

RAHEL O FON

by

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This play, Rahel o Fon, has been built upon the character of Rachel Paynter Davies, mother of Joseph E. Davies, formerly of Watertown, Wis. She was the first ordained woman-minister in Wisconsin and there are those alive today, who testify to her eloquence and rare nobility of character. I am indebted to Mr. Davies, for his letters to me, and to Mary King Schoen Thomas for help in selecting the Welsh music. All the characters in the play are fictitious, with the exceptions of Rahel, Mr. Davies, and their little boy, Joseph, who grew up to be, United States Ambassador to Russia and Belgium.

RAHEL o FON.

A

DRAMA IN 3 ACTS.

BY,

EMILY SPRAGUE WURL.

CHARACTERS

Silas Williams, old Welshman.

Gareth Jones, 14 yr. old boy, whom Davies befriends.

Patrick McCarthy, Irishman.

Hugh Roberts, middle-aged Welshman.

Edward Davies, 30 yr. old bachelor, owner of wagon-shop.

Deacon Jones

" Griffith

" Evans

" Howell

" Thomas

Widow Bucksem, the town gossip.

Her woman friend.

Rahel o Fon, young, beautiful, eloquent woman-preacher.

Llewelyn Pryce, young man-preacher in love with Rahel,
who has followed her from Wales to America.

Joseph Davies, 5 yr. old son of Rahel and Edward.

2 little sisters, children of Patrick McCarthy.

Farmers, 1st. & 2nd., and Boy Jenkins.

1st. & 2nd. Women, and Choir members.

Stout Woman in typical Welsh farm group.

ACT ONE.

Scene: Interior of wagon-shop, 1874.

ACT TWO.

(Two months later)

Scene: Grove in front of small Welsh Church.

ACT THREE

(Six years later)

Scene: Same as Act Two.

"Every noble life leaves the fibre of it interwoven forever in
the work of the world." John Ruskin.

ACT ONE

Scene: Interior of the wagon-making shop owned by Edward Davies, at Ixonia, Wis., June, 1874. There are large double doors at left of center-back. A ~~small~~ window on the wall to right of center-back. A small wagon complete but for the wheels stands across two saw-horses, R.F. Silas is painting on it. Patrick is hammering out a wheel-rim at C.B. Hugh stands shaping spokes, L.C. while Gareth at L. foreground, saws. They go about the normal duties of workmen in a wagon-shop, crossing and recrossing the stage for tools, sand-paper, etc., between their speeches. As the curtain rises, the mood is established by the four, singing in harmony, the plaintive Welsh tune, "HEN WHAD FY NHADAU." OLD LAND OF MY FATHERS.

OLD LAND OF MY FATHERS

Old mountain-built Cymru, the bard's Paradise,
The farm in the cwm, the wild crag in the skies,
The river that winds, have entwined tenderly
With a love spell my spirit in me.

Gareth, in a high tenor voice sings the chorus alone, while the others stand about raptly listening.

CHORUS: Too fondly I love thee, dear Land,
'Till warring sea and shore be gone,
Pray God let the old tongue live on.

Silas

"Glorious is the voice of man and sweet is the music of the harp." Oh indeed, my boy, it is very sad you can't lay hand on your

Welsh harp - it is very sad, indeed.

GARETH.

I'm glad I've still got my vocal chords -

SILAS

An' ye don't need eggs for your voice -

Gareth

(Examining saw) Ed. Davies, don't think much of my singing! He keeps threatening to lay a switch across my back, but he ain't broke me yet! Not but what he would like to.

Silas

For why, Gareth?

Gareth

(Throwing down saw with a clatter) He's always bullyragging me. I've half a mind to leave home, or go jump in the quarrey. Anything to get away -

Silas

Hisht now, it is soft you are. Don't be afraid of him, lad. The Welsh have too much respect for the body the good Lord gave 'em to live in, to go strikin' of it. He's just threatenin' ye, that he is, indeed.

Hugh

(Mildly) I've heard tell your Uncle had to climb over a hard row of stumps to get where he is today -

Gareth

(Kicking at saw-dust) Forget it, Hugh. I know what you're going to say. 'He didn't have to raise you. You ought to remember that.'

Hugh

It ain't even as though he were your real Uncle - *and he took you in when you were a baby -*

Gareth

That's what I'm tired of having thrown up to me. (Crossly) I wish he'd let me be!

Patrick

Then Gareth, why do you stand out agin Ed. Davies so? He's been rite good to ye. *Ain't you grateful that* He ~~took ye in an'~~ giv ye a home when ye needed it -

Gareth

Lay off of me, Pat. It wasn't my fault my parents both got drowned. (Picks up saw with a bored motion.)

Patrick

Ed. found it a mighty hot skirmish to find a dollar when he first came here. He is well-wished in this community - Ain't he now, Hugh

Hugh

(Squinting along spoke) Davies is a good man. He's got a good religion. When he sees a man down, and things on top of him, he likes to lift 'em off, and help 'em up.

Patrick

(To Gareth) Come now, ain't he been like a father to you?

Gareth

(Reluctantly) Yeh, I guess so, except for one thing, an' it's that I'm squawking about. Why should Ed. Davies be so dead set against hearing anything about Wales? After all, he did come out from it, same time as my parents - It ain't natural -

Hugh

(Crosses to box, takes out sand-paper) Well, when you put it that way, it does seem queer, sorta. 'Tain't usual for a man what's been born in Wales not to love music an' singin' -

Gareth

(With bitterness) He's taken my Welsh harp and hidden it, and he's forbidden ^{to} me singin' any Welsh songs when he's around -

Patrick

Oh, I ~~don't~~ ^{can't} belave he's raily agin' the Welsh -

Hugh

(Sanding on spoke lightly) Then why not let the boy -

Patrick

If you ask me the raison he's put the nix on Wales, it's 'cause he's made his pile in Ameriky! He feels it ain't ^{rite} right not to dig up roots with the old country -

Gareth

Why can't he let me say and think as I feel?

Silas

Hisht boy, ye know in your heart it's a hero ye've made of the man, an' ye're not willin' fer thet same man to have human short-comin's

Gareth

(Stubbornly) There is no call for him to be so stern -

Silas

(Interrupting) It's the age ye are in boy, which makes ye so doubtin', an' questionin'. When ye git as old as I am, ye'll know people come put up in different packages in this world. Which one of us is to say what's goin' on inside o' them?

Patrick

(Shaking his hammer playfully at Silas) What ye drivin' at, Silas?

Hugh

(Pausing in work, looking at Silas) You know yerself, Ed. Davies has forbidden us all Welsh singin' an' even talkin', since he got his own shop.

Silas

Such blasted twiddle-twaddle! Ye are talkin' for the wind to run away with. The man's heart is broke over Wales, an' if ye've no understandin' of that, 'tis small use in my sayin' another word -

Gareth

(Bitterly) I've no understanding of a man who turns his back on his birth-country.

Silas

(Stops his painting on the wagon and stands waving his paint-brush in the air to emphasize points as he talks.) There are a lot o'things in this world, boy, ye'll need help in understandin', an' lots ye'll never git to understand at all. If ye'd ever lived in Wales, like yer Uncle when he was a younger man, ye'd come to know how it is more than just a spot on the map to folks what's born there. From Carmel Head in Anglesey, to Aberystwyth, in Cardigan - (deep sigh) indeed Wales is beautiful, an' lonely, an' sad. She is full of strange thoughts an' fancies, the rest of ye would not understand. There were kings who were poets, an' poets who were half-kings; there were swords, an' battles, an' struggles of men who loved Wales. There's the Eisteddfods, an' the Hwyls - (describes an eloquent circle in the air with his brush. ~~and snaps it~~) Iye, Wales is that grand a place, I'll never be tired o'tellin' -

Patrick

(With a broad smile) Ye wouldn't be after a-givin' the truth a small tug now, would ye?

Silas

(In pretended anger) By mighty, here's a knock on the nose fer the likes of ye - (Throws his paint-brush at Pat, purposely missing.)

Gareth moves as tho he were in a trance to pick up the brush.)

Silas

(Sighing) Alas, I've grown too stout thro me middle to stoop fer it. Upa dando, with me brush, Gareth lad!

Gareth

(Dramatically as a young boy would who is very imaginative)

Wales, so heroic, so brave, and my parents brought me away from there - but I'm going back, so help me.

Hugh

(Starts sanding again. Philosophically) It ain't yer fault, an' it ain't Davies; so what's the use in quarrelin' with the man.

Gareth

Here am I born in America and loving everything Welsh besides, and he born in Wales and turning his back on her -

Patrick

Judas-priest, where is Davies? He's that late this mornin'.

Gareth

I don't know, and I -

Patrick

Ain't you seen him?

Gareth

Not since seven o'clock!

Hugh

Have you no idea where he is?

Gareth

Over at Deacon Evans'. They're having a meeting.

Hugh

Another meetin'? I thought they jest had one last week?

Gareth

They've been having them every Saturday. It seems they can't agree on the idea of asking a woman-preacher here -

Silas

(As tho he relished it) 'Tain't only the deacons. The hull congregations gittin' riled up -

Patrick

(Slapping his thigh) Hot zikkaty! Then they are thinkin' on gittin' a woman fer preachin'?

Hugh

(Playful banter) It's no skin off your nose! The priest will be excommunicatin' ye fer meddlin' in our parish!

Patrick

I ain't meddlin'.

Hugh

(Good naturedly) Then why are you pokin' in your snout?

Patrick

I never heard tell on a woman in the pulpit.

Silas

What's the difference whether a male or a female talks at ye?

Ain't women good at shakin' their jaws?

Gareth

(Breaking in) Deacon Jones says she's not only a good talker, but she's young and beautiful, and fine at getting new ones in the church.

Patrick

(Slyly) I must be remindin' Father O'Flarity to hold fast to his men folk

Hugh

(Curiously) Did you hear anymore, Gareth?

Gareth

(Jealously) Ask Silas, he knows. He managed to be at the last meeting.

(Crossly) Getting a woman's a foolish idea, if you ask me.

Hugh

(To Silas, ignoring Gareth) Come Silas, tell us what you know. 'Tain't true, be it, they thinkin' on a woman?

