acclamation."

ARMITAGE: And now that I find myself here, I should like to say just a few words. I am a man of peace and of moderation – I believe in moderation and discretion, discretion, yes, and moderation. Both, at all times, those who know me will back me up in this, I'm sure ...

PETER GIBSON: Well spoken!

ARMITAGE: ... and just to make the point clear, discretion and moderation are what enable a man to be of service to his community. I must therefore ask our respected fellow-citizen who is solely responsible for calling this public meeting, here in Captain Hooper's residence, to assist me in keeping proceedings strictly within the bounds of discretion and, not forgetting, moderation. Now, does anyone else wish to make any introductory remarks?

PETER GIBSON: Mr. Chairman.

ARMITAGE: The chair recognises the Mayor.

Applause and the odd cheer.

PETER GIBSON: Mr Chairman, I should very much have preferred not to speak tonight – but, in my official capacity as Mayor and as Chairman of the Board of the Spa Baths Municipal Partnership Limited, I have to say that I consider it would be best if the Doctor's unreliable and wildly exaggerated version of the sanitary conditions of the Spa Baths were not to be given any wider circulation.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*together*) Absolutely not! It ought not to be allowed! Disgraceful altogether!

PETER GIBSON: I should like to propose, therefore, that this meeting should simply not permit the Medical Officer to read or, for that matter, to comment on his proposed lecture.

DR. GIBSON: (*impatiently*) Not permit me? Gag me? Go to the devil!

MRS. GIBSON: Harry! You promised me.

DR. GIBSON: (*collecting himself*) Oh, go on then. Have your say.

PETER GIBSON: In my own statement to the "People's Messenger," I have set out the core facts in such a way that reasonable and fair-minded citizens can judge where the truth lies and form their own opinion. As I have made plain, the main result of the Medical Officer's proposals – ignoring altogether their libellous attack on the leading men of the town – would be to burden every ratepayer with the wholly unnecessary expenditure of (*pause for emphasis*) at least thirty to forty thousand pounds.

Gasps and general hubbub.

ARMITAGE: (*ringing his bell*) Let us have some order, please, gentlemen! I am happy to support the Mayor's motion. Now, while no one doubts the honesty of the Doctor and I, myself, am a believer in the exercise of democracy by the people, provided the cost does not fall too heavily on the ratepayers, that's just exactly what seems to be the case here; and that is why I call on this meeting to suppress Dr Gibson's revolutionary aspirations. You can pay over the odds for a thing sometimes; that's my opinion and I'm damned –you'll pardon my French – if I'll give that my support.

Loud applause on all sides.

HINCHCLIFFE: Mr. Chairman, I, too, feel called upon to explain my position. As a chronicler of local news and views, I was ready to report it as impartially as I could. But, in very short order, I found reason to suspect that we were being intentionally misled by misrepresentation of the true state of affairs ...

DR. GIBSON: Misrepresentation!

HINCHCLIFFE: Well, if you prefer a more moderate expression, Chairman, let's say a not entirely valid representation. The Mayor's statement has proved that. Having had the advice of more experienced and thoughtful men, I am now persuaded that, in purely local matters as opposed to national issues, a newspaper ought to tread with caution.

ARMITAGE: I entirely agree with the speaker from the floor, our respected representative of the Fourth Estate.

SEVERAL VOICES: *(together)* Right, absolutely right! Hear, hear! You've said it!

HINCHCLIFFE: I won't deny it has been painful to dissociate myself from a man in whose house, until as recently as two days ago, I was a regular guest; to break with a man who, in the short time since he came back from Scotland, has gained the respect of his fellow-citizens but who, if he has a fault, is to let himself be swayed by emotion rather than guided by reason.

HOOPER: Bravo, Dr Gibson!

SEVERAL VOICES: *(together)* Quiet! Order!

HINCHCLIFFE: But that overarching civic responsibility compels me to break publicly with him. I should add, at this time, that there is another consideration; *(PETRA rises, then hurriedly sits again)* one that compels me to speak against him and, if it lies in my power, to halt him in his tracks and that is my consideration for the effects on his family ...

DR. GIBSON: Stick to the matter in hand, can't you? The water supply and the sewers ...

HINCHCLIFFE: ... the effects, I say again, on his wife and daughter that he seems determined to ignore.

PETRA: How dare you?

MRS. GIBSON: Hush!

ARMITAGE: We must move on. I will now put the Mayor's proposition to the vote.

DR. GIBSON: Never mind that, Mr. Armitage. I've no intention of wasting time on that filth down at the Baths. No; I've got something else to say tonight.

PETER GIBSON: Now what's coming?

SEVERAL VOICES: *(together)* This isn't what we came for. What's he on about? The man's off his chump.

ARMITAGE: Quiet please!

DR. GIBSON: Am I ever to be allowed to speak at my own meeting?

ARMITAGE: *(ringing his bell)* Dr Gibson will now address the meeting.

DR. GIBSON: This has all taken my breath away and a few days ago I would have challenged anyone who tried to silence me. But now? Well now it's all one to me; I have something of fundamental importance to say to you. These past few days I've been giving a great deal of thought to all manner of things, more than one small head has room for, it sometimes seemed.

PETER GIBSON: Quite so!

DR. GIBSON: I must tell you that I've made an amazing discovery; one that has much wider implications than finding that our water supply is polluted and our medicinal Spa stands on pestilential soil.

ARMITAGE: You're trying to change the subject. No more of that. Don't mention the Baths.

DR. GIBSON: Hold on, hold on! I've already told you I want to speak about something else – and that's my discovery that our own moral fibre is being poisoned and the entire framework of our municipality is built on foul ground and falsehood.

PETER GIBSON: That's a damnable insinuation!

ARMITAGE: *(with his hand on his bell)* I must call upon the speaker to moderate his tone and to conduct himself with greater discretion.

