

Yeats William Butler

# Where There is Nothing



**William Yeats**  
**Where There is Nothing**

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*Where There is Nothing / Being Volume I of Plays for an Irish Theatre:*

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# **Yeats W. B. William Butler Where There is Nothing / Being Volume I of Plays for an Irish Theatre**

## **DEDICATION OF VOLUMES ONE AND TWO OF PLAYS FOR AN IRISH THEATRE**

My dear Lady Gregory, I dedicate to you two volumes of plays that are in part your own.

When I was a boy I used to wander about at Rosses Point and Ballisodare listening to old songs and stories. I wrote down what I heard and made poems out of the stories or put them into the little chapters of the first edition of "The Celtic Twilight," and that is how I began to write in the Irish way.

Then I went to London to make my living, and though I spent a part of every year in Ireland and tried to keep the old life in my memory by reading every country tale I could find in books or old newspapers, I began to forget the true countenance of country life. The old tales were still alive for me indeed, but with a new, strange, half unreal life, as if in a wizard's glass, until at last, when I had finished "The Secret Rose," and was half-way

through "The Wind Among the Reeds," a wise woman in her trance told me that my inspiration was from the moon, and that I should always live close to water, for my work was getting too full of those little jewelled thoughts that come from the sun and have no nation. I had no need to turn to my books of astrology to know that the common people are under the moon, or to Porphyry to remember the image-making power of the waters. Nor did I doubt the entire truth of what she said to me, for my head was full of fables that I had no longer the knowledge and emotion to write. Then you brought me with you to see your friends in the cottages, and to talk to old wise men on Slieve Echtge, and we gathered together, or you gathered for me, a great number of stories and traditional beliefs. You taught me to understand again, and much more perfectly than before, the true countenance of country life.

One night I had a dream almost as distinct as a vision, of a cottage where there was well-being and firelight and talk of a marriage, and into the midst of that cottage there came an old woman in a long cloak. She was Ireland herself, that Cathleen ni Hoolihan for whom so many songs have been sung and about whom so many stories have been told and for whose sake so many have gone to their death. I thought if I could write this out as a little play I could make others see my dream as I had seen it, but I could not get down out of that high window of dramatic verse, and in spite of all you had done for me I had not the country speech. One has to live among the people, like you, of whom an old man said in my hearing, "She has been a serving-

maid among us," before one can think the thoughts of the people and speak with their tongue. We turned my dream into the little play, "Cathleen ni Hoolihan," and when we gave it to the little theatre in Dublin and found that the working people liked it, you helped me to put my other dramatic fables into speech. Some of these have already been acted, but some may not be acted for a long time, but all seem to me, though they were but a part of a summer's work, to have more of that countenance of country life than anything I have done since I was a boy.

W. B. Yeats.

*Feb. 1903.*

Paul Rutledge, Mrs. Thomas Rutledge, Thomas Rutledge,	a Country Gentleman his Brother. a Country Gentleman his Brother.
Mr. Dowler, Mr. Algie, Colonel Lawley, Mr. Joyce,	} Magistrates.
Mr. Green,	a Stipendiary Magistrate.
Sabina Silver, Molly the Scold, Charlie Ward, Paddy Cockfight, Tommy the Song, Johnnen, etc.	} Tinkers.
Father Jerome, Father Aloysius, Father Colman, Father Bartley,	} Friars.
Other Friars, and a crowd of countrymen.	

# ACT I

*Scene: A lawn with croquet hoops, garden chairs and tables. Door into house at left. Gate through hedge at back. The hedge is clipped into shapes of farmyard fowl. Paul Rutledge is clipping at the hedge in front. A table with toys on it.*

*Thomas Rutledge.* [Coming out on steps.] Paul, are you coming in to lunch?

*Paul Rutledge.* No; you can entertain these people very well. They are your friends: you understand them.

*Thomas Rutledge.* You might as well come in. You have been clipping at that old hedge long enough.

*Paul Rutledge.* You needn't worry about me. I should be bored if I went in, and I don't want to be bored more than is necessary.

*Thomas Rutledge.* What is that creature you are clipping at now? I can't make it out.

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh, it is a Cochin China fowl, an image of some of our neighbours, like the others.

*Thomas Rutledge.* I don't see any likeness to anyone.

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh, yes there is, if you could see their minds instead of their bodies. That comb now —

*Mrs. Rutledge.* [Coming out on steps.] Thomas, are you coming in?