Silas

(Stopping his apinting again) An' why not? Since when has preachin' got to have sex?

Patrick

(With a sly smirk) There's laws agin it in my church.

Silas

(Determinedly) Well, there ain't no law in the Welsh Congregationalist

what says preachin' the good word has got ter come out o'men's mouths only, an' I'm glad on it.

Hugh

(Breaking in) What woman be they thinkin' on? What's her name? Where's she from?

Silas

(Importantly and dramatically) Her name is RAHEL o FON. She is late from Amlwch, Anglesea Shire -

Patrick

(Interrupting) Ra-hell! That's a fine name now, for a preacher!

Silas

(Severely) Iye, yer Irish-tongue is too stiff fer the twistin' round Welsh names. There's music an' poetry in the name Rah-el. (repeats) Rahel, from the shire of Fon. I know it well. 'Tis in the north of Wales an' a more beautiful spot ye never seen. 'Tis the sort of beauty what puts a seal on yer tongue 'cause there ain't words in the language -

Gareth

(Angrily breaking in) No woman's gonna preach at me. I'll stop going to the church entirely. Ain't it bad enough I've got Davies nagging at me?

Enter Davies, a tall, handsome man of thirty.

Silas

'Mornin', Ed. Yer a little late, ain't ye?

Davies

(To Silas) Good-morning. (Nods to the rest)

Patrick

'Mornin'.

Hugh

'Mornin'.

Gareth glances sullenly at Davies without saying a word.

Davies

(Looking about to see what they've accomplished) Not through painting that small wagon, Silas? You men weren't pretending to run a singing school, while I was gone, instead of a wagon-shop?

Gareth

(Angrily) We do not pretend to sing. We mean it!

Davies

It is strange how often those who talk the loudest have the guiltiest conscience! That puts me in mind, Gareth. I'd like a word with you. (Takes Gareth to left side-front of stage) I've been told you were fighting the Rowland's boy again?

Gareth

(Defiantly) Oh that weren't anything - much -

Davies

(Puts hand on Gareth's shoulder giving him a little shake) Boy, what is

wrong with you? Must you always quarrel and fight? Is that the way to make a good world? I'd hoped you were growing up -

Gareth

(Stubbornly, under his breath) Naggin' me again.

Davies

I do not like to be the one to remind you of the virtue of gratefulness, but the way you're behaving, forces me to it. What is your story? Why were you fighting this time?

Gareth

I ain't gonna tell you -

Davies

(Becoming angry) I'll have no strip of a boy standing up to me. Be quick with your defense.

Gareth

(Angrily facing him and spitting out the word) "Welcher!" Do you think I like hearing the kids call you that? (Appealingly, taking a step toward him) Uncle Ed, why don't you come out and stick up for Wales? Wasn't you born there?

Davies

(Very angry) Wales and Welsh! Must I have them thrown in my teeth from morning 'till night. Is there no end to the misery - (breaks off, stands a moment in thought) It is easy enough for a boy to glorify, to dream, when he has no idea how things actually are. Gareth, did you ever

have - no, of course not. No boy could ~~ever~~ have - (Breaks off, becomes stern again) For the last time, I'm warning you, stop fighting and forget the Welsh! Now get about your business, I've lots on my mind this morning besides disciplining a wayward lad. (Turns his back on Gareth, who makes a face while it is turned, he walks over to the others. The deacons are coming here in a few minutes to finish up an important meeting.

Hugh

Why here, Ed?

Davies

We couldn't get on over at Deacon Evans'. The women-folks kept edging in. (To the men) You men better work outside the rest of the morning. Stack that lumber Krueger brought up against the east shed. You might fill in those deep ruts in the drive-way too. Be back at twelve-thirty, sharp.

Men put away tools, pick up caps and leave except Silas who keeps right on painting.

Silas

(Looking around, belligerently) I ain't finished my job yit an' I ain't quittin' 'til I do. I swan to Bungay, this paint don't dry worth a cent! (Looking at Davies) How the deacons makin' it?

Davies

(Indulgently) You are like an old mule. I'd hateto see a man eaten up of curiosity right before my very eyes.

Silas

How the deacons gettin' on? (Slyly) Say Ed, jest 'tween you an' me. Be you in favor of a female fer preachin', or ain't ye?

Davies

(A bit pompously) Well, Silas, I suppose preachers aren't primarily male or female, but human beings. (Walks up and down) I want to be fair, you understand but it seems to me a woman now, should have her mind on softer things. But then I don't pretend to know anything about women. I've always managed to steer pretty clear of them so far.

Silas

(Aside) The more's the pity, if ye ask me -

Davies

I guess your staying won't matter, if you can keep quiet. Here they come now.

Enter the five deacons. The mannerisms and looks of each one are very different from the other.

Deacon Jones is short, fat and jolly.

Deacon Griffith is tall, thin and very solemn.

Deacon Evans is smooth shaven. Always clears his throat before he speaks and twirls his watch-fob.

Deacon Howell has a rough beard. Keeps rubbing his chin, shows a sly humor.

Deacon Thomas continually puts his finger-tips together, is very sanctimonious.

As the deacons come in they all say 'Howdy' or ~~'aye'~~ to Silas, who

keeps right on working as he answers them.

Deacon Jones

(Jokingly) I've heard tell so often your Welsh, Silas. Danged if I ain't beginning to believe it. Ha, ha!

Deacon Howell

(Rubbing his chin) Only a Welshman would keep workin' so steady -

Silas

Ye're a queer hairpin yerself, Robie Howell!

Deacon Evans

(Clearing his throat) You stick around here, you'll be as welcome as a skunk in a hen-roost. (All join in general laugh but D, Griffith, who is the serious one.)

Davies

What I tried to tell him.

Deacons Evans and Thomas come up to L.F. stage.

Deacon Evans

(Clearing his throat) It's not on ^{what we've met here to discuss. I can't help askin} the present subject, but did any of you see that cartoon in Harper's Weekly?

Deacon Thomas

Which one do you mean?

Deacon Evans

The one where the young feller's applying to the President of

the rail-road for a job. (Chuckling) It's a good one alright! Fits the situation like a glove.

Deacon Thomas

Can't say I recall seeing it. What was it about?

Deacon Evans

(Clears throat and starts to twirl fob) Well, in the cartoon they showed a young fellow applying for a job. The president of the rail-road says to him, "You want a job, eh?" Then he calls to the time-keeper, "Mr. Jones, has there been a brakeman killed on the road within a day or two?" "Well, no sir," the time-keeper sez, "none this week." "Oh, well, my man," sez the president, "call in next Monday, and by that time I'm sure there'll be a vacancy."

(They all laugh and shake their heads dubiously.)

Deacon Griffith

You can put that one in your pipe and smoke it, the lax way things are run on the rail-roads out here.

Deacon Evans

(Twirling his fob) Their rates are too high too. It's squeezing the farmers.

Deacon Thomas

(Finger tips together) That is why in my opinion we ought to back the Potter bill.

Deacon Evans

(Clearing throat) I can't get through my head, why the rail-roads and

the farmers can't see both sides ^{has} ~~her~~ got their rights.

Deacon Griffith

Gentlemen. Gentlemen, interesting as this all is, we have not met here to discuss Wisconsin politics.

(They all fall silent)

Let us get on with the subject which concerns us all and lies closest to our hearts. Whom shall we call as our preacher? Deacon Jones has put up the name of Rahel o Fon, the woman lately come to America from Wales; and Deacon Thomas has suggested Llewelyn Pryce, the man-preacher, also recent from Wales. You decided you couldn't say all you wanted to before the women in Deacon Evans' house, so now brothers, let us hear your opinions.

The deacons all start to talk at once, nodding and shaking their heads. Deacon Griffith claps his hands for order.

Deacon Howell

(Raising his voice and rubbing his chin) I've got one question I'd like to ask -

Deacon Griffith

Ask it then -

Deacon Howell

How kin a woman be the pastor, and yet have a home and family?
(Rubs chin) Ain't she never figurin' on gettin' married?

Deacon Thomas

(Finger-tips together) ^{Deacon Howell's} The ~~man's~~ got something there!

Deacon Evans

(Clears throat) I've been thinking about that, myself.

Silas

(Puts in) Indeed, an' what business be ye gittin' her here for, preachin', or weddin'?

Some laugh a bit uncomfortably; others glare at Silas.

Davies

(To D, Jones) Deacon Jones, tell us more about her qualifications. What gave you the idea we ought to consider a woman?

Deacon Griffith

(To Davies) That's right, Davies. (To D, Jones) Tell us some more regarding this woman, Brother Jones.

Deacon Jones

I read a long article telling about Rahel o Fon in the Drych. It took up a whole front page in the tellin'. She must have been a great one in Wales. They said her prayin' was so powerful, and so eloquent, she had ten-thousand people standing as one man at the sound of her voice. At the Eisteddfods, for the past three years she's won all the poetry contests, and there is no end to the converts she's made to the Congregational Church. (Enthusiastically) She sounds like a great one!

—And that ain't all—she's been an angel of mercy goin' about all over Wales and doin' for the poor and the sick—

Deacon Evans

(Clearing his throat and twirling his fob) ~~To be sure the men have~~ *Heard tell, Deacon Jones, that she's a relative on your wife's side. Could that be why you're for gettin' her out here?*

Deacon Howell

(To Silas) Quiet. You're an' old wind-bag!

Silas

Yer nothin' but an old bag yerself!

Deacon Griffith

(Pompously) In my opinion, I do not believe it would help the growth of the church, it would be looked upon as a fad, or obstacle, directly in the path of the growing church.

Deacon Jones

She has had a revival wherever she ^{is} ~~has~~ been to preach. It might help the growth.

Deacon Howell

(Slyly) Don't know, at that. Might be kindda nice havin' a woman holdin' yer hand and leadin' yer spiritual soul.

Deacon Griffith

(Severely) Seems to me you are trying to straddle two sides of the fence at once, Deacon Howell. Indeed, you can't do that.

Deacon Howell

(Smugly) I'll be comin' up for reelection soon. I ain't takin' no chances of offendin' nobody.

Deacon Evans

(Twirling fob) There could be a place for women in the church, but do

the Scriptures make it clear whether they should be ordained?