DR. GIBSON: Believe me, fellow-citizens; I have always loved this place, my native town, the part of the world I've known since childhood. But I wasn't much more than a child when I left here and the memories I carried with me cast a golden glow over the town and its people. *(Ripple of applause.)* I was in exile far to the north, first as a medical student and then as a doctor to one of the rudest and crudest places in this country, where I might have been more use as a vet rather than a doctor, considering the sort of people I had to look after. *(Sounds of disapproval this time.)*

HINCHCLIFFE: That's an insult to a respectable population! Withdraw!

DR. GIBSON: But no one could ever accuse me of having forgotten my native heath while I was there, surrounded by all that heather. All the time, I was working away at my big idea: to establish a hydropathical spa here in this town.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*expressing mixed reactions*) Don't mention the Baths! Good for you, Doctor. Here he goes again!

DR. GIBSON: So when, finally – and I acknowledge here the assistance of my brother – the fates relented and I was able to return home to live and work among you, there was only one thing I wanted more than coming back and that was to be of service to this community.

PETER GIBSON: (*loud aside*) Well you've chosen a funny way of doing it.

DR. GIBSON: And that explains how, dazzled by the bright lights of my home town, I was blinded to the real facts lurking in the shadows – that is until the day before yesterday. And that, my friends, was when the scales fell from my eyes and I saw at last the colossal stupidity of the Town Council and its various jerry-built extensions.

PETER GIBSON: Mr. Chairman, I protest!

ARMITAGE: (*ringing his bell*) By virtue of the authority vested in me...

DR. GIBSON: Yes, Mr. Armitage, I hear you. Moderation, you were about to say. What I really meant to say was that I suddenly found myself down wind of the men responsible for the penny-pinching decisions they took in setting up the Baths, and I could clearly detect the odour of hypocrisy. (*Intakes of breath.*) Yes, hypocrisy which, however you sniff at it, simply reeks of corruption and needs to be cleaned up. (*Protests.*)

PETER GIBSON: Mr. Chairman, you cannot allow this diatribe to continue.

ARMITAGE: Doctor, Doctor, Doctor!

DR. GIBSON: (*waving them all aside*) And now, of course, it baffles me how it has taken me so long to realise what kind of bourgeois bluebottles they really are, hovering over the municipal dung-heap and just what an excellent specimen my own brother is; big, round and full of nothing but buzz and wind.

Amid a general uproar, ARMITAGE rises, swinging his bell. MRS GIBSON tries to pull her husband down to his seat. PETER GIBSON shakes his fist. HINCHCLIFFE comes forward, notebook and pencil in hand.

ARMITAGE: Doctor, this has to be your last chance. Either you moderate your language and refrain from these slanderous insinuations or we shall have to close this meeting.

DR. GIBSON: Very well, Mr. Armitage, ladies and gentlemen, I shall say no more about your local worthies. They are not the cause of the poisoning, merely the symptoms. It is not they who are responsible. They merely react to the opportunities that the primary cause has generated.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*together*) You're losing us. This is flannel. Get to the point.

DR. GIBSON: You can count on it! That's just the amazing discovery I made yesterday is that the most dangerous enemy of truth and freedom is, purely and simply, the so-called solid majority – Yes! The damned, smug, solid majority that lets it all happen – so now you know!

Tremendous uproar: ARMITAGE rings his bell and begs for silence. HINCHCLIFFE and PETER GIBSON are shouting and talking to each other but are inaudible. Eventually quiet is restored.

ARMITAGE: As Chairman, I call on the speaker to withdraw his thoroughly ill-considered and immoderate expressions.

DR. GIBSON: Never, Mr. Armitage, not one word! It is the unthinking, silent and solid majority in our community that would deny me my freedom and which seeks to prevent my telling the world the truth.

HINCHCLIFFE: The majority always has right on its side. It's called the will of the people.

DR. GIBSON: Mr. Hinchcliffe, the majority has *never* had right on its side. Never! It's just one of these social white lies we all mouth and which any independent and intelligent man must denounce. Would you argue that the stupid should govern the clever? (*Loud protests.*) Oh yes, you can try to shout me down but what you can't do is argue the point. The solid majority may have might on its side but that can never mean that it is right. I tell you here and now that *I* am in the right. The intelligent minority is in the right.

HINCHCLIFFE: Rubbish!

DR. GIBSON: Just you listen to me, all of you. I'll waste no more words on the puny, scrawny, and dull-witted, short-termist pack of hangers-on we are leaving behind us. Lively minds need no longer concern themselves with such as those. I am talking of those few among us whose minds are open to the vim and vigour of the unvarnished truth. We shall be so far ahead of the slow-moving solid majority. We shall be out there fighting for the newly-discovered truths that need us to rally to their side.

HINCHCLIFFE: You really are a Bolshevik! I'd never have believed it. You want to start a revolution.

DR. GIBSON: Exactly right Mr. Hinchcliffe. I plan to start a revolution against the great lie that the solid majority has some monopoly on the truth. And what kind of truths do the majority usually support? Elderly and decrepit

truths that are so much on their last legs they're well on their way to becoming lies. (*Protests*) Oh yes, gentlemen, there are no such things as enduring truths, as old as Methuselah. Your average truth has a working life of seventeen or eighteen years, at most twenty. But any truth that gets to that age is pretty clapped out and hollow. Yet it's only *then* that the solid – in every sense of the word – majority catches up with it and recommends this thin gruel of a truth as wholesome porridge for the rest of the community. But lively minds can't live on such mean fare. As a doctor, I can assure you of this. These husks, these "majority truths" are like last month's potted meat; rancid, mouldy and the origin of the moral scurvy that is endemic in our communities.

ARMITAGE: What on earth is the *point* of this entire tirade, Doctor?

PETER GIBSON: It's beyond me, Mr. Chairman.

DR. GIBSON: Can't you get it into your thick head, Peter? I'm sticking like a leech to the subject because my subject is just this – that the masses, the majority, that damnable solid majority is what is poisoning the well-springs of our moral life and, indeed, the very ground on which we stand.

HINCHCLIFFE: Come now, Doctor. Instead of mouthing vague generalities, give us some concrete examples.

Loud applause.