*Thomas Rutledge.* Yes, I'm coming; but Paul won't come.

[Thomas Rutledge goes out.]

*Mrs. Rutledge.* Oh! this is nonsense, Paul; you must come. All these men will think it so strange if you don't. It is nonsense to think you will be bored. Mr. Green is talking in the most interesting way.

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh! I know Green's conversation very well.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* And Mr. Joyce, your old guardian. Thomas says he was always so welcome in your father's time, he will think it so queer.

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh! I know all their virtues. There's Dowler, who puts away thousands a year in Consols, and Algie, who tells everybody all about it. Have I forgotten anybody? Oh, yes! Colonel Lawley, who used to lift me up by the ears, when I was a child, to see Africa. No, Georgina, I know all their virtues, but I'm not coming in.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* I can't imagine why you won't come in and be sociable.

*Paul Rutledge.* You see I can't. I have something to do here. I have to finish this comb. You see it is a beautiful comb; but the wings are very short. The poor creature can't fly.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* But can't you finish that after lunch?

*Paul Rutledge.* No, I have sworn.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* Well, I am sorry. You are always doing uncomfortable things. I must go in to the others. I wish you would have come. [*She goes in.*]

*Jerome.* [*Who has come to gate as she disappears.*] Paul, you

there! that is lucky. I was just going to ask for you.

*Paul Rutledge.* [*Flinging clipper away, and jumping up.*] Oh, Father Jerome, I am delighted to see you. I haven't seen you for ever so long. Come and have a talk; or will you have some lunch?

*Jerome.* No, thank you; I will stay a minute, but I won't go in.

*Paul Rutledge.* That is just as well, for you would be bored to death. There has been a meeting of magistrates in the village, and my brother has brought them all in to lunch.

*Jerome.* I am collecting for the Monastery, and my donkey has gone lame; I have had to put it up in the village. I thought you might be able to lend me one to go on with.

*Paul Rutledge.* Of course, I'm delighted to lend you that or anything else. I'll go round to the yard with you and order it. But sit down here first. What have you been doing all this time?

*Jerome.* Oh, we have been very busy. You know we are going to put up new buildings.

*Paul Rutledge.* [*Absent-mindedly.*] No, I didn't know that.

*Jerome.* Yes, our school is increasing so much we are getting a grant for technical instruction. Some of the Fathers are learning handicrafts. Father Aloysius is going to study industries in France; but we are all busy. We are changing with the times, we are beginning to do useful things.

*Paul Rutledge.* Useful things. I wonder what you have begun to call useful things. Do you see those marks over there on the grass?

*Jerome.* What marks?

*Paul Rutledge.* Those marks over there, those little marks of scratching.

*Jerome.* [*Going over to the place Paul Rutledge has pointed out.*] I don't see anything.

*Paul Rutledge.* You are getting blind, Jerome. Can't you see that the poultry have been scratching there?

*Jerome.* No, the grass is perfectly smooth.

*Paul Rutledge.* Well, the marks are there, whether you see them or not; for Mr. Green and Mr. Dowler and Mr. Algie and the rest of them run out of their houses when nobody is looking, in their real shapes, shapes like those on my hedge. And then they begin to scratch, they scratch all together, they don't dig but they scratch, and all the time their mouths keep going like that.

[He holds out his hand and opens and shuts his fingers like a bird's bill.

*Jerome.* Oh, Paul, you are making fun of me.

*Paul Rutledge.* Of course I am only talking in parables. I think all the people I meet are like farmyard creatures, they have forgotten their freedom, their human bodies are a disguise, a pretence they keep up to deceive one another.

*Jerome.* [*Sitting down.*] What is wrong with you?

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh, nothing of course. You see how happy I am. I have a good house and a good property, and my brother and his charming wife have come to look after me. You see the toys of their children here and everywhere. What should be wrong with me?

*Jerome.* I know you too well not to see that there is something wrong with you.

*Paul Rutledge.* There is nothing except that I have been thinking a good deal lately.

*Jerome.* Perhaps your old dreams or visions or whatever they were have come back. They always made you restless. You ought to see more of your neighbours.

*Paul Rutledge.* There's nothing interesting but human nature, and that's in the single soul, but these neighbours of mine they think in flocks and roosts.

*Jerome.* You are too hard on them. They are busy men, they hav'n't much time for thought, I daresay.

