(He goes. Mary sinks in grief, and begins to sob. The clock strikes ten.)

MARY: I won't believe it — not until I know. But — well — the day's work — I guess there's a hundred with what I got this morning!

(She rises, and takes her hat and coat.)

The curtain falls to indicate the passage of Time.

(The clock strikes four. The bell rings. After a little, enter Squiff with Jack, crouching, like persons stalking game.)

SQUIFF: Ha! we are unobserved. Now, then, go to it, kid, go to it!

JACK: I almost hate myself for having employed you to spy on my wife's actions. But it has been too much for me! Week after week no proper meals! What does she do with her allowance? She hasn't had a dress or a hat in six months. And be tween you and me, I believe there's more than my carelessness in the way my money disappears. Sixty-four dollars this very morning, or I miss my count. You have discovered all, you say?

SQUIFF: What a question to ask me, the master detective, the man who arrested Edward Kelly! Mr. Samson, it grieves me to the heart to have to break the terrible news to you, but its a cinch. Bear up, man, it's the booze. Your lady wife's a secret drinker. It is the drink! Dre-hink! Dre-hink!

JACK: I've never seen her drink in my life. It's absurd.

SQUIFF: It is on such paradoxes that detective genius has an average of over .300. I am the master detective. I arrested Edward Kelly, and believe me, I'm the wise guy. Never drink? That sort's the worst of all. Always sober, never seen to touch drop, but she'll put away her weight in whiskey in a week, gol darn it! It is one of the most paradoxical and lamentable facts in the psychopathy of the neurological diathesis of dipsomania and parallel noioplegias, b'gosh!

JACK: God! it's too dreadful. Is there no doubt possible?

SQUIFF: It is not possible for a sound ratiocinatonary apparatus which is functioning normally to enter a caveat against the ipse dixit of my ex-cathedra pronunciamento. Holy smoke, no, ahem! It's a sure thing, babe, she's doing the hula-hula with the demon Rum.

JACK: How can you be so sure?

SQUIFF: You forget! I am the master detective. I am the man who arrested Edward Kelly! And so — ah, so! Well? Ahem! I listened in. I did. It may have been unworthy, but I listened in! Ahem! Only yesterday! No sooner had your manly foot spurned the threshold of this your mansion in disdain and haste as you fled swiftly to your house of affairs — ahem! — than — ting! the masterpiece of Morse and Bell resounded. 'Twas even the sweet voice of your fair spouse — wife of your bosom, alas; that I should say it.

SQUIFF: Bosom, alas! that I should say it!

She called one Joe — I know not who he may be, this pandar to unhallowed vice and debauchery of drunkenness. She gave her order in terms that she thought darkly hidden, but to me, the master detective, the man who arrested Edward Kelly, they were alas! too clear — ahem! Too plain! Too evident! Too damnably damning, damn it! Oh, yes, ahem! "Joe!" cried she, "two hundred bucks. Wilson — that's all!" My innocent friend, "Wilson — that's all" is the advertisement of a famed brand of whiskey. It was enough. She rang off. I swooned.

JACK: Two hundred dollars worth of whiskey! The woman must be a barrel!

SQUIFF: 'Tis the dread truth! 'Twill out, wil't not, indeed, ahem?

JACK: My God, can nothing be done?

SQUIFF: First, brother in distress, we must prehoove it on her. Prehoof! Prehoof's the one best bet. Hark! my trained ear perceives a fairy foot fall. Camouflage, Mr. Samson, camouflage! Quick — in the window — bay, behind you Arras tapestry!

(They hide behind the window curtain, in the recess. Squiff keeps watch through the periscope. Enter Mary with parcels, which she leaves on the table. She looks round, as if fearing observation)

MARY: All safe here! (Aside.) Yet I am the most wretched of women. At this very moment my husband — my own husband — is ensconced within the arms of that vile sorceress, Laura Brown. The fly is in my ointment, and I cannot swat it! Accursed be him that invented hydrogen peroxide with a little ammonia in it, to be combed through the hair carefully, well into the roots! Blondes! Blondes! Blondes! Oh, mother! mother! (aloud). But to my secret joy, my only compensation in this valley of woe!

SQUIFF (in a hoarse whisper; very loud): Did you hear that, Mr. Samson? Prehoof! Prehoof I promised you, and there I am with the goods. Prehoof!

JACK (very loud): Alas! I hear you, and I am lost. But hush! will she not hear us?

SQUIFF: No fear, her mind is on the drink. Drehink! Drehink! Oh, woe! Dre-hink!

MARY: I could have sworn that I heard voices, had I not promised mother not to swear. But nothing matters now — nothing save my secret!

(She extends her arms to heaven and gives a cry as of ecstasy) Wilson — that's all!

(She goes to a cupboard and closes the door behind her.)

SQUIFF: Now, then, Mr. Samson, to the prehoof! Confront her. I'll stay hidden, and be witness. Hully gee! I'll reveal myself in my true form — aha! — at the proper moment, yes, indeed, ahem! as the master detective, the man who arrested Edward Kelly!

JACK: I'll do it, if it breaks my heart.

(He comes out and leans with folded arms against the table. Mary comes out of the cupboard.)

MARY: Jack! Why, how did you get in? I never heard you! SQUIFF (with a loud laugh): What a question to ask! All things are easy when they are taken in hand by the master detective, the man who arrested Edward Kelly!

MARY: Oh, Jack, why don't you speak? I thought I heard a voice, another voice.

JACK: It was the voice of your own guilty conscience, Mary! MARY: Jack! What do you mean? You frighten me. Why don't you kiss me? Why do you act so strangely?

JACK: Wilson - that's all!

MARY: Oh, Jack, Jack, don't!

(She comes to him, he repulses her, she begins to cry.)

SQUIFF: Aha! she trembles, she confesses, it is prehoof!

MARY: Oh, I'm sure I hear a voice!

JACK: Do you see nothing? No snakes, rats, beetles, pinktoed marmosets? Drink, wretched woman, drink! These things