DR. GIBSON: Hinchcliffe, I could give you a whole string of them but let me confine myself to that one, old-established but long-outmoded truth which is at the root of all the lies we are told – and yet you and the *People's Messenger* and all your loyal readers feed off it.

HINCHCLIFFE: Go on then.

DR. GIBSON: It's the creed of your tribal elders which you proclaim far and wide and *never* question – the belief that the public, a crowd of people, the seething masses somehow constitute the People, and that the common herd, the dull and the dumb, the ignorant and the unthinking, have in some strange way the same right to judge, to approve, to decide and to govern as those who are intelligent and intellectually superior.

HINCHCLIFFE: We've heard it all now! Fellow-citizens and readers of the "People's Messenger", I hope you're taking due note of all this.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*together*) Only the nobs can govern, can they? Rubbish! What a load of cod's wallop. Chuck him in the lake! To hell with you. I've heard enough!

DR. GIBSON: Look at your barnyard hen, for instance. What sort of a meal would you get off an old fowl like that? Precious little! Don't you think the Labrador's brain is more highly developed than any mongrel, as Charles Darwin argued? Of course it is. The future is not for the underdogs and their over-numerous under-puppies. (*Uproar and mocking cries.*)

PETER GIBSON: Are you calling us dogs, now? We're not animals. You're talking tripe.

DR. GIBSON: But that's the whole point; we *are* animals, Mr Mayor! True human beings are the finest animals ever to have evolved but even among men there are some who are exceptionally well-developed in terms of intelligence. You agree with me about horses, for example?

HINCHCLIFFE: If you're a betting man. (*Laughter.*)

DR. GIBSON: There you are. But, just as soon as I apply the principle to two-legged animals, Mr. Hinchcliffe, gets up on his hind legs. I'm afraid he'll not change until he shakes off the ingrained habit of thinking that reflects his origins.

HINCHCLIFFE: Fellow-citizens, I lay no claim to any sort of distinction. I do come from the working classes, the common five-eighths, but I am proud of it. I'm proud of the common people he now insults.

Cheers and bravos.

DR. GIBSON: I'm not talking about class. The common people I'm talking about are at every level of the social scale and crawl and swarm around us even at the top of the power pyramid. My own brother is every bit as much a part of the common herd as ever walked on two shoes ...

Laughter and hisses.

PETER GIBSON: Mr. Chairman, I protest against personal allusions of this kind.

DR. GIBSON: He only thinks what his cronies think, and clings to the same views as them. People who do that are, in my definition, the common people; and that is why my high and mighty brother is in reality completely undistinguished and very far from being forward-thinking and liberal-minded.

PETER GIBSON: Mr Chairman!

HINCHCLIFFE: You've lost your marbles, Doctor. Only clever-clogs like you are forward-thinking, then?

DR. GIBSON: Yes! And that's why the *Messenger's* previous assertions that we must cling to the old shibboleths are akin to preaching moral depravity. Well, let's have none of it. Let's recognise and acknowledge the truth: that it is ignorance, poverty and poor living conditions that are doing the devil's work. New ideas are as important to public health as good food, clean water and sweet-smelling drains. And there seems to be a pitiful lack of new ideas in this town when the *solid* majority seems to be willing to let the town's prosperity be built on a quagmire of pollution, falsehood and deceit.

ARMITAGE: (*ringing his bell*) I cannot allow such a grave accusation to be thrown in the face of this community.

PETER GIBSON: I move the Chairman directs the speaker to sit down.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*chanting and stamping their feet*) Sit down! Sit down! Sit down!

DR. GIBSON: (*losing his composure*) Then I'll shout the truth on every street corner! I'll publish it in Ripon and Harrogate! The whole country will soon find out what's going on in this town!

HINCHCLIFFE: Dr Gibson plans to ruin his own home town!

DR. GIBSON: Yes, this town is so dear to me that I'd rather see it ruined than flourishing on a lie.

ARMITAGE: This is quite dreadful.

Uproar and cat-calls. MRS. GIBSON tugs at his coat but her husband will not listen to her.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*shouting*) Any man who would willingly ruin an entire community can only be called an enemy of the people.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*echoing him*) Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people!

DR. GIBSON: (*wildly*) What would the destruction of a single community matter if it lives off immorality and decay? Like Sodom and Gomorrah it deserves to be razed to the ground and all who live in it put down like vermin. It's a simple matter of Public Health. The plague could spread across the whole country like the 'flu epidemic. And if that happened, then the only safe course of action would be to let the country perish and all its people.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*together*) Out of your mind! Rubbish! Think he's Mussolini!

HINCHCLIFFE: The people have spoken, Doctor, by all they hold sacred.

SEVERAL VOICES: (*shouting*) Enemy of the people! Out, out, out!

ARMITAGE rises, ringing his bell repeatedly. DR. GIBSON steps down off his chair.

ARMITAGE: I have to say as Chairman, as a citizen and as an individual, I am nearly speechless with shock at what we have just heard. Dr Gibson has shown himself in a completely new and very unflattering light. Despite my motto of moderation at all times, I am forced to agree with the sentiments I hear expressed from every corner of the room. I feel it must be formally expressed in a resolution. From the chair, therefore, I propose "That this

meeting declares Dr Henry Gibson, Medical Officer of the Spa Baths, to be an enemy of the people.”

A storm of cheers, stamping and applause. Members of the crowd confront the DOCTOR and hiss at him. MRS. GIBSON, with her hands to her mouth and PETRA are outside this group. PETRA tries to lash out with her umbrella. CAPTAIN HOOPER restrains her.

DR. GIBSON: *(Standing)* You fools! You ignorant, blind, greedy fools.

ARMITAGE: *(ringing his bell)* We shall not listen to another word. A vote has been called. We shall have a show of hands.

PETER GIBSON shakes his head and, picking his hat and stick from the table, he stalks out. DR. GIBSON enfolds his wife and daughter in an embrace. A hubbub of angry conversation continues throughout. MARTIN KYLE sidles up to DR. GIBSON.