Deacon Thomas

(Finger-tips together) Jesus and the Apostle Paul chose only men for the ministry.

Deacon Jones

(Breaking in) I believe it would bring honor to our community to have the first ordained woman-preacher in this part of the country.

Deacon Thomas

I knew a woman who was the executive secretary of the suffrage association. Brothers, I BEG of you, (shakes head woefully) give the matter your most careful consideration.

Silas

(Clucking tongue) Indeed, are there only men in heaven, now indeed!

Davies

Why don't we keep to the issue of their qualifications. (Nods of approval from all) The big question is has Llewelyn Pryce, or Rahel - what's her name - the better qualifications for what we need here in this part of Wisconsin?

Deacon Griffith

Did you save the article from the paper, Deacon Jones? Have you perhaps cut it out? Was there possibly a picture of the woman, this Rahel o Fon?

Deacon Jones

(Fumbling through his pockets) That I did. I've got the article telling all about her, right here with me someplace. (Feels in pockets; takes clipping out of breast-pocket) Ah, here it is, gentlemen. They all crowd around Deacon Jones to get a look at the picture.

Deacon Howell

(Letting out a slow whistle) The devil fly off with me but she's a good-looker!

Deacon Evans

(Taking the clipping from Deacon Jones and holding it out at arm's length.) What large, eloquent eyes. They've a melting look, seems like she's studyin' ^{down} into your soul.

Deacon Jones

(Slyly nudging his neighbor) She's got a right smart little figure too, wouldn't you say?

Deacon Griffith

(Disapprovingly) Gentlemen, gentlemen! May I remind you -

He is interrupted by the door flying open. Widow Bucksem enters holding Patrick by the arm. Pat looks very sheepish. There is a woman companion who follows Widow Bucksem about, nodding when she nods and copying her every gesture.

Widow Bucksem

(Gives the deacons a nod and marches up to Davies) I seen the man go

past what leaves the mail here; an' I was droppin' in ter see if ther was somethin' fer me, when I claps my eyes on this squintin' Irishman (nods toward Patrick) leanin' up against yer window there (nods toward window) tryin' to fill both his ears.

Deacon Griffith

(Shocked) Patrick, eaves-dropping! I'm surprised at you. What if the Devil were to come in here now, which one of us do you think he'd take?

Patrick

(Brazenly) That's easy. He'd take me, of course.

Deacon Griffith

(Taken back) What makes you think that?

Patrick

(With a sly wink) Because he could be sure of gittin' the rest of ye, any time! (Takes rake down from nail on the wall, blows a kiss to the Widow Bucksem and waltzes out with the rake.)

Widow Bucksem

(Shaking her head) If the Devil's as smart as they tell, he won't want any dealin's with that one. (To D. Griffith) What's this I've heard talk about? You've heard it too, haven't you Sadie? Sadie nods an emphatic 'yes'.

Deacon Griffith

I wouldn't venture to guess. (Dryly) I expect you ladies hear about all there is going on in this neighborhood.

Widow Bucksem

They cain't be figurin' on gittin' a female preacher, sez I! I tells Sadie here, The men ain't completely lost their wits. Sadie nods her head 'no' then 'yes'.

Deacon Griffith

Would you women be against one of your own sex?

Widow Bucksem

Women what go gallivantin' 'round the country takin' a man's place preachin', ain't got no right ter expect respectable females ter accept 'em as women. (Shakes her head dubiously and Sadie copies.) Once the women start thet, ye cain't tell to what lengths they might go.

Deacon Howell

(Chuckling) What you mean don't you, Widow Bucksem, women might get so they wanted to wear the pants, an' chew terbacky, an' ye can't tell they might even go so far as ter take up smokin', like the men folks. Sadie nods, copying the Widow's every move.

Widow Bucksem

(Severely) You quit pokin' fun, Robie Howell. The women won't never turn that far. (Very determinedly) But ye kin mark my words if ye git a female preacher here everything will jest go six ways fer Sunday.

Davies

(Breaking in) Yes, yes, here's your mail, Widow Bucksem. I'd be much obliged if you'll leave this catalogue at Mrs. Williams.

Widow Bucksem

I'd advise ye to watch out fer that Patrick McCarthy. He's likely to go 'round the whole neighborhood tellin' ^{— Say, (she looks about her) have any of ye got a picture of this female preacher?} ^{Deacon Jones shows her the clipping, which he takes and looks at, then hands back.} ^{W. Buck Davies} all I have to say is, the men will be keepin' their eyes on her face, an' forgettin' (Steering her toward the door) Yes, yes, much obliged. I'll look after Patrick. ^{entirely to listen to her words}

The two women go out the door and close it. Deacons all breathe a sigh of relief, then Widow Bucksem pokes her head in again.

Widow Bucksem

Ye'd better mark my words!—Ye will all git a slicin' from yer wives if ye do git a woman here. (Bangs door shut.) Sadie opens it and shakes her head 'yes' at all.

Silas

(Chuckling) Her words pour like vinegar from a cracked jug, now. (Looking about at all) Will ye be lettin' a woman tell ~~ye~~ who ye kin have, an' who ye can't?

Expressions of the others undergo a visible change.

Deacon Jones

If God calls a woman to the ministry, I for one wouldn't want to stand in her way.

Deacon Evans

(Twirling fob) I have known some women who could preach a lot better than some of the men I've known.

Deacon Howell

Iye, some of them can talk nineteen to the dozen -

Deacon Thomas

You should listen to
~~I'd like to tell~~ more about the man. *He is the one I am in*
~~I think you ought to hear~~
Saves of getting here
~~about him too.~~

Deacon Griffith

~~Yes~~, Brother Thomas. Tell us about the candidate you ~~suggested~~ we consider.

Deacon Thomas

I had a letter from my cousin in Ohio. He said there was a young man, Llewelyn Pryce, by name, a preacher lately come from Wales *also,* looking to settle in America. *He is the one to get out here.* ~~Why not get him out here?~~

Deacon Evans

I am afraid now we will have a Split.

Deacon Thomas

My cousin ~~did say~~ *wrote* in his letter, that the ~~young man~~ had followed this same Rahel o Fon from Wales to America, him being in love with her. So far he ain't been successful in getting her to say 'yes', or in locating a parish. Said he seemed like a fair-^{enough}spoken young ~~man~~. *fellow. I sat*
down and wrote my cousin -
Silas

Breaks
(Aside) Hisht now, he sounds like nothin' ter buy a stamp fer.

Davies

(Shakes his head reprovngly at Silas) After all, preaching shouldn't

be a matter of sex. True nobleness should ^{is} be within ^a ~~the~~ person. Why don't we send someone to Cleveland to listen to both of them, and invite back the better ~~one~~ for us all to hear?

Deacon Jones

(Loudly) Amen!

Deacon Evans

Amen

Deacon Howell

That's a right smart idea.

~~Deacon Thomas~~

~~I'm agreed.~~

Deacon Griffith

~~I'm agreed.~~
And I. You've heard Brother Davies, and ~~sounded your agreement.~~

Now who among us is to go?

The deacons all look around at each other.

Deacon Thomas — I don't believe ^{that} any of you ~~need~~ —
Davies

How about you, Deacon Jones? You suggested the woman's name. Maybe you ~~need~~ ^{should} to hear her, to be satisfied a woman wouldn't do.

Deacon Jones

Oh no, no. I couldn't go. My wife's took down bad with her sciatica again. I couldn't get away possibly.

Deacon Griffith

How about you, Brother Thomas? You suggested the man.

Deacon Thomas

I couldn't be away for as long as that trip would take. ~~I've~~

~~got four cows getting ready to calve. I've just gotta stay around handy.~~
besides there ain't any need for any of us — I've taken it upon myself
to write and ask the — Deacon Griffith
Turns away from D.T. ignoring —

Deacon Evans, how you fixed for traveling?

Deacon Evans

No, no, I couldn't go. I'm expecting that patent I took out on my binder invention to come through from Washington about now. No, sir-ee, I've gotta stay here. How about Brother Howell?

Deacon Howell

My health ain't good. My rheumatism's gittin' so bad -

Davies

I didn't know you suffered with rheumatism.

Deacon Howell

(Chuckle, chuckle.) Sure! What else kin you do with it?

Deacon Evans

~~I don't know why we didn't think of him in the first place.~~ I suggest the name of Edward Davies to go. He's the only one not tied down with a family and free to pull out for such a long trip. Silas here, can look after the wagon-shop. Couldn't you now, Silas?

Silas

(Relishing this turn) Indeed, an' I could! You put the very words in my mouth -

Deacon Thomas

There ain't no need -

Davies

I can't go - I don't know the first thing about women -

Silas

(Disgustedly) Hisht now, ye are bein' sent to pick out the better preacher, an' not to choose a filly, indeed -

Deacons all smile but Griffith

Davies

Why not give up the idea of considering the woman? Get the man out here - Then none of us will need to make the trip -

Deacon Thomas

Now that's the first sensible thing that's been said. We ought to give up the idea of considering her. Besides I've already written to -

Deacon Jones

(Excitedly, breaks in) I don't approve of that! We might loose ourselves the finest preacher in the whole country. I think Brother Davies, you ought to go.

Deacon Howell

There's no call to get so fussed-up about it. Seein' new sights does any man good. You owe it to yourself as well as to the rest of us -

Deacon Thomas

But what I'm trying to say is - there ain't no -

Davies

You seem to be the only one in favor of the woman, Deacon Jones. I am afraid she is likely to get short-shrift from me -

Silas

(Aside) Indeed, I've a feelin' she will have him on the floor in no time!

Deacon Howell

There you go - pokin' in again, Silas!

Deacon Griffith

Gentlemen, all those in favor of Brother Davies being sent to Cleveland to hear Llewelyn Pryce and Rahel o Fon preach, and for him to decide on the better one to be invited here for our further consideration - then to be called to our ministry - say, 'Iye'.

All the deacons shout 'Iye', except Deacon Thomas, who raises his hand. They all stare at him.