*Paul Rutledge.* That's what I complain of. When I hear these people talking I always hear some organized or vested interest chirp or quack, as it does in the newspapers. Algie chirps. Even you, Jerome, though I have not found your armorial beast, are getting a little monastic; when I have found it I will put it among the others. There is a place for it there, but the worst of it is that it will take so long getting nice and green.

*Jerome.* I don't know what creature you could make for me.

*Paul Rutledge.* I am not sure yet; I think it might be a pigeon, something cooing and gentle, and always coming home to the dovecot; not to the wild woods but to the dovecot.

*Jerome.* I wonder what creature you yourself are like.

*Paul Rutledge.* I daresay I am like some creature or other, for very few of us are altogether men; but if I am, I would like to be

one of the wild sort. You are right about my dreams. They have been coming back lately. Do you remember those strange ones I had at college?

*Jerome.* Those visions of pulling something down?

*Paul Rutledge.* Yes, they have come back to me lately. Sometimes I dream I am pulling down my own house, and sometimes it is the whole world that I am pulling down. [*Standing up.*] I would like to have great iron claws, and to put them about the pillars, and to pull and pull till everything fell into pieces.

*Jerome.* I don't see what good that would do you.

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh, yes it would. When everything was pulled down we would have more room to get drunk in, to drink contentedly out of the cup of life, out of the drunken cup of life.

*Jerome.* That is a terribly wild thought. I hope you don't believe all you say.

*Paul Rutledge.* Perhaps not. I only know that I want to upset everything about me. Have you not noticed that it is a complaint many of us have in this country? and whether it comes from love or hate I don't know, they are so mixed together here.

*Jerome.* I wish you would come and talk to our Superior. He has a perfect gift for giving advice.

*Paul Rutledge.* Well, we'll go to the yard now. [*He gets up.*]

*Jerome.* I have often thought you would come to the Monastery yourself in the end. You were so much the most pious of us all at school. You would be happy in a Monastery. Something is always happening there.

*Paul Rutledge.* [As they go up the garden.] I daresay, I daresay; but I am not even sure that I am a Christian.

*Jerome.* Well, anyway, I wish that you would come and talk to our Superior. [They go out.

*Charlie Ward and Boyenter* by the path beyond the hedge and stand at gate.

*Charlie Ward.* No use going up there, Johneen, it's too grand a place, it's a dog they might let loose on us. But I'll tell you what, just slip round to the back door and ask do they want any cans mended.

*Johneen.* Let you take the rabbit then we're after taking out of the snare. I can't bring it round with me.

*Charlie Ward.* Faith, you can't. They think as bad of us taking a rabbit that was fed and minded by God as if it was of their own rearing; give it here to me. It's hardly it will go in my pocket, it's as big as a hare. It's next my skin I'll have to put it, or it might be noticed on me. [*Boy goes out.*

[Charlie Ward is struggling to put rabbit inside his coat when Paul Rutledge comes back.

*Paul Rutledge.* Is there anything I can do for you? Do you want to come in?

*Charlie Ward.* I'm a tinker by trade, your honour. I wonder is there e'er a tin can the maids in the house might want mended or any chairs to be bottomed?

*Paul Rutledge.* A tinker; where do you live?

*Charlie Ward.* Faith, I don't stop long in any place. I go about

like the crows; picking up my way of living like themselves.

*Paul Rutledge.* [*Opening gate.*] Come inside here. [*Charlie Wardhesitates.*] Come in, you are welcome.

[*Puts his hand on his shoulder. Charlie Wardtries to close his shirt over rabbit.*]

*Paul Rutledge.* Ah, you have a rabbit there. The keeper told me he had come across some snares in my woods.

*Charlie Ward.* If he did, sir, it was no snare of mine he found. This is a rabbit I bought in the town of Garreen early this morning. Sixpence I was made give for it, and to mend a tin can along with that.

*Paul Rutledge.* [*Touching rabbit.*] It's warm still, however. But the day is hot. Never mind; you are quite welcome to it. I daresay you will have a cheery meal of it by the roadside; my dinners are often tiresome enough. I often wish I could change – look here, will you change clothes with me?

*Charlie Ward.* Faith, I'd swap soon enough if you weren't humbugging me. It's I that would look well with that suit on me! The peelers would all be touching their caps to me. You'd see them running out for me to sign summonses for them.