MARTIN KYLE: Damnit, Gibson, can't you see what these monkey tricks of yours will lead to?

DR. GIBSON: My conscience is clear, father-in-law.

MARTIN KYLE: Fancy! And are you still blaming my tannery?

DR. GIBSON: Absolutely! It's the principal source of all the pollution.

MARTIN KYLE: My tannery! And that is what you wanted to put in the paper?

DR. GIBSON: That; and much else besides.

MARTIN KYLE: This may cost you dear, Gibson. Think on. *(Exits.)*

ARMITAGE: Will those in favour of declaring Dr Henry Gibson an Enemy of the People please show. ... That's an overwhelming majority. Accordingly, this meeting of townspeople declares Dr Henry Gibson to be an Enemy of the People. *(Cheers and stamping of feet.)* This meeting is now closed. *(He steps to the side of the stage.)*

The crowd disperses quickly. The GIBSONS and HOOPER are left on one side of the stage while ARMITAGE and HINCHCLIFFE confer at the other.

DR. GIBSON: Kate, Petra, we must go home but I have one question for you, Captain. Do you have room on your ship for three passengers for the New World?

HOOPER: For you and yours we can always make room, Doctor.

DR. GIBSON: Good; then it's settled. Come, both of you. Many thanks, Hooper. You were brave too.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry dear; let's go out by the back way.

DR. GIBSON: No back ways for me, Kate. (*To HINCHCLIFFE and ARMITAGE*) You'll hear more from this enemy of the people before I shake the dust of this unhealthy town off my shoes. I'm not as forgiving as a certain Person. I shall not be heard saying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

ARMITAGE: That is blasphemy, Dr Gibson!

The GIBSONS escorted by HOOPER begin to leave. There is the sound of a window breaking and a stone rolls onto the stage. Offstage, the chant get up, "Enemy of the People!" As GIBSON exits, HINCHCLIFFE and then ARMITAGE take up the chant then shake hands in mutual congratulation. ARMITAGE exits tipping his hat to PETER GIBSON who crosses to HINCHCLIFFE, glances round and hands him a brown envelope. HINCHCLIFFE also looks round carefully as he slips it into his inside pocket.

Black out house and stage lights. Silence.

End of Act IV

ACT V

SCENE – The GIBSON’S sitting room. The large table is littered with books and papers while on its front, downstage corner sits a small cairn of stones. One larger stone is under the table and DR GIBSON is raking for it with the handle of a stout walking-stick. MRS GIBSON enters holding a letter.

DR. GIBSON: Kate! I’ve found another one. A half-pounder, I’d say.

MRS. GIBSON: Keep looking, Harry; you’ll find them all.

DR. GIBSON: *(adding the stone to the cairn)* I’ll preserve these gifts from the masses and, one day, our grand-children will inherit them, as family heirlooms. *(He sits at the table then calls out again.)* Has what’s-her-name been to chase-up the glazier?

MRS. GIBSON: Yes, but she has her doubts if he’ll come today.

DR. GIBSON: I’ll lay a small bet he won’t dare show up. *(Chants.)* “Enemy of the People! Enemy of the People!”

MRS. GIBSON: She thinks he’ll be afraid of the neighbours. Anyway, here’s a letter for you. *(Hands it to him.)*

DR. GIBSON: *(opens and reads it)* Well this was entirely predictable.

MRS. GIBSON: Who’s it from?

DR. GIBSON: Our beloved landlord. Our notice to quit.

MRS. GIBSON: He seemed such a nice man too.

DR. GIBSON: *(reads from the letter)* “In the circumstances, public opinion leaves me no choice ... don’t personally like doing this but ... must respect the views of my fellow-citizens ... don’t care to offend certain influential people”. Balderdash! *(Screws it into a ball and tosses it onto the table.)*

MRS. GIBSON: Please don’t tell me you didn’t foresee this.

DR. GIBSON: Yes, yes! Well enough. Amongst the whole pack of them, there isn’t one who’s not a moral coward. The daft thing is each one is afraid of everyone else. But that doesn’t matter to us, my darling. We’re off next week to the New World. *(Sings.)* “Oh, say can you see, by the dawn’s early light”, et cetera, et cetera.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry, how can you be so certain this is the right step?

DR. GIBSON: Are you seriously imagining we can go on living *here*? Where I’m branded an enemy of the people, where most of our windows have been broken and, as if that wasn’t enough, they’ve torn my Montague Burton trousers. *(Shows off the tear.)*

MRS. GIBSON: Oh, Harry. They’re your best pair!

DR. GIBSON: And the moral is – never wear your best trousers when you set out to fight for freedom.

MRS. GIBSON: They did treat you very roughly, Harry, but is that enough to have us cut and run, and leave our country for ever?

DR. GIBSON: Since the War, this country has never got back on an even keel, socially. I'd better not be under any illusions that it's so much better in the "land of the free", but at least there's so much land you have room to be your own man.

MRS. GIBSON: But what about Petra; and those grandchildren the stones are for?

DR. GIBSON: (*coming to her*) Would you prefer to see her grow up in this place? One half of the population are numbskulls and the other half have no brains in their skulls to go numb.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry, you do say some very imprudent and intolerant things.

DR. GIBSON: Is anything I say untrue? Haven't Armitage, Hinchcliffe and my esteemed brother been standing reason on its head and saying that everything I've *proved* is just a lie?

They embrace. PETRA enters.

DR. GIBSON: Back from school already?

PETRA: No ... I've been dismissed.

MRS. GIBSON: Dismissed?

DR. GIBSON: The sack? You too!

MRS. GIBSON: I'd never have thought Miss Cooper would do such a thing.

PETRA: She said she didn't have any choice and had to show me the door.

DR. GIBSON: Typical! Just typical. Just like the landlord, just like the others. What a flock of sheep.

MRS. GIBSON: But even considering the dreadful scenes last night, how could she ...

PETRA: It wasn't just that. There was more.

DR. GIBSON: Oh, yes. What else?

PETRA: She showed me the awful letters, pushed through her letterbox.