Deacon Thomas

I been trying to tell you I took it upon myself to write to Llewelyn Pryce and I've invited him out here for a visit. I never thought for one minute any of you would be so crazy as to even consider a woman -

Deacon Griffith

You've asked him out here? I - I don't understand -

Deacon Jones

That's a fine Kettle of fish! Now the woman won't even get a chance -

Deacon Griffith

You ought not to have done it on your own, Deacon Thomas. It ain't allowed that one man -

Deacon Thomas

Oh, I didn't invite him to preach here, just to come on a visit. He was the one that assumed that -

Deacon Griffith

(Severely) You seem quite full of surprises, Brother Thomas. Will you kindly explain further -

Deacon Thomas

Yes, yes, - you see I just invited him to come on a visit, and he was the one who wrote back - sayin' he would be delighted to accept the call to our parish - I expect he'll be here any day from what he wrote -

The deacons murmur angrily.

Deacon Evans

How can the man put himself forward so - accepting what ain't been offered to him yet - I don't like that -

Davies

Sounds like he's trying to foist himself upon us -

Deacon Griffith

I can't abide forwardness, even in the clergy.

Deacon Howell

I've changed me mind! Let's write the woman too now, and let them both compete -

Widow Bucksem bursts in the door, out of breath as tho she'd been running.

Widow Bucksem.

(Panting) She's a'comin' - that woman - rite along behind me! I seen her git off the train, at the Junction - there's a strange man a'comin' with her -

Deacon Griffith

What woman? What are you talking about?

Widow Bucksem

That one in the picture you showed me! Libby Jones's cousin - the woman preacher!

All turn and look at each other. All start talking excitedly.

Deacon Evans

What's she comin' here for?

Deacon Howell

What's she a'doin' in Ixonia?

Deacon Thomas

(Severely) Is she visiting you, Deacon Jones?

Deacon Jones

If she is, I'm as surprised as the rest of you -

The door opens, and Llewelyn bustles in pompously, followed by Rahel who carries herself with quiet dignity in contrast. She has a letter in her hand.

Llewelyn

I have come to meet a certain Deacon Thomas. Llewelyn Pryce, is my name -

All stand about uncertainly. Deacon Thomas steps forward.

Deacon Thomas

Howdy you do! I was not expecting - ah, and the lady with you?

Llewelyn

This is Rahel o Fon -

Rahel

(Stepping forward) I was told to stop at the wagon-shop, were I wishing to leave mail - Would someone of you direct me to John B. Jones house? (Smiles shyly) I have been told there are thirty-three Joneses living in this community -

Deacon Howell

(He is the first to recover, shoves Deacon Jones forward.)
This must be the Jones you are lookin for, Mam! We've heard tell you are his wife's cousin -

Rahel

(With great surprise) And how would you know who I am?

Deacon Jones

(Recovering himself, makes a gallant bow)

The fame of you, Rahel o Fon, has run on before you. Have you come now for a visit with Libby?

Rahel

I am on my way to Cambria, where I have been invited to preach, and I have a stop-over here between trains. I should like to visit with Libby, were I welcome?

Deacon Jones

Indeed now, you are most welcome! Permit me to present these other gentlemen. Deacon Griffith, Deacon Evans, Deacon Howell, Deacon Thomas, and Deacon Davies the owner of this shop, and Silas, over there, his helper -

Rahel

(Acknowledge each, with a nod) It is my pleasure to meet you all. (Turns to Davies) And you, Mr. Davies, would you take my letter?

Davies

(Greatly taken in by her beauty and sweetness) It would be a pleasure to serve you in any way. (Pause) You would not know it, but your coming here has saved me the long trip to Cleveland. This parish too, is in need of considering -

Rahel

Llewelyn has been telling me how delighted he is with his call to Ixonia -

Deacon Griffith

Begging your pardon, mam, and yours, sir. There has been some mistake. No one man can invite in a new pastor. Only all of the deacons can do the inviting -

Llewelyn

You mean to say then, I am not considered for this church?

Deacon Griffith

That is not what I said. I only wish to make it clear to

you that the final deciding is done by a vote of all the deacons including the whole congregation -

Llewelyn

Well in that case, it only means a short time of postponement -

Deacon GParfesh

I've a feeling that the little lady should favor us also with a sermon. We have heard of your good works and now that we have met you -

Llewelyn

Oh, she is on her way to Cambria, that's a smaller church. Only a man could handle this large a parish -

Deacon Jones

(To Rahel) You spoke of but a short stop-over. I shall take you to Libby at once then. My team is outside.

Silas

If only the angels have as sweet and kind a face -

Davies

(Dreamily) To meet with such a one on earth - (To Rahel) Won't you wait? The deacons had just delegated me to invite a preacher to Ixonia for their further consideration. Would you do us the honor of returning from Cambria, and preaching here, too?

Rahel

(Graciously) Where I am invited, there shall I be glad to come. And now if I am to see Libby -

She puts her hand on Deacon Jones' arm. They walk toward the door but are

halted by the voice of Gareth coming in the window, singing EBENEZER, in Welsh.

Rahel

(Listens enchanted) What a beautiful voice! Who could be the lad? I must meet him.

Davies

(Forgetting himself, says harshly) I have forbidden him singing -

Rahel

And by what strange reasoning can you find it wrong for a lad to do that which gives joy to others?

Davies

You don't understand. The boy is my ward. I am the one who is responsible -

Rahel

(Sweetly) Firm reins, and a gentle bit for a colt now, does the winning - (Sensing the tension in the air) No matter - I shall greet with him at another time. (To Deacon Jones) Perhaps we had best to go? (She takes his arm and they exit.)

The deacons look at Davies but can find nothing to say to him. they commence to leave.

Deacon Thomas

(To Llwyn) You will find lodging with me, sir.

They exit together. Silas takes down cap from peg.

Silas

If I may be sayin' so, you've no call to be so angry with Gareth. The lad cannot help lovin' the Welsh singin'. It were born in him.

Davies makes an angry motion with his head at Silas to clear out. Silas leaves. Davies walks over to the window. He calls imperiously, in a cold, hard voice.

Davies

Gareth! Gareth, I'll have a word with you!

A boy's careless laugh heard off-stage, is his only answer. The curtain goes down in complete silence as Davies stands with downcast head.

END OF 1ST ACT.

ACT-TWO

Scene: Two months later. Summer in a grove before small Welsh Church, placed L. back. The wide front doors of the church are left standing open for it is summer. There are two steps leading down. The backdrop reveals the low hills of that part of Wisconsin and the broad farm-fields. As the curtain rises, Rahel is standing looking off into the distance, her profile toward audience. She wears a long, black full-skirted dress with white at neck and sleeves and a little black bonnet with white ruching about face. Davies is in the typical black broad-cloth of the period of 1874. Davies voice is heard calling from off stage. She turns to face him fully when he enters from R.S.

Davies

Iye, iye there!

Rahel

(Looking down path and waving) Iye, and good-morning to you!

Davies

(Hurrying in rather out of breath but eagerly) I had a small notion I might find you here, though I know it is much too early for church.

Rahel

(Banteringly) Mr. Davies, you rush in with the enthusiasm of someone bringing bad news!

Davies

(Embarrassed) I've no bad news. That is - I am hoping - it will be good news!

Rahel

(Turning away from him toward backdrop) It is a beautiful country all about! (Smiling) Almost as lovely as Wales now.

Davies

(With pride) Wisconsin is one of the grandest and best states of the Union. (Softly) It is a fine day for Ixonia, (more softly) since you came.

Rahel

(a bit flustered) Yes, indeed - perhaps -

They both look at each other and away again shyly.

Davies

(Scowling) Ever since you came to Ixonia, I've had no chance for a private word with you -

Rahel

(Teasingly) That scowl on your brow makes small noise but it puts me in mind of thunder rumbling up -

Davies

(Looking serious and unhappy) To a thoughtful man there is much to scowl about as the world is today - (pause) Take the plight of Wales, for instance -

Rahel

(Seriously) Are you wishing then for perfection on this earth?

(Gayly) Why not just be glad of the ability to reach out, to stretch for it?

Davies

Tell me about Wales. You have come from there so recently. Have they still the poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed?

Rahel

(Drawing herself up, her eyes flashing angrily) Stop, how can you say the Welsh are poor when they live as equals among each other? Is it not better to be noble among peasants than a serf to ignobles? Have you forgotten the Welsh teach there is no room for false pride in any man? All men are born equal.

Davies

(Falls into the Welsh manner of speaking as he thinks back)

'Tis a pity my father's heart had to break over the small bit of wages he could bring home, and from watching my mother's face grow whiter each day. The very sun was shut off from her bed; (an' she lyin' an invalid) because of the dirty slag-heaps rising higher each twelfth month! (Pause, deep sigh) There was too much in Wales, callin' for pity. When my parents passed on, I shook the soil from my feet and came to America. I have not spoken of Wales since that day. To mention the name is like pressin' on a black and blue spot within me, for soreness. I had hoped that in time, things there would get better, but no -

Rahel

What is time, Mr. Davies? Wales has not given her life away. The people have faith. They know a tomorrow always comes. It is you yourself who put shackles on them. (Davies looks at her surprised) You do, you know, when you judge by what they are now, with small thought of what they may become. Strong action, my friend, can issue only from

strong faith!

Davies

But when will they gather the strength to do better -

Rahel

(Interrupting, facing him seriously, with an inspired look)

Could we not all be part of some Divine plan? Have you never felt for a moment the curtain parting between yourself and a Will greater than yours? Oh, I know it is never long enough for more than just a glimpse but surely all of us at one time or another have felt Someone there.

Davies

(Looking at her in open admiration) You - you are beautiful! The light of a thousand candles glows warm in your face!

Rahel

(Shyly but sweetly) Is it Wales now, you have followed me about this country for two months, to have word of?

Davies

(Embarrassed, stoops, picks up twig, stands peeling it)

I have held lots in my mind to talk of. That is, I have been daring to hope -

Rahel

(Interrupting) Does it not upset you that I am not a typical woman of my time? Many would consider you rash for talking with me.

Davies

Stuff and nonsense - when the deacons call you to this church -

Rahel

(Turning from him and walking away a little) Don't you mean if they call me? I have heard tell some thought Llewelyn Pryce's sermon last Sunday, could not be outdistanced. Perhaps Mr. Pryce will receive the call to this church?

