

**THE PHILANDERER:
AN
UNPLEASANT PLAY**

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The Philanderer: An Unpleasant Play by Bernard Shaw

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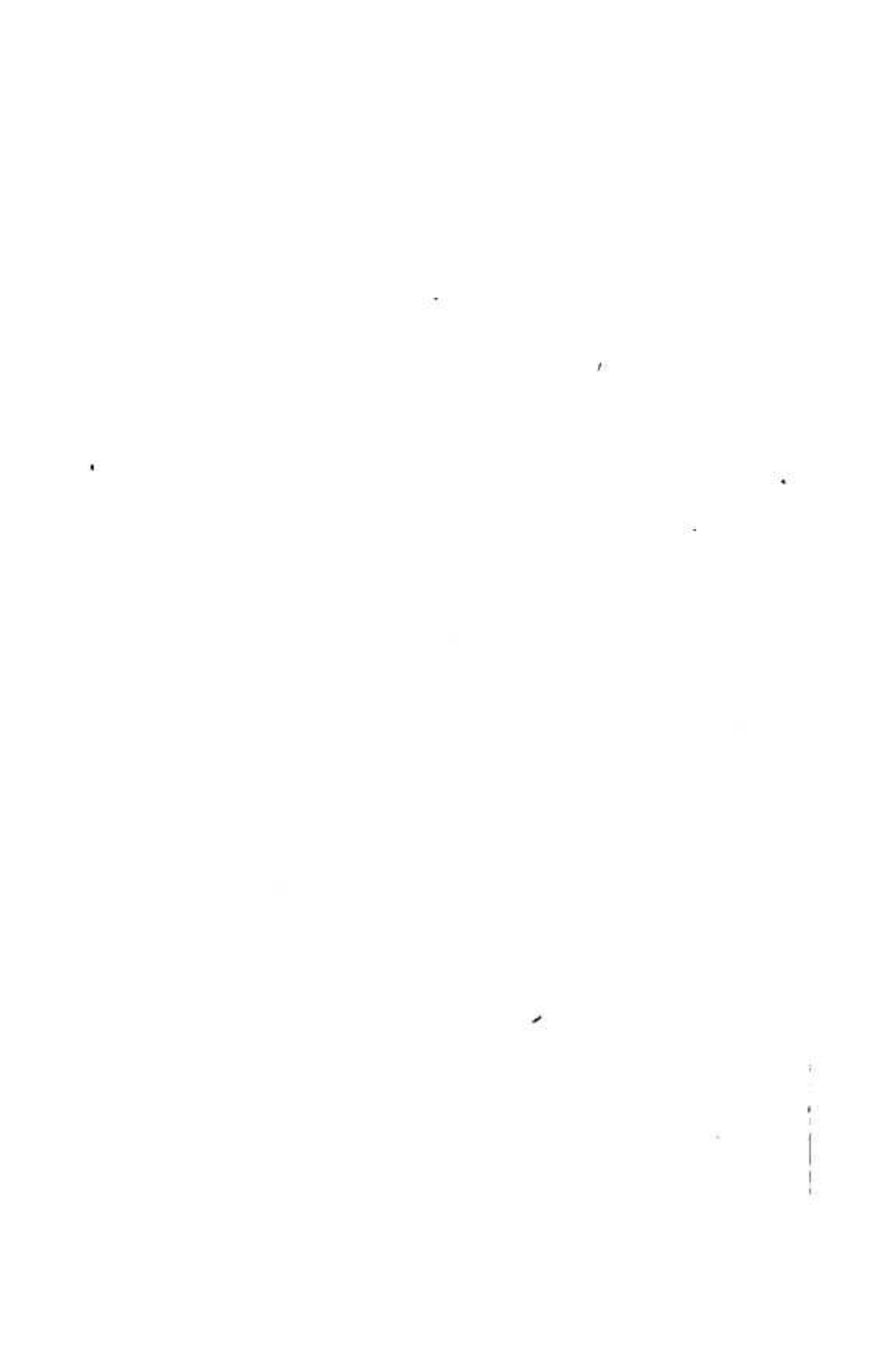
AN UNPLEASANT PLAY

By
BERNARD SHAW



NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1914

THE PHILANDERER



THE PHILANDERER

ACT I

A lady and gentleman are making love to one another in the drawing-room of a flat in Ably Gardens in the Victoria district of London. It is past ten at night. The walls are hung with theatrical engravings and photographs—Kemble as Hamlet, Mrs. Siddons as Queen Katharine pleading in court, Macready as Werner (after Maclise), Sir Henry Irving as Richard III (after Long), Miss Ellen Terry, Mrs. Kendal, Miss Ada Rehan, Madame Sarah Bernhardt, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. A. W. Pinero, Mr. Sydney Grundy, and so on, but not the Signora Duse or anyone connected with Ibsen. — The room is not a perfect square, the right hand corner at the back being cut off diagonally by the doorway, and the opposite corner rounded by a turret window filled up with a stand of flowers surrounding a statue of Shakespear. The fireplace is on the right, with an armchair near it. A small round table, further forward on the same side, with a chair beside it, has a yellow-backed French novel lying open on it. The piano, a grand, is on the left, open, with the keyboard in full view at right angles to the wall. The piece of music on the desk is "When other lips." Incandescent lights, well shaded, are on the piano and mantelpiece. Near the piano is a sofa, on which the lady and gentleman are seated affectionately side by side, in one another's arms.