DR. GIBSON: Anonymous, no doubt?

PETRA: One of them was saying that a man who had been a guest in our house was telling people at the Toc H that my views on all kinds of things were extremely emancipated.

MRS. GIBSON: Someone who's been a guest of ours! That'll teach you to keep open house, Harry!

DR. GIBSON: We shan't stay a moment longer in this cess pit.

HOOPER enters diffidently. PETRA sees him.

PETRA: Captain Hooper! Do come in and join us.

HOOPER: If I may? Good morning Doctor, Mrs Gibson, Miss Gibson. I thought I'd just look in and see how things are this morning.

DR. GIBSON: (*grasping his hand*) That's very kind of you. We're well, very well, all things considered.

MRS. GIBSON: And thank you for helping us to get through the crowd last night.

DR. GIBSON: Cowards the lot of them. And look at this. Scarcely a decent cobblestone amongst them. They stood outside shouting and swearing for half-an-hour but then it got too near closing time.

HOOPER: Just as well for you then.

DR. GIBSON: Maybe so, but by heck, it makes me angry. But why should I bother? After all, I'm an enemy of the people. They called me that, so that's what I'll be.

MRS. GIBSON: You never were. You never will be, Harry.

DR. GIBSON: Don't swear to it, Kate. They say names will never hurt but poisonous names could just infect a man's soul and eat away at his insides, and there's no *Milk of Magnesia* on earth to treat that sort of corrosion.

PETRA: Pay no attention, Father. Laugh at them.

HOOPER: One day, they'll come round to your point of view, Doctor.

MRS. GIBSON: Of course they will.

DR. GIBSON: Perhaps – but when it's all too late, and then what good will it do them? Well, well; when do we sail, Captain Hooper?

HOOPER: I'm afraid that's what I really came to see you about.

DR. GIBSON: Something wrong with your ship?

HOOPER: Nothing at all. It's just I'm not going to sail in her.

PETRA: Oh, Captain Hooper! You've been dismissed too. It's not true, is it?

HOOPER: *(Smiling)* I'm afraid it is.

PETRA embraces him and then they step apart, both slightly embarrassed.

DR. GIBSON: The disease is spreading. I'm sorry you're a victim too.

HOOPER: Don't take it too much to heart. Business is booming in America. They say 1929 will be a record year. I'll soon find another ship.

PETRA: If only you hadn't let us use that room this wouldn't have happened. It's not fair!

HOOPER: I don't regret it, Miss Gibson.

PETRA: *(holding out her hand to him)* Thank you for that!

HOOPER: *(to DR. GIBSON)* I mustn't forget to say that, if you are really determined to leave, I might have some other ideas.

DR. GIBSON: I want to go at once, so let's hear them.

PETER GIBSON enters with his hat and staff. MRS GIBSON sees him first.

MRS. GIBSON: Peter!

PETRA: Uncle, we were just thinking about you.

DR. GIBSON: Mr. Mayor – do come in. You bring good tidings, I'm sure.

MRS. GIBSON: *(admonishing)* Harry!

PETER GIBSON: You have company, Henry, in which case, I ...

DR. GIBSON: No. Do come in.

PETER GIBSON: Alone then, Henry.

MRS. GIBSON: Come along, Petra. The rest of us will leave you in peace.

HOOPER: I'll look in later.

MRS GIBSON begins ushering PETRA and HOOPER off-stage.

DR. GIBSON: (*calling out*) Do wait for me in the kitchen, Captain Hooper.

HOOPER: With pleasure. (*He and the ladies exit.*)

DR. GIBSON: As your medical adviser, I have to warn you about the effects of the draughts in here. Do please put your hat back on.

PETER GIBSON: Thank you. I think I might have caught cold last night.

DR. GIBSON: Fancy! I must say I found it hot enough.

PETER GIBSON: It was not in my power to curb some of last night's excesses, including your own.

DR. GIBSON: Was there anything else you wanted to say, apart from that?

PETER GIBSON: (*bringing out an envelope*) I have this for you, from the Board of the Spa Baths Municipal Partnership.

DR. GIBSON: The sack?

PETER GIBSON: With immediate effect. (*He places it on the table, propped against the cairn of stones.*) In order to retain the confidence of the public at large we have no choice. We dare not retain your services.

DR. GIBSON: (*grinning*) Dare not? Now where have I heard that before?

PETER GIBSON: I think you need to grasp your position without any misunderstanding, Henry. From this moment you cannot expect any paying patients or any public work in this borough.

DR. GIBSON: How can you be so sure?

PETER GIBSON: Even as we speak a petition is circulating, calling on all right-thinking citizens to boycott you, and I rather doubt if many heads of families will refuse to sign. The pressure on them will be irresistible.

DR. GIBSON: I can well imagine. And then what?

PETER GIBSON: Quite honestly, after last night's performance, I think putting some distance between this town and yourself would be advisable.

DR. GIBSON: Coincidentally, the benefits to be gained from a long sea voyage had crossed my mind.

PETER GIBSON: Splendid. Find something to do, at least a hundred miles from here and then, after six months or so, if you found your way to pen a few words, acknowledging possible error, indicating regret and so on ...

DR. GIBSON: You'd let me have my job back, is that it?

PETER GIBSON: There's no guarantee, but nothing's impossible.

DR. GIBSON: But Peter, how on earth would you handle public feelings on the issue? Surely you are a slave to the opinions of others?

PETER GIBSON: Public opinion can change and we'll have the elections out of the way by then. But this is all conditional.

DR. GIBSON: Conditional?

PETER GIBSON: We must have some admission from you in writing.

DR. GIBSON: That's what you want, is it?

PETER GIBSON: You spoke in error, and under the mistaken impression you had the whole town at your back.

DR. GIBSON: And now I feel that the whole town is *on* my back – but I shall not retract a word, even if you get down off my back and onto your knees.

PETER GIBSON: Merciful heavens, Henry, a man with family responsibilities simply can't behave like that. You haven't the right.

DR. GIBSON: I tell you, Peter, a free man, a man of honour, cannot dabble in party political filth, or the world will simply spit in his face.