Davies

(Simply and fervently) You will win. You must win. Your eloquence, your integrity of spirit - (Takes a step closer to her) Oh Rahel, when I've watched you standing in the pulpit - so alight, so serene, it was as though you walked with one hand placed in God's. (Steps back away from her embarrassed as tho he had said too much.)

Rahel

(Shyly) Well, Edward?

Davies

(Still confused and stumbling about) Well -

Rahel

(Coming up to him, tenderly) Are you hurting with you, Edward?

Davies

(Forlornly, half turning from her) I have been thinking how little I have within me to inspire love in others. (Pause, hesitates, looks at her then away)--there is Gareth for instance.

Rahel

Could it be you are trying too hard? I have seen others who wanted to change people; make over the whole world in one generation. (Smiling) I have been told you bottle-up the lad. Silas says, Gareth has worship for you, like for a hero -

Davies

(Determinedly) It is not Gareth, or Wales, I came up here to talk about. It is us. (Stands looking at ground) I thought I had gotten to a place in life where I wouldn't want anything anymore - (Looks up at her) and now I want you - and the ache of wanting you burns like a fire inside of me and is ten-thousand times more tormenting than all other things put together - Rahel? (He picks up her hand and looks pleadingly at her)

Rahel

Edward, there is nice things you say.

Davies

The perfume of lavender is about you - there is nothing sweeter for a woman - takes up her other hand) My thoughts hover over your dark head like lazy butterflies hovering over a flower -

Rahel

(Disengaging herself gently) Why Edward, that's poetry - that's lovely - you do see me then as a woman?

Davies

Will you marry me, Rahel o Fon?

Rahel

(Gently) And what is to become of my ministry?

Davies

I have no wish to separate you from your calling. I ask only to round out your life as a woman's -

Rahel

It would be all right then for me to continue a preacher? You wouldn't mind the sharing of my time with others?

Davies

You are so much more than just one woman. I've a strong feeling there is enough of you to go around.

Rahel

It would not be honest, were I to let you believe there have been no previous offers. I have never intended to divide myself - only to do good words in the name of God. (Pause) I must have time to think on it, and pray. Today, the deacons and the congregation will make a choice between Llewelyn and myself as preacher for here, and then -

Davies

(Anxious wishing to get her to express herself) Am I then to have no idea of your feelings?

Rahel

(Coquettishly) Have you forgotten I am from Wales? I thought you had no liking for anything from that place?

Davies

Why must you tease me? Surely you know it is because I love Wales and all things Welsh so dearly.

Rahel

(Still teasing) Then perhaps that is why you want to marry me?

Davies

(Tries to embrace her but she eludes him) I believe you are a scamp, and a witch, and set on breaking hearts -

Rahel

I will have done with my teasing. Should I come directly to you at the close of the service (Turns and walks slowly away from him towards the church, faces him on church-step)- you will know that my answer is 'yes'.

Davies springs after her, starts to embrace her, whispering, Rahel, oh Rahel -

Gareth whistling the same Welsh tune which he had been singing outside the wagon-shop, comes in from R.S. He is all mussed up showing he has been in a fight again. Davies quickly steps back from Rahel. She disappears into the church. Davies turns angrily upon Gareth.

Davies

Gareth, must you be forever disgracing me? Look at yourself! You've been fighting again, and on Sunday!

Gareth

(With scorn in his voice) You're a cool one! So it is true, what the

boy was saying - you're sweet on the lady-preacher - and she so recent from Wales -

Davies

(Making a threatening motion) I'll not hold with having you stand up to me -

Gareth

(Defiantly) You don't have to be treating me like I was a child. I can see through a glass window as well as the next one. So that's why, you never have time for talking with me. I suppose next, you'll be (sarcastically) handing back my Welsh harp and begging me to sing Welsh songs - (steps close to Davies) How foolish you are! Can't you see she's making up to you just to get the church - (breaks off) But she'll never win me over. I'd - I'd jump in the quarrey first. I'd rather be drowned!

Davies, very angry, makes a threatening motion to strike Gareth. He restrains himself with great difficulty.

Davies

Stop talking so foolish or I'll lay one across you for fair, God help me!

Gareth

(Tauntingly) ^{Strike!} ~~Fight!~~ Why don't you? Should I not speak out against what I know is wrong? You're pretending now, that you believe in Wales, and you're making a hypocrite of yourself, going to church to a woman, when you never would have anything to do with women -

Davies

(Angrily) Gareth, stop and think! Have you found anything I ever told

you to be wrong, or worthless? (Shakes his head sadly) No, I'm not fighting you. Force is no good. It is like she said. The whole world needs reason and patience. (Turns to Gareth) Perhaps I must make peace more exciting than fighting, if I am to hold you; turn you more toward God and His power!

Gareth

(Scornfully) One can't just pray for what they want, instead of going out after it!

Davies

One has to be careful that what one wants is right, and not only half right. Are you commencing now to turn from your faith?

Gareth

(Bitterly) I see, it's no longer to you I can look for help. The woman has you in her power. (Reversal of mood as high-strung boys of that age often show. Hunches his shoulders and suddenly looks miserable and bereft.) Commences to slowly walk away toward R.) Don't worry, I'll not be a bother to you for long. I'll take myself off - (aside) There is always the quarrey - (Exits R.)

Davies

(Calls after him with deep feeling in his voice) Gareth! (Takes several steps after him) Gareth, you don't understand how it is. Come back, I want to talk to you. There are some things a boy -

While he is saying this, Llewelyn Pryce walks in with Deacon Thomas from L.S. followed by the other deacons and two farmers and Hugh Roberts. During the following four speeches, a typical Welsh farm crowd stroll in.

Big-boned farmers, farm-women, a fleshy old lady, several boys and girls.

Llewelyn

(Unctiously) Ah, good-morning, Mr. Davies. It is early you are for the church. I suppose you were in a hurry now to hear the good news that I've been chosen -

Davies

(Turns back with difficulty from following Gareth)

Nothing has been decided yet, Llewelyn Price. (Coldly) You forget, I too, am on the Board -

Llewelyn

Ah, but I have just had a talk with your fellows, these good deacons. I can assure you, the majority are with me since hearing my sermon last Sunday.

Davies

Perhaps - so far - but the day is not yet over. Don't forget the congregation too, have a voice in the final deciding. There is another matter I would like to discuss with you -

Davies joins Llewelyn and deacons in a group. The scene is a busy one as deacons and farmers move about in the backfround from group to group. The hum of conversation is heavy but sedate as befits Sunday and churchgoers. A first and second farmer step out to R.F.

1st Farmer

Who's doin' yer thrashin'?

2nd Farmer

They're movin' onto my place, next week.

1st Farmer

Doin' any breakin'?

2nd Farmer

A little dry now; the bulls don't git the plough thro more'n two acres a day. It's a lot better out here in Wisconsin then back in Vermont tho. I don't have ter sharpen my sheep's noses sos't they kin git at the grass between the stones.

1st Farmer

Yep, feels fine ter clap a hoe inter the ground without strikin' fire. (Turns to Hugh Roberts) How's things in town? The Judge still a-lyin'?

Hugh

(Joining the two farmers) Yep, he's still at it.

1st Farmer

The mayor still a-swearin' to it?

Hugh

You hit the nail on the head. Seems like railroad schemes are thicker 'n flea-bites.

2nd Farmer

Them farmers sit aroun' on their bumps in the legislater. We settlers - we gotta work!

1st Farmer

What they fightin' thet Potter bill fer? Do they think we fellers are fools clear to the rine?

2nd Farmer

Farmers know a couple o'things. They don't dast fergit it!

Hugh

(To 1st farmer) What do you want to get het-up over politics for? You'd better spend your time in singin'. Goin over to the Gymanfa Ganu, at Cambria, next week. There's where you'll hear the singin'.

1st Farmer

(Scratching his head) Wall, I dunno. I ain't rightly made up my mind -

Hugh

That so? I bet you're waitin' for your wife to make it up for you.

2nd Farmer

(Pointing to a farm boy) Will ya lookit, Jenkins, there. It's a clean collar!

1st Farmer

He's runnin' fer Congress -

2nd Farmer

I'll bet he's courtin' -

Hugh

Hi-ya, Jenkins. I've heard tell you've a good head on yer

shoulders fer a young feller - bet it's a different one every night.

(Laughs)

1st Farmer

Who's the girl?

Farm boy looks bashful and hangs his head.

2nd Farmer

Bet yer ain't tellin' 'cause yer 'fraid o' competition!

Silas enters, walking with Widow Bucksem from L.S.

Widow Bucksem

(With a flirt of her head) Kin change me mind, can't I? It's a woman's priviledge! You've been changin' yours so often you've got it near wore out.

Silas

(Trying to placate her) Iye, Widow Bucksem, ye're as beautiful as when ye came here twelve years ago.

Widow Bucksem

And ye, Silas, are jest as big a liar as ever an' I believe ye jest the same. (She drops him a courtesy and joins the women.)

Silas

(Goes up to stout woman sitting on stump and offers her his arm)

Won't ye take hold on me arm, mither? Sure, and ye should take yeast now, ter help ye ter rise the better -

Stout Woman

(Snaps back at him) Take some yerself man, an' then ye'll be better bred! (She turns her back on him and talks to the other women)

Silas makes a motion as tho dodging something she'd thrown at him, then he walks over to R.B. and joins Davies and the deacons group.

Two farm women come up front center.

1st Woman

Have you seen the new preacher?

2nd Woman

He's standin' over there, talkin' with Mr. Davies.

1st Woman

I don't mean Llewelyn Pryce. I hear him last Sunday. I came to listen to the woman. Where is she?

2nd Woman

They say she's in the church preparin' herself in prayer -

1st Woman

She's a little mite, ain't she? Don't 'pear as tho she'd have the strength to talk loud enuff to make us all hear -

2nd W.

Deacon Jones told my husband, she's got a powerful voice. He said, in Wales, ten-thousand stood as one, listenin' to her.

1st Woman

Well, a body would never guess it by lookin' at her but then ye can't tell by the looks of a frog how far he kin jump. I'll wait 'til I've heard her meself, an' make up me own mind.