The lady, Grace Tranfield, is about 32, slight of build, delicate of feature, and sensitive in expression. She is just now given up to the emotion of the moment; but her well closed mouth, proudly set brows, firm chin, and elegant carriage show plenty of determination and self respect. She is in evening dress.

The gentleman, Leonard Charteris, a few years older, is unconventionally but smartly dressed in a velvet jacket and cashmere trousers. His collar, dyed Wasan blue, is part of his shirt, and turns over a garnet coloured scarf of Indian silk, secured by a turquoise ring. He wears blue socks and leather sandals. The arrangement of his tawny hair, and of his moustaches and short beard, is apparently left to Nature; but he has taken care that Nature shall do him the fullest justice. His amative enthusiasm, at which he is himself laughing, and his clever, imaginative, humorous ways, contrast strongly with the sincere tenderness and dignified quietness of the woman.

CHARTERIS (*impulsively clasping Grace*). My dearest love.
GRACE (*responding affectionately*). My darling. Are you happy?

CHARTERIS. In Heaven.

GRACE. My own.

CHARTERIS. My heart's love. (*He sighs happily, and takes her hands in his, looking quaintly at her.*) That must positively be my last kiss, Grace, or I shall become downright silly. Let us talk. (*Releases her and sits a little apart from her.*) Grace: is this your first love affair?

GRACE. Have you forgotten that I am a widow? Do you think I married Tranfield for money?

CHARTERIS. How do I know? Besides, you might have married him not because you loved him, but because you didn't love anybody else. When one is young, one marries out of mere curiosity, just to see what it's like.

GRACE. Well, since you ask me, I never was in love

with Tranfield, though I only found that out when I fell in love with you. But I used to like him for being in love with me. It brought out all the good in him so much that I have wanted to be in love with some one ever since. I hope, now that I am in love with you, you will like me for it just as I liked Tranfield.

CHARTERIS. My dear, it is because I like you that I want to marry you. I could love anybody—any pretty woman, that is.

GRACE. Do you really mean that, Leonard?

CHARTERIS. Of course. Why not?

GRACE (*reflecting*). Never mind why. Now tell me, is this your first love affair?

CHARTERIS (*amazed at the simplicity of the question*). No, bless my soul. No—nor my second, nor my third.

GRACE. But I mean your first serious one.

CHARTERIS (*with a certain hesitation*). Yes. (*There is a pause. She is not convinced. He adds, with a very perceptible load on his conscience.*) It is the first in which I have been serious.

GRACE (*searchingly*). I see. The other parties were always serious.

CHARTERIS. No, not always—heaven forbid!

GRACE. How often?

CHARTERIS. Well, once.

GRACE. Julia Craven?

CHARTERIS (*recoiling*). Who told you that? (*She shakes her head mysteriously, and he turns away from her moodily and adds*) You had much better not have asked.

GRACE (*gently*). I'm sorry, dear. (*She puts out her hand and pulls softly at him to bring him near her again.*)

CHARTERIS (*yielding mechanically to the pull, and allowing her hand to rest on his arm, but sitting squarely without the least attempt to return the caress.*) Do I feel harder to the touch than I did five minutes ago?

GRACE. What nonsense!

CHARTERIS. I feel as if my body had turned into the toughest of hickory. That is what comes of reminding me of Julia Craven. (*Brooding, with his chin on his right hand and his elbow on his knee.*) I have sat alone with her just as I am sitting with you—

GRACE (*sbrinking from him*). Just!

CHARTERIS (*sitting upright and facing her steadily*). Just exactly. She has put her hands in mine, and laid her cheek against mine, and listened to me saying all sorts of silly things. (*Grace, chilled to the soul, rises from the sofa and sits down on the piano stool, with her back to the keyboard.*) Ah, you don't want to hear any more of the story. So much the better.

GRACE (*deeply hurt, but controlling herself*). When did you break it off?

CHARTERIS (*guiltily*). Break it off?

GRACE (*firmly*). Yes, break it off.

CHARTERIS. Well, let me see. When did I fall in love with you?

GRACE. Did you break it off then?

CHARTERIS (*mischievously, making it plainer and plainer that it has not been broken off*). It was clear then, of course, that it must be broken off.

GRACE. And did you break it off?

CHARTERIS. Oh, yes: I broke it off.

GRACE. But did she break it off?

CHARTERIS (*rising*). As a favour to me, dearest, change the subject. Come away from the piano: I want you to sit here with me. (*Takes a step towards her.*)

GRACE. No. I also have grown hard to the touch—much harder than hickory for the present. Did she break it off?

CHARTERIS. My dear, be reasonable. It was fully explained to her that it was to be broken off.

GRACE. Did she accept the explanation?