PETER GIBSON: Come off your high horse before you *fall* off. Pompous platitudes might wash with someone who doesn't know your family circumstances and expectations.

DR. GIBSON: And just what is *that* supposed to mean?

PETER GIBSON: You know perfectly well what I'm talking about; but I counsel you not to build too much of your future plans on these expectations.

DR. GIBSON: You're talking riddles.

PETER GIBSON: Are you standing there telling me that you're unaware of the terms of your father-in-law's will?

DR. GIBSON: The Silver Fox? How can that concern me?

PETER GIBSON: In the first place, what he possesses is by no means a modest sum.

DR. GIBSON: Fancy that! He gives little outward sign of it.

PETER GIBSON: And you'll be telling me next you were blissfully unaware that the bulk of his estate will actually go to your daughter while your wife will have a life rent of the capital. I have it from an unimpeachable source.

DR. GIBSON: Then, praise the Lord! Kate and Petra are provided for, and the rest of the world can go hang!

PETER GIBSON: But you haven't got a penny yet and Martin Kyle can rewrite his will any time he likes.

DR. GIBSON: Why on earth should he do that? Let me tell you he was only too delighted when he first heard about my report and my attack on you and your cronies.

PETER GIBSON: (*realisation suddenly dawning*) So *that's* it! What a devious and disgraceful scheme. And you're my own brother!

DR. GIBSON: Are you mad; as well as stupid?

PETER GIBSON: Of course; of course. I see the whole thing now! The pair of you have been acting in collusion. First of all you make these wild attacks on the Council, under the guise of a report about the Spa Baths.

DR. GIBSON: I did what?

PETER GIBSON: But it was simply a smoke-screen, and the price he demanded from you for a place in that vindictive man's will. Well, you can say what you like now. We've got the goods on you. Why else has Kyle been buying up shares and bonds at knock-down prices? Well, your dismissal is final and irrevocable now; and you can clear out of this town forever. (*He storms out in high dudgeon, DR. GIBSON looking after him.*)

DR. GIBSON: (*calling after him*) Idiot! Imbecile! Kate! Have the floors scrubbed. Wipe anything he's touched with Dettol.

MRS GIBSON rushes in.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry, Harry, for pity's sake calm down.

PETRA enters.

PETRA: Father, grandpa's here.

MARTIN KYLE enters.

DR. GIBSON: Come in, father-in-law. Won't you take a seat, sir?

MARTIN KYLE: I'd rather stand. (*Looks around.*) You look very comfortable here today, and I don't think!

DR. GIBSON: You see how it is, I'm afraid.

MRS. GIBSON & PETRA exit.

MARTIN KYLE: Plenty of fresh air though. I'd say you'd got your ration of that oxygen you're always on about. And I suppose your conscience is in the pink after all the exercise you've given it.

DR. GIBSON: I'll say!

MARTIN KYLE: Happen. (*Draws a foolscap folder from inside his coat.*) Do you know what these are?

DR. GIBSON: It could be the *People's Messenger* for all I know.

MARTIN KYLE puts the folder on the table and draws out its contents.

DR. GIBSON: (*looking at them in astonishment*) But these are bonds and share certificates in the Baths.

MARTIN KYLE: They were going even cheaper today, I can tell you.

DR. GIBSON: You've been buying them? Then it's true?

MARTIN KYLE: I've bought everything I could pay for. Cash on the nail.

DR. GIBSON: But, father-in-law; I've been telling you what an abysmal state the Bath's affairs are in. Why? In God's name, why?

MARTIN KYLE: Why? Don't be daft. If you act reasonable and we move quick, we can set the Baths on their feet again before the season's first charabanc gets here from Leeds.

DR. GIBSON: Well, I wanted the Board to take remedial action but that might take a couple of years.

MARTIN KYLE: Now you just listen to me for once. You've been saying that my tannery's where all your troubles are coming from but if that were true then my father, my grandfather and me would have killed off the whole town long since. Am I supposed to sit back and accept that nonsense? Think on.

DR. GIBSON: Whatever you call it, you'll have to accept it.

MARTIN KYLE: Happen not. I'm proud of my name and my family reputation. I've always kept them clean and polished. I mean to live and die a clean man.

DR. GIBSON: Just precisely how do you aim to manage that?

MARTIN KYLE: You're going to do it for me, Gibson.

DR. GIBSON: Me! How?

MARTIN KYLE: Have you the least idea where I got the money for all these shares I've bought? Of course you don't, I've never told you, but I'll tell you now. It's my life savings and every penny of it will come to my daughter and granddaughter just as soon as I pop my clogs.

DR. GIBSON: (*flaring up*) You mean to say you've spent Kate's inheritance buying worthless shares in the Baths?

MARTIN KYLE: I haven't a halfpenny of liquid cash left and just you think about this – if you can still think. If you go on spouting all this rubbish about the nasty little animals coming out of my tannery, then you'll be pissing away your own wife's inheritance. No decent man would do that to a woman – unless he was completely mad.

DR. GIBSON: If I wasn't mad already, I am now!

MARTIN KYLE: You're not going to be so mad as to put the future of your wife and child at risk, are you, eh?

DR. GIBSON: Why in the name of God didn't you talk to me about all this before rushing out and squandering a fortune?

MARTIN KYLE: I'm my own man, Gibson. And it's done now.

DR. GIBSON: If only it weren't such an open and shut case, whichever way you look at it.

MARTIN KYLE: Wouldn't rat poison do the trick?

DR. GIBSON: Please! Let's be serious at least. In any case, my brother and his cronies are already saying the problem only exists in my imagination, so why don't you let these ignorant and greedy schemers have their way. To them, I'm an enemy of the people, and the townspeople seem ready to tear the clothes off my back.

MARTIN KYLE: And break your windows!

DR. GIBSON: Oh, Kyle! How could you do such a dreadful, such a wicked thing? Risking Kate's security and thrusting me into such a painful dilemma. It isn't just wicked; it's obscene.