Child

(Comes over and pulls at her mother's hand) Mama, if we giv her the money now, will she let us go home?

1st Woman

Hush, Dyllis. (To 2nd woman) You'll have to excuse her. She's all excited over seein' a woman-preacher. It is surprisin' now, a woman should wantta preach.

2nd Woman

Oh, I dunno. It ain't so queer if she felt the call to do it. Llewelyn Pryce leaves the deacons group and strolls over to the women's group. He stops and speaks to them.

Llewelyn

Ah, ladies, Don't I see the same group here who sang that beautiful hymn at my service last Sunday?

Widow Bucksem

You see the same group alright - their voices are meltin' to honey!

Llewelyn

Won't you ladies, do me the great favor of singing one song

before we go into the church? (Looking about him) I always say there is nothing finer than voices raised in praise of God, out in the open. Come, let me hear you lift your voices to the magnificent dome of heaven!

The women sing the beautiful hymn, "BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS"

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Jesus' love:
The fellowship of Christian minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
We pour united prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one;
Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,
And sin, we shall be free;
And perfect love and friendship reign
Throughout eternity.

"O! aros gyda ni,
Ein Ior a'n Ceidwad cu!
Os cawn dy wedd, nid ofnwn fraw-
O! aros gyda ni.

While singing the last verse they walk slowly toward and into the church. All the others follow reverently after them into the church. As Llewelyn gets to the steps, he turns and says to Davies, who is next to him at the end of the line,

Llewelyn

Even though you didn't invite me, Mr. Davies, I'm glad to know I'm to have a fair chance at getting this church, and when I get the church I imagine I'll be successful at getting - (he makes a motion with his hand towards what is in the church) other things - Davies stops him by putting his hand on Llewelyn's arm.

Davies

(In a cold tone) And what could you mean, by saying 'other things?'

Llewelyn

(Conceitedly) Well, the little lady, you know. She may have it proved to her today that only men are fit for the Lord's ministry! Then maybe she'll come to her senses and stop trying -

Davies

(Very coldly) Perhaps you'd better go inside! Hurry now, before I forget your calling -

Llewelyn hastily enters the church. Davies starts to follow then turns back. Shakes his head 'no'. He nervously paces up and down in the grove, finally leaning up against a tree, his face covered by his arm. The soft drone of the church service going on can be heard.

Two little sisters, enter from L.S. and run to church-steps. The church doors are left standing wide open as it is summer.

Older Child

You didn't tell Pa we were comin' here, did you?

Younger

Pa'll skin us if he finds out!

Older

We don't have to go inside -

Younger

Then how we gonna see the woman?

Older

We can peek, can't we? See - the doors are open. (Edging up steps and peeking) I peeked! Nothin' happened!

Younger

(Trying to see in, complaining) I can't see the woman.

(Awestruck) Is she in the pulpit, do you 'spose?

Older

(Beckoning with her hand) Come on this side, then you can see her.

The children stand looking through the open doors. The eloquent voice of Rahel can be heard lifted in prayer. Very soft music in the background.

Rahel

"Grant, O God, Thy Protection;
 And in Protection, Strength;
 And in Strength, Understanding;
 And in Understanding, Knowledge;
 And in Knowledge, The Knowledge of Justice;
 And in the Knowledge of Justice, the Love of it;
 And in that Love, the Love of all Existence;
 And in the Love of all Existence, The Love of God.
 God and all His Goodness - - - Amen."

The music swells as she reaches the climax, then there is the soft singing of a hymn by the congregation and choir, as the two little sisters tip-toe guiltily down the steps.

Younger

Do you think the devil will get us for listening?

Older

I ain't gonna stay 'til the people come out. Let's go home.

Younger

Take my hand, sister.

The two children start to run through the grove past Davies, who grabs each one by the arm as they pass him. He leads them to C.F. as the younger lets out a scream.

Younger

The devil's katched us!

Davies

(Frowning at them) Slow down, children. Aren't you Patrick McCarthy's daughters? What are you doing here?

Older

Oh, please, Mr. Davies! Did you scare us! It ain't our church, I know. We were jest wantin' to see the woman-preacher -

Davies

And did you see her? (Both children nod 'Yes') What do you think of her?

Both children in unison

Oh, she's pretty -

Davies

Yes, she is pretty, and she's noble as well as beautiful -

Older

(Breaking away from his hold) I bet I know something you don't know!

Gareth's swimming in the quarrey! We seen him when we came past!

Davies

(Instantly upset) I forbid him to go there! He'll take a cramp in that icy water - and drown -

Older

Maybe he's drowned now -

Younger

(Chanting) Maybe he's drowned now - maybe he's drowned n-ow -

Davies

I've got to save him - but what if Rahel comes out and finds me gone? (Looks toward church then toward quarrey showing the struggle in his mind) See here, child, can you give a message? (Drops on one knee before older girl putting both hands on her shoulders and looking earnestly at her) Stay right here and if the lady comes out and looks about -

Older Child

(Interrupting) Do you mean the lady-preacher?

Davies

Yes, the lady-preacher. Tell her I've gone to save Gareth - (He starts away calling back as he goes) Remember - I've gone to save Gareth from drowning in the quarrey -

Younger Child

(Starting to fuss) I wantta go home NOW!

Older

S-sh. Don't you want to see the woman when she comes out?

Younger

Won't she scold us?

Older

I don't think so. He said she was nice.

Just then the five deacons file out of the church into the grove and look about for Davies.

Deacon Griffith

What happened to Brother Davies? Why didn't he come into the church? How can we count in his vote?

Deacon Jones

(Happily) We aren't going to need his vote. I'm glad it's all settled, and that Rahel o Fon's won! I'm mighty proud we are to have the first woman-preacher in these parts!

Deacon Evans

(Happily) It made me glad the way the whole congregation took to her style of preaching. They all stood up for her!

Deacon Thomas

I'm forced to admit the man couldn't hold a candle to her for eloquence in preaching. She's a woman inspired! A noble gift, the Lord has given her.

Deacon Evans

She is noble within herself and so inspires others.

Rahel comes out of the church, pauses on top step and looks about eagerly. The congregation can be seen grouped within the church behind her.

Rahel

(Calling) Deacon Griffith? Have you seen Mr. Davies here about?

Deacon Griffith

No, I can't say I have seen him. That's what I've been askin the others, where he coulda took himself to?

Older Child

(Interrupting) I know where he is. He said to tell the lady if she come out, he's gone to the quarrey -

Deacon Griffith

The quarrey? What on earth made him go there?

Deacon Howell

What in thunderation is he doin' at the quarrey?

Younger Child

(Losing her fear and coming out beside the older) His boy is drowndin' - Gareth's in the water -

Older

Yes, that's right. Gareth's in the water, maybe drownded -

The deacons all become excited and the people start pushing past Rahel

Deacon Jones

(Hurrying off R.S.) Oh, poor Gareth - that unlucky boy!

1st Farmer

(Hurrying too) We must hurry there, an' try to help -

Silas

(Hurrying along) Poor Ed. Davies! He loved the lad alright, tho I must say he didn't always have the right understandin' of him -

Hugh

Pray to God we get there in time! That water's ice-cold -
The people all rush off. Only Rahel, who appears to be dazed, is left standing on the top step, the Widow Bucksem on the step below her.

Widow Bucksem

There's somethin' pressin' on me I gotta say. I was dead set agin ye before ye come, but since hearin yer preachin' - well, may I be the first to congratulate ye on gettin the parish? That was a fine sermon. Everything ye said made me think of somebody or other I knew. An' now, if ye'll excuse me, I must be goin'. Poor Mr. Davies, he might git hisself drowned too along with that boy he took in an' -

Rahel

(Giving a sob) Edward? Oh, no, no, no! (She picks up her skirts, rushes past the widow, and runs off toward the quarrey. Exit R.S.)

Widow Bucksem

Good-land-o-goshen, if she didn't turn whiter 'n a sheet at the mention of his name. Well, if that don't beat all. I guess I kin put

two an' two together as well as the next one. The question is now,
will there be a weddin', or a funeral?

END OF SECOND ACT.

ACT THREE.

Scene: Same as for Act Two. Time: Six years later. Farmers, wives and young people are scattered in groups about the grove enjoying lunches spread on the ground, at their church picnic. They sit on horse-blankets. The farmers, wives and children are in one group at L.B. beside the church. The group of deacons, including Llewelyn, sit C.B. In the right foreground, the Widow Bucksem spreads a cloth and puts out a picnic lunch. Silas sits on ground next to her, Gareth at opposite side. There is a place set for Rahel but she has not yet come out of the church.

Widow Bucksem.

(Looks anxiously at church) I wish she'd come out o' the church. She's been in there prayin' for the past hour. (Puts hand on large bottle of tea) Her tea's gonna get cold as a stone!

Silas

Leave her be. She's seekin' peace. Her heart must be right sore. Only the Lord kin heal such wounds.

Gareth

(Impatiently) The Lord - the Lord! That's all you people keep saying!

Silas

An' who better could we be callin' on?

Gareth

If He's so just and merciful, why does He heap trouble on good folks? That woman doesn't deserve it. She's been kind and helpful to

everybody.

Widow Bucksem

(Shaking her head) It is hard to understand. She's a right good woman to be so put upon.

Silas

Who can read the mind of the Lord? 'Tis t-e-r-r-i-ble, the poor woman havin' to stand twice within a year beside the graves of her loved ones.

Widow

I never seen the beat. Bad luck goes travelin' in pairs! First, her husband, and now her little daughter, took away from her.

Gareth

Why, I wonder when the little girl was so happy here, did the Lord take her away?

Silas

Sad. (Shakes his head) Very sad, that it had to happen.

Widow

Yes, it is. But a beautiful funeral, indeed -

Silas

If I could go as that little girl did - I would go tomorrow.

Widow

But her poor mother now. It is lucky she has the one child left,-

an' him such a blessed, good youngun!

Silas

(Rising and stretching out his legs as tho he were stiff from sitting)

Yes, who kin read the Lord's mind. The truth is not in us but beyond us. We must go forward in faith. That is all.

Widow

(On knees looking up)

Did you have enough to eat, man? 'Pears to me you don't take proper interest in your vittles!