*Paul Rutledge.* But I am not humbugging. I am in earnest.

*Charlie Ward.* In earnest! Then when I go back I'll commit Paddy Cockfight to prison for hitting me yesterday.

*Paul Rutledge.* You don't believe me, but I will explain. I'm dead sick of this life; I want to get away; I want to escape – as you say, to pick up my living like the crows for a while.

*Charlie Ward.* To make your escape. Oh! that's different. [*Coming closer.*] But what is it you did? You don't look like one that would be in trouble. But sometimes a gentleman gets a bit wild when he has a drop taken.

*Paul Rutledge.* Well, never mind. I will explain better while we are changing. Come over here to the potting shed. Make haste, those magistrates will be coming out.

*Charlie Ward.* The magistrates! Are they after you? Hurry on, then! Faith, they won't know you with this coat. [*Looking at his rags.*] It's a pity I didn't put on my old one coming out this morning.

[*They go out through the garden. Thomas Rutledge comes down steps from house with Colonel Lawley and Mr. Green.*]

*Mr. Green.* Yes, they have made me President of the County Horticultural Society. My speech was quite a success; it was punctuated with applause. I said I looked upon the appointment not as a tribute to my own merits, but to their public spirit and to the Society, which I assured them had come to stay.

*Colonel Lawley.* What has become of Paul and Father Jerome? I thought I heard their voices out here, and now they are conspicuous by their absence.

*Thomas Rutledge.* He seems to have no friend he cares for but that Father Jerome.

*Mr. Green.* I wish he would come more into touch with his fellows.

*Colonel Lawley.* What a pity he didn't go into the army. I wish he would join the militia. Every man should try to find some useful sphere of employment.

*Mr. Green.* Thomas, your brother will never come to see me, though I often ask him. He would find the best people – people worth meeting – at my house. I wonder if he would join the Horticultural Society? I know I voice the sentiments of all the members in saying this. I spoke to a number of them at the function the other day.

*Thomas Rutledge.* I wish he would join something. Joyce wants him to join the Masonic Lodge. It is not a right life for him to keep hanging about the place and doing nothing.

*Mr. Green.* He won't even come and sit on the Bench. It's not fair to leave so much of the work to me. I ought to get all the support possible from local men.

[*Mrs. Rutledge comes down steps with Mr. Dowler, Mr. Algie, and Mr. Joyce. She is walking in front.*]

*Mrs. Rutledge.* [To Thomas Rutledge.] Oh! Thomas, isn't it too bad, Paul has lent the donkey to that friar. I wanted Mr. Joyce to see the children in their panniers. Do speak to him about it.

*Thomas Rutledge.* Well, the donkey belongs to him, and for the matter of that so does the house and the place. It would be rather hard on him not to be able to use things as he likes.

*Mr. Algie.* What a pleasure it must be to Paul to have you and the little ones living here. He certainly owes you a debt of gratitude. Man was not born to live alone.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* Well, I think we have done him good. He hasn't done anything for years, except mope about the house and cut the bushes into those absurd shapes, and now we are trying to make him live more like other people.

*Colonel Lawley.* He was always inclined to be a bit of a faddist.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* [To Mr. Algie.] Do let me give you a lesson in croquet. I have learned all the new rules. [To Mr. Joyce.] Please bring me that basket of balls. [To Colonel Lawley.] Will you bring me the mallets? Yes, I am afraid he is a faddist. We have done our best for him, but he ought to be more with men.

*Mr. Algie.* Yes, Mr. Dowler was just saying he ought to try and be made a director of the new railway.

*Colonel Lawley.* The militia – the militia.

*Mr. Joyce.* It's a great help to a man to belong to a Masonic Lodge.

*Mr. Green.* The Horticultural Society is in want of new members.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* Well, I wish he would join something.

*Enter Paul Rutledge in tinker's clothes, carrying a rabbit in his hand. Charlie Ward follows in Paul's clothes. All stand aghast.*

*Mr. Joyce.* Good God!

*[Drops basket. Colonel Lawley, who has mallets in his hand, at sight of Paul Rutledge drops them, and stands still.]*

*Mrs. Rutledge.* Paul! are you out of your mind?

*Thomas Rutledge.* For goodness' sake, Paul, don't make such a fool of yourself.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* What on earth has happened, and who on earth is that man?