MARTIN KYLE: I think I'd better go before *I* hear something *you* might regret. But mark this, Gibson; it's time to make your mind up, yes or no. If I haven't got a yes from you by tonight then I'll give all this to the cat-and-dog home.

DR. GIBSON: Then what would Kate get?

MARTIN KYLE: Damn all. Totally zero.

HINCHCLIFFE and ARMITAGE enter.

MARTIN KYLE: And what brings these two here, I wonder?

DR. GIBSON: (*glaring at them*) You astonish me. You have the bare-faced cheek to come into my house.

HINCHCLIFFE: That's right.

ARMITAGE: We need to speak to you. It's important.

MARTIN KYLE: Tonight, Gibson! I'll see myself out.

He exits briskly upstage right. While DR. GIBSON stares after him, nonplussed, HINCHCLIFFE nudges ARMITAGE and whispers something, indicating KYLE with his thumb.

DR. GIBSON: You can have two minutes. Make it snappy.

HINCHCLIFFE: Now Doctor, I can understand you might be a little annoyed by our *public* attitude towards you at last night's meeting.

DR. GIBSON: Attitude you call it. I call it shallow, shameful prejudice.

HINCHCLIFFE: We had little choice in the matter, as it happens.

DR. GIBSON: You mean you didn't *dare* do otherwise.

HINCHCLIFFE: You can put it that way if you wish.

ARMITAGE: Why couldn't you have tipped us off *before* the meeting? A word in my ear would have been enough.

DR. GIBSON: Tipped you off – about what?

ARMITAGE: About what was behind it all – the master plan!

DR. GIBSON: You have simply no idea what you're talking about.

ARMITAGE: (*with a confidential nod*) Oh yes, I think we do.

HINCHCLIFFE: I mean there's no mystery about it now.

DR. GIBSON: Just what the devil are you driving at?

ARMITAGE: Is it, or is it not true that Martin Kyle, your own father-in-law, is going round buying up all the shares in the Baths that he can lay his hands on?

DR. GIBSON: Yes – that's true, actually. He has been buying shares today, but ...

ARMITAGE: Wouldn't it have been more politic to have got someone else, less closely related to you, to have handled that part of it?

HINCHCLIFFE: Then your name would have been kept out of the affair. Even the attack on the Baths needn't have come directly from you. If only you'd taken me into your confidence, Dr Gibson.

DR. GIBSON: (*incredulous*) Can I believe what I'm hearing? Are you saying what I think you're saying? Are such things possible?

ARMITAGE: (*smiling*) Of course they are. But a little discretion, moderation, some *finesse* would have helped.

HINCHCLIFFE: It's always better for these things to be a team effort when the goal is so important. The worry's less, and the responsibility for everyone.

DR. GIBSON: (*calmly*) I feel you're about to make a proposal.

ARMITAGE: Perhaps Mr. Hinchcliffe should ...

HINCHCLIFFE: No, better you, Armitage.

ARMITAGE: Well, let's put it positively – now we have a measure of the plan, we might see our way to back you through the columns of the *People's Messenger*.

DR. GIBSON: Your bravery astonishes me. But what will you do about public opinion? The thing about lightning conductors is they generally get struck by lightning.

HINCHCLIFFE: Then we must just try to weather the storm.

ARMITAGE: And you must prepare your own line of attack, just as soon as your pointed criticisms have had their intended effect ...

DR. GIBSON: Aha! You mean the moment my father-in-law and I have mopped up all the shares at bargain basement prices?

HINCHCLIFFE and ARMITAGE nod vigorously.

HINCHCLIFFE: Meanwhile, we shall be taking the line that your interest in seeking control of the Spa Baths is primarily scientific.

DR. GIBSON: Shrewd! Well, I might as well tell you, the plan will be to dig up a bit of the lake shore and a few yards of the conduit pipe near the tanneries but it won't cost the town a brass farthing. That'll satisfy public opinion, surely?

HINCHCLIFFE: I should say so; assuming you *do* have the *People's Messenger* behind you.

DR. GIBSON: Did you say *assuming*?

ARMITAGE: The popular press can be a powerful voice, for or against.

DR. GIBSON: Quite so, but we mustn't forget public opinion. Will you be able to answer for the views of the Chamber of Commerce and the Householders' Association?

ARMITAGE: Indubitably; and, for that matter, the Temperance Society.

DR. GIBSON: But, dear friends, I'm overwhelmed. I'm almost embarrassed to ask, but what might I then be expected to do for *you*?

HINCHCLIFFE: Well, naturally one would like to act out of simple altruism but the fact of the matter is the *People's Messenger* is a bit rocky at the moment, scarcely keeping its head above water.

DR. GIBSON: I can see that, and it would be a blow for such friends of the people as you two. But you're forgetting something, surely. I'm an officially declared enemy of the people. So, where the deuce did I put my stick. (*He makes an ostentatious search on the table.*)

HINCHCLIFFE: Now, hold on!

ARMITAGE: Surely you never mean ... Doctor! Moderation!

DR. GIBSON: (*pausing in his search*) Just imagine, for discussion, I wasn't to give you a penny.

HINCHCLIFFE: Just imagine then ... for discussion ... that there could be more than one way of interpreting the facts.

DR. GIBSON: And I can see you're just the man to master such skills. The dilemma seems to be that if I don't ride to the rescue like Rothermere, you and Armitage will turn on me with your columns and run me out of town.

HINCHCLIFFE: It's a cruel world, Dr Gibson. All dog gets to eat these days is other dog.

ARMITAGE: We all have to protect our own futures, as best we can, with the tools at our disposal.

DR. GIBSON: Then you two can look for yours in the gutter. I'll just show you which of us has true strength of purpose. Ah, here's my stick.

HINCHCLIFFE: You don't intend to resort to violence?

ARMITAGE: Have a care, Doctor! Have a care!

DR. GIBSON: I'm going to throw you both out of that broken window. You first, Hinchcliffe.

HINCHCLIFFE: (*edging with ARMITAGE towards the door but DR GIBSON cuts off their retreat*) Steady on. Don't be daft, now.