Silas

(Patting his tummy) Woman would you have me hauled to the Fair for a freak now?

Widow

(On her knees starting to clear up lunch and put things in basket)

Here, Gareth, have an apple. It'll kinda go down with that doughnut you ete.

Gareth

(Arms locked around knees, gazes off into space) No thanks, I ain't got much appetite. I keep wondering what's going to happen next around here.

Widow

Well, ye men et more'n she's done at that. (Looking at Rahel's empty place) She ain't shown up to tech a bite. It seems a shame an' her lookin' so flaxed out.

Gareth gets up and wanders to C.B. Stands looking off into distance, lost in thought.

Silas

(To Widow) You've no need to pack everythin' away. She may want somethin' when she comes out.

Widow

I can't leave it set, --less you want the flies to git it?
First Farmer leaves his group and comes over to Silas.

1st Farmer

Heard yer doin' a good job, runnin' the wagon-shop, Silas. It's a mighty fine thing the widow's got you to depend on. (Shakes his head) It sure were a pity her husband took sick an' died on their anniversary trip to Wales! An' now her dauter took, too. The hand of the Lord lies heavy -

Silas

I allus did say there's more to this job o'livin' then I'll ever be able to take in.

Widow Bucksem

(Busying herself about basket) The only mercy I kin find was he died sudden, without sufferin', an' the little girl too -

1st Farmer

It's better that way fer them that's took but hard on them what's left.

Silas

(Showing impatience with the subject) Well, let's get on ta somethin'

else. How's farmin' with you these days?

1st Farmer

I bin buggin' my vines in my tater patch -

Silas

How's Willis makin' out? I heard he had some trouble -

1st Farmer

Seems like bad news has good legs! (Calling over to 2nd farmer, in group beside church) Come on over, Willis. Silas here wants ta know how yer makin' out.

2nd Farmer

(Ambling over, hands in pockets) Well, I ain't so bad. I've closed up my corn. I come in town to git my horses shod while I'm at the picnic. Can't say I'm havin' sech a good time tho. Everybody 'pears to be on the gloomy side. Silas, ain't we gonna have no singin' today?

Widow Bucksem

(Breaking in) I don't know as she would be wantin' it - (Looks at church)

Silas

Nonsense, the Welsh are always singin' their way out o'trouble. 'Tis the one time they fully forget. (Calls to all the others) How about a good song, now? What shall it be, "MEN OF HARLECH," or "~~WALES UNITED~~"? *Calon Law*

The other groups stand and form together in center front. Silas directs as they sing, "~~WALES UNITED~~." *Calon Law*.

Deacon Jones

(Steps apart from group) That was a good one for fair, but I've a-hanker-
ing to sing "Men of Harlech!" How 'bout it, Silas. The others all say,
"Iye," "Iye," for Men of Harlech.

Silas

Good Welsh backgrounds ye've all had. Now lets hear ye on MEN OF
HARLECH. (They all sing.)

The group of singers break up. Gareth, Silas and Widow return to place under tree, R.F.

Gareth

That song makes me gallop inside. I never hear it but what I get a terrible longing to go to Wales, and see those glens they sing about.

Widow Bucksem

You are old enough to go on your own now, lad. Why don't you make the trip over?

Silas

Iye, that song makes me feel the same way, but I know I'll never be gittin' there -

Gareth

(Breaking in) Why don't we go, Silas? Why don't you and I go together?

Silas

With my old bones creakin' an' groanin' at every step? No, lad, this old tub is no longer sea-worthy. I hope I've more sense than to ship out of port.

Widow B.

But you, Gareth. With that money Ed. Davies left you, you've enough to go on and some to spare.

Gareth

I do not plan to use that money. There is no way to tell what

she and his little son may be in need of someday. I'm planning to turn that over to the boy.

Silas

(Patting Gareth on the shoulder) You've turned out a good lad, Gareth, jest as I knew ye would. It is too bad Ed. Davies can't be alive today to see what ye've made of yourself, but then he may know at that.

Gareth walks toward back as 1st Farm Woman comes over to Widow B.

1st Farm Woman

Beautiful singin', weren't it?

Widow B.

That it were, indeed.

Farm Woman

Did you ever see a braver little woman? I thought she'd break down for sure, standin' twice at the grave-side, but she didn't.

Widow B.

It's lucky she's got her young son left, an' him such a good youngun.

Silas

The cacklin' better not begin until the pullet's off the nest.

Farm Woman

It was too good to last, I always said. She an' Davies were the happy together. Well, the Lord gives an' the Lord takes away. Why do

you suppose Llewelyn Pryce come back here? Ain't he got a parish in Ioway?

Widow B.

Sure, that he has. How often I've been grateful we took the dear woman, 'stead o' him.

Farm Woman

(Edging over closer to widow) Do you suppose he's still sweet on her? Mebbe that's why he's come back; thinkin' he could win her over, now her poor husband's dead -

Widow

That may well be. I wouldn't put it past him, an' he could be havin' an eye on gittin' this parish too! He was for wantin' it terrible.

1st Farm Man

(Strolls up) Hadn't you women better leave off grindin' your tongues?

Farm Woman

(Laughing at him and tossing her head) Any day the women talk more'n the men! Just take a look at them goin' it - (Points to group of deacons around Llewelyn)

Widow B.

They're like a mill that runs on without grist.

Farm Woman

(Taking the farmer's arm) Good-day to you, Widow Bucksem. We'd better mosey on home. There's allus the chores, an' I gotta git changed outta my

Sundays - (Makes a motion toward her clothes) They go off R.S.

Widow B.

(Looking toward Gareth, talking to Silas) I wish somethin' could be done about Gareth. The boy's all upset inside. He can't settle to nothin'.

Silas

He is still too young to know that it's the fightin' an' guessin' part of life what keeps a man wound up an' goin'. It's kind of you to be concernin' yerself over him, now.

Widow B.

Do you remember how I used to be, 'fore she came here? I never had a good word for nobody it seemed. Well she taught me the wrong of that.

Silas

(Taking off his cap and making her a low bow) There ain't a finer woman sitting down no place, an' if ye'll do me the honor, like I been askin' ye fer the two-thousandth, or is it three - I fergit which?

Widow B.

(Shaking her finger playfully at Silas) Ye ain't wore me down yet, to where I fergit what I'm sayin'. It were Gareth I was talkin' about. I keep hopin' that maybe she'll convert him -

Silas

You won't have no rest I 'spose 'til she does. Well, don't git yer heart set on it. I ain't heard him say nothin' what makes it seem likely.

Widow B.

He does go to church regular now, even though he ain't joined.

Silas

Iye, religion's a great comfort!

Widow B.

If he could bring himself to it, then he wouldn't keep so upset all the time -

Silas

It is strange with the young, you can't hurry them, or they shy at the bit! An' older man now, knows what he wants. (Leans over, tries to take her hand) He'd be glad for a pull on the harness, tellin' him which way to go -

Widow B.

Go 'long with you now. I'm goin' over an' speak with Gareth about Rahel. He'll listen to me then. (Shakes her head sadly) Poor thing! I wish she didn't look so flaxed out.

Widow rises, brushes off her knees, walks over to Gareth at B.C. While she is doing this, Rahel comes out of church. Bows and smiles to all, she walks over and joins Silas, At R.F.

Rahel

It's nice to see you Silas. Have you been having a good time at the picnic?

Silas

(Rising) Oh yes, mam. Thank you, Mam. And how are you, indeed?

Rahel

I am tired Silas, tho I dislike to confess it. There is so much I want to do.

Silas

(Motioning toward the Widow) I'll get Widow Bucksem back. She's been savin' some supper for ye -

Rahel

No, Silas, please don't. (Seats herself under tree.) I don't feel a bit hungry.

Silas

But you've gotta eat, mam, or you'll lose your strength. You don't wantta do that with the whole congregation dependin' on ye.

Rahel

(Looks about her) It doesn't seem possible that I've had this church for six years now. Tell me, Silas, do the people really like me? Are they satisfied with having a woman?

Silas

Indeed, mam, ye have made tremendous strides in improvin' this parish. Before ye got here there were some held out mighty strong against the fact of your bein' a woman. Ye have made great strides.

Rahel

One cannot undertake to alter the opinions of people and expect to have them like it.

Silas

Few indeed, are left still agin ye.

Rahel

If all had been able easily to receive my teaching I would not be necessary.

Silas

It is marvelous now, the way you have dealt justly with Gareth. So head-strong a lad was no easy problem.

Rahel

I still do not feel that he is completely won. It would seem my reason has no power against his feeling. I have just been in praying to be given that power. Silas, won't you please go tell Gareth to come here to me.

Silas

(Aside) A marvelous woman! Fresh from her own troubles and thinking of others.

Silas goes to tell Gareth. Deacon Griffith strolls up.

D. Griffith

Resting? No, don't get up.

Rahel

Thank you. It is so pretty here. I've come to love this state.

D.Griffith

I suppose we Welsh chose to settle in these parts because of hills. They reminded us of home.

Rahel

This has become 'home' for all of us.

D. Griffith

Madame, you have brought an unaccustomed radiance into the pulpit.

Rahel

It is kind in you to say that. Christ's work is a crusade. I try to keep the spirit within me.

D.Griffith

Ye have always found plenty to say, and all of it sense.

Rahel

My business is anything that comes between people and the spirit of God.

D.Griffith

I am more than convinced a man will never know a woman until he knows her work.

Rahel

I am grateful for the opportunity to do my work. (Rising)
And now if you will excuse me. I sent for Gareth.

Gareth comes up to her eagerly. Deacon Griffith moves to the back group.

A farmer passes between Gareth and Rahel.

Rahel
not to
(To farmer) I was sorry ~~I didn't~~ see you at church, last Sunday, Roland.

Farmer

Well, I meant to come, but, ye see, it was so wet a day it wasn't fit to turn out a dog in. I sent the wife tho, mam!

Rahel

(With the flicker of a smile) I see. I see! Well, next time you better come with her.

Farmer

(Tipping his hat) Thank you, mam. Much obliged!

Gareth joins her, center front.

Rahel

Lets^{NO} sit down. (She seats herself on blanket and pats place beside her indicating he should be seated too.) Gareth stands.