*Paul Rutledge.* [*Opens gate for tinker. To Charlie Ward.*] Wait for me, my friend, down there by the cross-road.

[*Charlie Ward goes out.*]

*Mr. Green.* Has he stolen your clothes?

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh! it's all right; I have changed clothes with him. I am going to join the tinkers.

*All.* To join the tinkers!

*Paul Rutledge.* Life is getting too monotonous; I would give it a little variety. [*To Mr. Green.*] As you would say, it has been running in grooves.

*Mr. Joyce.* [*To Mrs. Rutledge.*] This is only his humbugging talk; he never believes what he says.

[*Paul Rutledge goes towards the steps.*]

*Mrs. Rutledge.* Surely you are not going into the house with those clothes?

*Paul Rutledge.* You are quite right. Thomas will go in for me. [*To Thomas Rutledge.*] Just go to my study, will you, and bring me my despatch-box; I want something from it before I go.

*Thomas Rutledge.* Where are you going to? I wish you would tell me what you are at.

*Paul Rutledge.* The despatch-box is on the top of the bureau.

[Thomas Rutledge goes out.

*Mr. Joyce.* What does all this mean?

*Paul Rutledge.* I will explain. [*Sits down on the edge of iron table.*] Did you never wish to be a witch, and to ride through the air on a white horse?

*Mr. Joyce.* I can't say I ever did.

*Paul Rutledge.* Never? Only think of it – to ride in the darkness under the stars, to make one's horse leap from cloud to cloud, to watch the sea glittering under one's feet and the mountain tops going by.

*Colonel Lawley.* But what has this to do with the tinkers?

*Paul Rutledge.* As I cannot find a broomstick that will turn itself into a white horse, I am going to turn tinker.

*Mr. Dowler.* I suppose you have some picturesque idea about these people, but I assure you, you are quite wrong. They are nothing but poachers.

*Mr. Algie.* They are nothing but thieves.

*Mr. Joyce.* They are the worst class in the country.

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh, I know that; they are quite lawless. That is what attracts me to them. I am going to be irresponsible.

*Mr. Green.* One cannot escape from responsibility by joining a set of vagabonds.

*Paul Rutledge.* Vagabonds – that is it. I want to be a vagabond, a wanderer. As I can't leap from cloud to cloud I want to wander from road to road. That little path there by the clipped edge goes up to the highroad. I want to go up that path and to walk along

the highroad, and so on and on and on, and to know all kinds of people. Did you ever think that the roads are the only things that are endless; that one can walk on and on and on, and never be stopped by a gate or a wall? They are the serpent of eternity. I wonder they have never been worshipped. What are the stars beside them? They never meet one another. The roads are the only things that are infinite. They are all endless.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* But they must stop when they come to the sea?

*Paul Rutledge.* Ah! you are always so wise.

*Mr. Joyce.* Stop talking nonsense, Paul, and throw away those filthy things.

*Paul Rutledge.* That would be setting cleanliness before godliness. I have begun the regeneration of my soul.

*Mr. Dowler.* I don't see what godliness has got to do with it.

*Mr. Algie.* Nor I either.

*Paul Rutledge.* There was a saint who said, "I must rejoice without ceasing, although the world shudder at my joy." He did not think he could save his soul without it. I agree with him, and as I was discontented here, I thought it time to make a change. Like that worthy man, I must be content to shock my friends.

*Mr. Dowler.* But you had everything here you could want.

*Paul Rutledge.* That's just it. You who are so wealthy, you of all people should understand that I want to get rid of all that responsibility, answering letters and so on. It is not worth the trouble of being rich if one has to answer letters. Could you ever understand, Georgina, that one gets tired of many charming

things? There are family responsibilities [*to Mr. Joyce*], but I can see that you, who were my guardian, sympathize with me in that.

*Mr. Joyce.* Indeed I do not.

*Mrs. Rutledge.* I should think you could be cheerful without ceasing to be a gentleman.

*Paul Rutledge.* You are thinking of my clothes. We must feel at ease with the people we live amongst. I shall feel at ease with the great multitude in these clothes. I am beginning to be a man of the world. I am the beggarman of all the ages – I have a notion Homer wrote something about me.

*Mr. Dowler.* He is either making fun of us or talking great rot. I can't listen to any more of this nonsense. I can't see why a man with property can't let well alone. Algie are you coming my way?