DR. GIBSON: Jump before you're pushed for the first time in your lives.

DR. GIBSON chases the other two round the front of the table.

ARMITAGE: Doctor – I'm not in perfect health. (*Calls out.*) Help! Help!

HINCHCLIFFE: Help!

MRS GIBSON, PETRA and HOOPER come running in and the two men rush behind them.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry! What are you doing?

DR. GIBSON: Throwing these two out of the window.

HINCHCLIFFE: An unprovoked assault. You're my witness, Captain Hooper. (*He steps back a couple of paces when DR. GIBSON raises his stick. ARMITAGE sandwiches himself between PETRA and MRS. GIBSON.*)

ARMITAGE: Let me out of here. (*He elbows his way past the two women and, with HINCHCLIFFE, exits at the trot.*)

MRS. GIBSON: (*holding her husband back*) Harry, control yourself. For shame!

DR. GIBSON: (*throwing down his stick*) Well, they've made good their escape now.

MRS. GIBSON: What did they want, Harry?

DR. GIBSON: I'll tell you later but now there's something else I have to do. By God, I have to do this. (*He sits at the table, picks up a sheet of paper and pulls out his fountain pen. He writes quickly.*) What does this say, Kate?

MRS. GIBSON: No. No. No. What does that mean?

DR. GIBSON: It means No; but I'll explain that later too. Petra, get the maid to run over to the Silver Fox's lair with this, just as fast as she can. Hurry!

PETRA takes the note and hurries off stage.

DR. GIBSON: I've had a visit from every one of the devil's disciples today but in order to keep them at bay I must sharpen my pen, dip it in garlic, and stab them without mercy.

MRS. GIBSON: Not *more* articles, Harry, and, besides, we're going away. We're almost completely packed.

PETRA comes back and CAPTAIN HOOPER puts his arm round her.

DR. GIBSON: Well?

PETRA: She's taking it round.

DR. GIBSON: Splendid. (*Turning to MRS. GIBSON.*) Going away? Not any more. I'm damned if I'll give these hypocrites that satisfaction. We're going to stand and fight.

PETRA: Stay here?

MRS. GIBSON: Here, Harry? In this town?

DR. GIBSON: Where else, Kate? Here's where the front line is. Just as soon as you've mended the tear in my trousers, I'll go and find us somewhere to live.

HOOPER: Have my house. There's plenty of room and when I get a ship I'll scarcely be there.

MRS. GIBSON: That is so kind, Captain Hooper!

PETRA: Thank you! (*She kisses him on the cheek and he puts his hand to the spot.*)

DR. GIBSON: (*Grasping his hand.*) Thank you, thank you, young man! Well that's our first problem solved. Now; on to the next. There's almost too much to do, and all at once; but never mind; I'll have plenty time now. I've been dismissed from the Baths.

MRS. GIBSON: (*sighing*) We rather thought that was Peter's errand.

DR. GIBSON: And there's a petition going the rounds to take my practice away. I'll only be left with those that can't afford to pay me, but if they come at all they'll have to listen to me and I'll preach at them non-stop and get them to spread the message.

MRS. GIBSON: Harry! Everywhere we've been you've tried preaching, and where has it got you?

DR. GIBSON: But now I have a new message, Kate. I have a simple and straightforward message. It's party machines and rigid party programmes that are the real enemies of truth and freedom. It's their stranglehold of conformity and their opposition to independent thought that's dragging us all down. Surely I can make the people understand?

HOOPER: I'm sure you can, Doctor, though I don't know a great deal about such things, I'm afraid.

DR. GIBSON: Then you'll be my first convert; my first recruit. (*Sits on the front corner of the table.*) Come over here Kate, and look out through the broken window. See how the sun shines. Smell the lovely spring air. (*She joins him.*)

MRS. GIBSON: But we can't live on sun and wind, Harry.

DR. GIBSON: You'll manage somehow, Kate. You always have done and we've been in worse positions. And I've a lifetime of work to tackle now – so much, I wonder who I can recruit to come after me.

PETRA: Don't think like that, father. You've all the time in the world and you've got me.

DR. GIBSON: And you're a *teacher!* I have it. We'll start a school. We'll educate those children whose parents can't pay grammar school fees and we'll make them so clever they'll none of them want to go and work in the tanneries. You must help me in this, Petra.

PETRA: With all my heart, father. How soon can we start?

DR. GIBSON: We have our schoolroom – the very room where they branded me an enemy of the people – but we need a good dozen boys, and girls, to get started.

MRS. GIBSON: Where will you get them in this town?

DR. GIBSON: We'll find them. Petra and I know all the street urchins, the working men's children, the abandoned waifs at the orphanage.

PETRA: We can easily get a *couple* of dozen.

MRS. GIBSON: And what are they going to do, when you've made independent thinkers of them?

DR. GIBSON: Then they will drive the wolves out of the country and lead the sheep to pastures new.

MRS. GIBSON: Let's hope the wolves don't drive out all the sheep, and us with them.

DR. GIBSON: How can that possibly be, Kate? How can they drive me out when it's clear I'm the strongest man in this town?

MRS. GIBSON: The strongest? Oh, Harry!

DR. GIBSON: Yes, Kate, and I'll even say the strongest man in the whole wide world.

PETRA/ MRS. GIBSON/ CAPTAIN HOOPER: *(together)* Hoorah for father! Harry, you're mad! Doctor, be serious.

DR. GIBSON: *(raising his hand for silence)* Don't say a word! But the enemy of the people has made a great discovery.

MRS. GIBSON: Another discovery?

DR. GIBSON: Oh yes. A momentous discovery. *(He climbs onto a chair and the others gather round him.)* The strongest man in the world is he who stands alone!!

CAPTAIN HOOPER: *(Clapping his hands.)* Bravo, Bravo!

MRS. GIBSON: *(overlapping, smiling and shaking her head)* Oh, Harry, Harry!

PETRA: *(hugging her father's knees)* Father! Dear father!

Curtain.

End