Rahel

(Looking up at him) You wear a long face, for so young a man.

Gareth

(Stands turning his cap round and round in his hands) I wish I had a spirit like yours.

Rahel

How can one hope to see the sunshine if one keeps tears in the eyes?

Gareth

I don't seem to be good at pretending, when I'm in trouble. (He gives in and sits down beside her.)

Rahel

(Smiling gently at him) One must always keep hope from meeting disappointment. A cheerful countenance is part of a Christian's duty.

Gareth

(Breaking in) "Christian duty", don't you ever get sick of those words? (Stretches out on his stomach looking up at her.)

Rahel

(Simply) My faith is all that keeps me whole.

Gareth

What can one believe? What can one put ~~faith~~^{the} in?

Rahel

(Earnestly) I have absolute faith in the goodness and wisdom of God, and in life in a world to come.

Gareth

(With admiration, looking at her) I believe you have. You are the most sincere person I have ever known. One can imagine you going to the stake like the ancient martyrs to defend your belief.

Rahel

It is all that I am, Gareth.

Gareth

I used to think the churches were full of hypocrites and seekers after self-glory -

Rahel

(Interrupting) You did wrong there, Gareth. The church has to be limited by the kind of people it gets in it. No church faith will be teaching you wrong things. They are all for the good.

Gareth

(Humbly) I know that now. Since I've been coming to church and listening to your teachings, do you know something? (Sits bolt upright)

Rahel shows by her face she is eagerly hoping to have won him to the ch.

Gareth

Well, - I don't believe that anymore!

Rahel

(Very sincerely) It is glad I am.

Gareth

I know I've been head-strong and filled with a lot of notions which have given you trouble since Uncle Ed. passed on, but if you'll for-give me there is something I want to say.

Rahel

Of course, I forgive you. And now what do you want to say?

Gareth

I've been thinking about it for a long time now. I wanted to

make sure I wasn't doing it just because Uncle Ed saved my life that time; or because I like you so much, but because I know it to be the right thing to do - That's the right way, isn't it?

Rahel

(Hardly daring to hope that at last Gareth is joining) The right way for what, Gareth?

Gareth

Joining up with the church, of course. That's the only right way, isn't it?

Rahel

(Rising quickly, her face radiant) ~~Gareth, dear Gareth. It is happy~~

~~I am at your words. I have been praying to hear you say just that. You've made me very happy - (Pause) I too have been thinking on a~~ *how I can say to you the words Virgil said to Dante at the entrance to the celestial paradise*
~~plan for you, Gareth. This one doesn't concern the church. I want you to go to Wales. There is some business there. I have need to send someone trustworthy.~~ *"Wherefore I crown and mitre thee lord of thyself. Believe always that God is greater than man, that the individual man is more important than the mass of men, that the mind is greater than the body, the heart greater than the intellect and that love for our fellow man is the most important thing in life - (breaks off laughing) but there I'd better stop or next I'll be preaching you a sermon - Gareth, how would you like to go to Wales for me?"*
 Gareth

(Overjoyed) Go to Wales - for you? Am I dreaming, or is this real?

Rahel

Could you be ready this fortnight? I have some property there which my parents left - (They turn still talking to each other and walk slowly toward church, stopping outside.)

Gareth

Tell me again how does Wales look?

Rahel

There are little white threads of streams unraveled on the hills-
(Their conversation becomes too soft to hear more of, as they stand talking to each other.)

Llewelyn Pryce comes up to Widow Bucksem who has moved down to R.F. as Rahel and Gareth moved toward church. Silas moves over and stands near.

Llewelyn

Ah, the good Widow Bucksem! Not a day older in looks. How you ladies do it, I wouldn't know, so help me.

Silas

(Aside) Ye'll need help if ye're comin' back here.

Llewelyn

(To Silas) My old friend, Silas. It's good to see you again.

Silas

My eyesight ain't what it used to be. I keep seein' such odd-lookin' ^{folks} ~~people~~.

Llewelyn

You old buzzard, you're too vain to wear glasses! There's Rahel, now. (Pushes Silas aside) I must go ^{have} talk with her. (He hurries eagerly toward Rahel and Gareth. When Gareth sees him, he says to Rahel

Gareth

Excuse me for now, I will be around to your house within an hour, shall I? (Rahel nods assent and stands waiting Llewelyn.)

Llewelyn

(Hurrying up, takes her hand) Ah, how very nice it is to be with you again, dear Rahel. It has grieved me deeply, to hear of your losses.

Rahel

I have heard ^{Rasbean} ~~it~~ said ~~that~~ the Lord never closes one door but ~~he~~ opens another. I try to keep my mind on that.

Llewelyn

I am very glad to hear you speak so. (Looks about) Is there some quiet place ^{where} we can go for a ^{long} talk?

Rahel

(Making a motion with her hand) Here beside my church - among my friends - is the nicest place I know of.

Llewelyn

(Lamely) I - I would like - to be sure of no interruptions.

Rahel

(Taking pity on him) I am sure (moves over to tree L.F.) standing here beneath this tree, we will not be disturbed.

Llewelyn

(Not knowing how to start) Life looks to me like a lot of different little worlds, each one created by ourselves and reflecting life as we see it. I'll wager yours is an orderly world?

Rahel

Why do you think that?

Llewelyn

I've gathered it from what the people here say about you.

Rahel

(Eagerly) What do they say about me?

Llewelyn

They tell me you believe each one of us contributes to a design. That there is no room for snobbishness in your world. ~~That~~ you have told them, it is not their work, but the quality of their work which counts. You speak with respect of common service. You see, I have learned much about you.

Rahel

Yes, yes, I do believe in a purpose and a Creator, and the importance of man -

Llewelyn

You have displayed unselfish service in your work. It is only your life which lacks success.

Rahel

(Quickly) What do you mean - my life lacks success?

Llewelyn

Surely you yourself must miss the good old days when a woman was protected -

Rahel

(Her ^{indignation} ~~anger~~ mounts as she talks) I suppose you mean before women were taught mathematics, or could own property, and were expected to cook, ~~bake~~, wash, iron, spin, weave, sew, board farm-hands, bear and raise an untold number of children - are those the "good old days" and the "protected" women which you refer to?

Llewelyn

I feel that every woman needs a man -

Rahel

(Purposely misunderstanding him) It would seem men's convictions about women and their place in society is difficult to change.

Llewelyn

(Meaningly) I feel you know the woman I mean -

Rahel

(Fencing) Perhaps a fine woman residing in your parish -

Llewelyn

(Making her a low bow) Mrs. Davies, you would make the finest political boss in this, or any community, if you would turn your mind to it steady. You are that good at evading the issue.

Rahel

(Repenting) I beg your pardon. I guess I was forgetting to be polite.

Llewelyn

There, that is better. It is your life I wish to protect. I think you know I've loved you for a long time. I haven't changed since following you from Wales. Rahel, listen to me -

Rahel

(Raising her hand) If you are asking me to marry with you, my answer is 'no', Llewelyn.

Llewelyn

Will you be glad then, to send me off?

Rahel

No, but I would be sorry to see myself beside another man.

Llewelyn

Why? Tell me why?

Rahel

It would seem wrong for me for another man to have life near me, or for me to be busy in my mind about his comings and goings.

Llewelyn

Why should it? Are there other reasons?

Rahel

I cannot tell why. No, there are no other reasons.

Llewelyn

You set me back. I had hoped to own you to give added purpose

to my life.

Rahel

There are so many things a man can do. In these times in which we live, they cry out for the doing. Do you know, Llewelyn, no one has every made an investigation of working conditions, or wages, or hours of labor; there are no child-labor laws, no wage regulations. Oh, Llewelyn, it is thrilling the life you can build for yourself. There is a great world of unrest which must be understood.

Llewelyn

How are these problems going to ^{ever} be solved?

Rahel

Problems will solve themselves if you have a complete understanding of the facts behind them.

Llewelyn

(Looking at her with respect) Rahel, you are truly a wonderful woman!

Rahel

(Smiling) I am used to having men look at me with astonishment and alarm, less often with respect.

Llewelyn

If I cannot convince you to marry me, may I ask you to take better care of yourself. (Bluntly) You work too hard. Why not give up your church? Davies left you plenty to live on, I've heard.

Rahel

(Angry, but forcing herself not to show it) If you take away my work, you take away the prop on which my life depends. (gently) My work, and my little son, are all my heart now -

Llewelyn

(Persisting) What makes you so set? What makes you think you are born to be a woman of God?

Rahel

(Imperiously raising her hand stopping him) Say rather, a woman for God. There is no room left in my heart for anything but service, and my son. (Turns away from him) Good-day, Llewelyn.

She sees her little boy and his nurse who have entered from R.S. and are talking to Silas, who is seated under tree reading a book. R.F.

Rahel

There is my little man, now. (She starts toward him)

Joseph

(To Silas) I like books. May I see your pretty book?

Silas

Here you are, child. Take it, and welcome. It is poetry of which your mother is so fond.

Joseph

Thank you, sir. (Looks up from book, sees his mother coming toward him) Mama, oh mama. Silas gave me a book. Will you read it to me?

Rahel and her child meet C.F. Rahel smiles her thanks at Silas as she takes the book. She glances through it, smiling down at her eager little son, one arm about his shoulders.

Rahel

This is a book of lovely poems, son. James Russell Lowell, a great man in Massachusetts wrote it.

Joseph

Read me, mamma. Read, me.

Rahel

Yes, dear. (pages through book) Here are some beautiful thoughts.
 (Reads eloquently) "Be noble and the nobleness which lies
 In other men, sleeping but never dead,
 Will rise in majesty to meet thine own."

Why don't we both learn that, Joseph. You say after mamma - Be noble,

Joseph

Be noble -

Rahel

And the nobleness which lies,

Joseph

And the nobleness which lies,

Rahel

In other men, sleeping but never dead,

Joseph

-- sleeping but never dead,

Rahel

Will rise in majesty to meet thine own.

Joseph

Will rise in ma-jes-ty to meet thine own. (Pause) Mamma, what
is ma-jes-ty?

Curtain goes down with Rahel (upon her knees) embracing her little
son, Joseph.

THE END