[They both go into the house, and come out presently with umbrella and coat.]

*Mr. Green.* Depend upon it, he's going to write a book. There was a man who made quite a name for himself by sleeping in a casual ward.

*Paul Rutledge.* Oh! no, I'm not going to write about it; if one writes one can do nothing else. I am going to express myself in life. [*To Thomas Rutledge who has returned with box.*] I hope soon to live by the work of my hands, but every trade has to be learned, and I must take something to start with. [*To Mrs. Rutledge.*] Do you think you will have any kettles to mend when I come this way again?

*[He has taken box from Thomas Ruttledge and unlocked it.]*

*Thomas Ruttledge.* I can't make head or tail of what you are at.  
*Colonel Lawley.* What he is at is fads.

*Mr. Green.* I don't think his motive is far to seek. He has some idea of going back to the dark ages. Rousseau had some idea of the same kind, but it didn't work.

*Paul Ruttledge.* Yes; I want to go back to the dark ages.

*Mr. Green.* Do you want to lose all the world has gained since then?

*Paul Ruttledge.* What has it gained? I am among those who think that sin and death came into the world the day Newton eat the apple. *[To Mrs. Ruttledge, who is going to speak.]* I know you are going to tell me he only saw it fall. Never mind, it is all the same thing.

*Mrs. Ruttledge.* *[Beginning to cry.]* Oh! he is going mad!

*Mr. Joyce.* I'm afraid he is really leaving us.

*Paul Ruttledge.* *[Who has been looking at papers, tearing one or two, etc., takes out a packet of notes, which he puts in his breast.]* I daresay this will last me long enough, Thomas. I am not robbing you of very much. Well, good-bye. *[Pats him gently on the shoulder.]* I mustn't forget the rabbit, it may be my dinner to-night; I wonder who will skin it. Good-bye, Colonel, I think I've astonished you to-day. *[Slaps his shoulder.]* That was too hard, was it? Forgive it, you know I'm a common man now. *[Lifts his hat and goes out of gate. Closes it after him and stands with his*

*hands on it, and speaks with the voice of a common man.]* Go on, live in your poultry-yard. Scratch straw and cluck and cackle at everything that you take for a fox. [*Exit.*]

*Mr. Joyce.* [*Goes to Mrs. Rutledge, who has sat down and is wiping her eyes.*] I am very sorry for this, for his father's sake, but it may be as well in the end. If it comes to the worst, you and Thomas will keep up the family name better than he would have done.

*Mr. Dowler.* He'll find the poor very different from what he thinks when they pick his pocket.

*Colonel Lawley.* To think that a magistrate should have such fads!

*Mr. Green.* I venture to say you will see him here in a very different state of mind in a week.

*Mr. Algie.* [*Who has been in a brown study.*] He has done for himself in this world and the next. Why, he won't be asked to a single shoot if this is heard of.

*Thomas Rutledge.* [*Turning from the gate.*] Here are the children, Georgina. Don't say anything before the nurse.

*Mr. Green.* Well, I must be off. [*Goes in for stick.*]

*Mr. Joyce.* Just bring me out my coat, Green.

*[They all prepare to go. Mrs. Rutledge has gone to open gate and children come in, one in a perambulator. All gather round them admiringly.]*

*Mr. Joyce.* Have you a kiss for godfather to-day?

*Mrs. Rutledge.* The poor darlings! I hope they will never know

what has happened.

*Colonel Lawley.* Thank goodness, they have no nonsense in their heads. We know where we are with them.

Curtain.

## ACT II

*Scene: By the roadside. A wall of unmortared stone in the background. Tinkers' encampment. Men, women, and children standing round. Paul Ruttledge standing by a fire.*

*Paul Ruttledge.* What do you mean by "tinning" the soldering iron?

*Charlie Ward.* If the face of it is not well tinned it won't lift the solder. Show me here.

*[Takes soldering iron from Paul Ruttledge's hand.]*

*Paul Ruttledge.* *[Sitting down and drawing a tin can to him.]* Now, let me see how you mend this hole. It seems easy. I'm sure I will be able to learn it as well as any of you.

*[Two tinkers come and stand over him.]*

*Charlie Ward.* *[Pointing to one of them.]* This, sir, is Tommy the Song. He's the best singer we have, but the divil a much good he is only that. He's a great warrant to snare hares.

*Tommy the Song.* Is the gentleman going to join us?

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