

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells James Hastings Cooke
Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott
Swift Chekhov Newton



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The Great Adventure

Arnold Bennett

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CHARACTERS

ILAM CARVE	<i>An illustrious Painter</i>
ALBERT SHAWN	<i>Ilam's Valet</i>
DR. PASCOE	
EDWARD HORNING	<i>Doctor's Assistant</i>
CYRUS CARVE	<i>Ilam's Cousin, a City Auctioneer</i>
FATHER LOOE	<i>A Catholic Priest</i>
PETER HORNING	<i>A Journalist</i>
EBAG	<i>A Picture Dealer</i>
JOHN SHAWN	<i>A Curate</i>
JAMES SHAWN	<i>His Brother, a Curate</i>
LORD LEONARD ALCAR	
TEXEL	<i>An American Millionaire</i>
A WAITER	
A PAGE	
A SERVANT	

JANET CANNOT	<i>A Widow</i>
MRS. ALBERT SHAWN	
HONORIA LOOE	<i>Sister of Father Looe</i>

SCENES

ACT I

ROOM IN ILAM CARVE'S HOUSE, 126 REDCLIFFE GARDENS

ACT II

PRIVATE ROOM AT THE GRAND BABYLON HOTEL

ACT III

JANET'S SITTING-ROOM AT WERTER ROAD, PUTNEY

ACT IV

LORD LEONARD ALCAR'S STUDY, GROSVENOR GARDENS

SPECIAL NOTE. — *Each Act is divided into two scenes, separated by a passage of time more or less short. The passage of time is indicated by darkening the stage for a few moments. No change of scenery is involved.*

NOTE

The play was produced for the first time in London at the Kingway Theatre, by Granville Barker, on Tuesday, March 25th, 1913.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

ACT I

SCENE I

Front room on ground floor at 126 Redcliffe Gardens. An apartment furnished richly but in an old-fashioned way. Fine pictures. Large furniture. Sofa near centre. General air of neglect and dustiness. Carpet half-laid. Trunks and bags lying about in corners, some opened. Men's wearing apparel exposed. Mantelpiece, R., in disorder. At back double doors (ajar) leading to another room. Door, L., leading to hall and front door.

TIME. — *Evening in August.*

ALBERT SHAWN *is reclining on the sofa, fully dressed, but obviously ill: an overcoat has been drawn over his legs. A conspicuous object is a magnificent light purple dressing-gown thrown across a chair.*

Door bangs off. Enter ILAM CARVE in his shirt sleeves, hurriedly. SHAWN feebly tries to get up.

[12]

CARVE. Now, don't move. Remember you're a sick man, and forget you're a servant.

(SHAWN *shivers*. CARVE, *about to put on his dressing-gown, changes his mind, and wraps it round SHAWN as well as he can. CARVE then puts on an oldish coat.*)

SHAWN. (*Feebly.*) You've been very quick, sir.

CARVE. I found a red lamp only three doors off. He'll be along in half a minute.

SHAWN. Did you explain what it was, sir?

CARVE. (*Genially.*) How could I explain what it was, you fool, when I don't know? I simply asked to see the doctor, and I told him

there was a fellow-creature suffering at No. 126, and would he come at once. "126?" he said, "126 has been shut up for years."

SHAWN. (*Trying to smile.*) What did you say, sir?

CARVE. I said (*articulating with clearness*) a hundred and twenty-six—and ran off. Then he yelled out after me that he'd come instantly.... I say, Shawn, we're discovered. I could tell that from his sudden change of tone. I bet the entire street knows that the celebrated Me has arrived at last. I feel like a criminal already, dashed if I don't! I wish [13]we'd gone to a hotel now. (*Walks about.*) I say, did you make up the bed?

SHAWN. I was just doing it, sir.

CARVE. But what about sheets and so on?

SHAWN. I bought some this morning, ready hemmed, sir—with those and the travelling rug—

CARVE. Well, don't you think you could work your passage out to the bed? With my help?

SHAWN. Me in your bed, sir!

CARVE. (*Genially bullying.*) Keep on in that tone—and I'll give you the sack on the spot. Now then. Try—before the doctor comes. (*Bell rings.*)

SHAWN. The bell, sir—excuse me.

CARVE. Confound—

(*Exit CARVE.*)

(*SHAWN coughs and puts a handkerchief to his mouth. CARVE returns immediately with DR. PASCOE.*)

PASCOE. (*Glancing round quickly.*) This the patient? (*Goes to SHAWN, and looks at him. Then, taking a clinical thermometer from his pocket and wiping it; with marked respect.*) Allow me to put this under your tongue for half a minute. (*Having done so, he takes SHAWN's wrist and, looking at his watch, counts the patient's pulse. Then turning to*[14]*CARVE, in a low curt voiced*) When did this begin?

CARVE. Just now. That is, he only began to complain about six o'clock. We arrived in London this morning from Madrid.

PASCOE. (*Reading thermometer.*) Temperature 104-1/2. Pulse is 140—and weak. I must have some boiling water.

CARVE. (*At a loss.*) What for?

PASCOE. What for? For a poultice.

CARVE. (*Helplessly.*) But there isn't any ... we've nothing except this spirit-lamp. (*Pointing to lamp on table.*)

PASCOE. No women in the house?

CARVE. (*With humour that the doctor declines to see.*) Not one.

PASCOE. (*Controlling his exasperation.*) Never mind. I'll run round to the surgery and get my hypodermic. (*To SHAWN, reassuringly and deferentially.*) I shall be back at once, Mr. Carve. (*To CARVE, near door.*) Keep your master well covered up—I suppose you can do that?

(*Exit.*)

CARVE. Shawn, my poor fellow, he takes you for the illustrious Ilam Carve. This is what comes of me rushing out in shirt sleeves. (*Gesture of despair.*) I can't explain it to him.

SHAWN. But— —

[15]

CARVE. It's all right. You'll be infinitely better looked after, you know, and I shall be saved from their infernal curiosity.

SHAWN. It's only this, sir. I was half-expecting a young lady to-night, sir (*very feebly*). At least, I believe she's young.

CARVE. Shawn, I've always suspected you were a bad lot. Now I know. I also know why you were so devilish anxious to put me to bed early. What am I to say to this young lady on your behalf?

(*SHAWN*worse, too ill to answer. Pause. Re-enter DR. PASCOE, very rapidly, with a large tumbler half-full of hot liquid.)

PASCOE. You may say I've been quick. (*As he bends down to SHAWN, addressing CARVE.*) Get me a wine glass of clean cold water. (*To SHAWN.*) Now, please. I want you to drink a little brandy and water. (*SHAWN*makes no response.) By Jove! (*The doctor pours some of the brandy and water down SHAWN's throat.*)

CARVE. (*Who has been wandering about vaguely.*) I don't think we've got a wine glass. There's a cup, but I suppose that isn't medical enough.

PASCOE. (*Taking a syringe from his pocket and [16]unscrewing it.*) Pour some water in it. (*CARVEobeys.*) Now, hold it.

CARVE. (*Indicating syringe.*) What is this device? PASCOE. This device? I'm going to get some strychnine into him by injection. Steady with that cup, now!

(*Pascoe drops a tablet into the syringe and screws it up again, draws a little water up into the syringe and shakes the syringe. Then he goes to SHAWN to make the injection, on the top side of the patient's forearm. CARVE still holds the cup out mechanically.*)

PASCOE. I've done with that cup.

CARVE. (*Putting the cup down.*) Might I ask what's the matter with him?

PASCOE. Pneumonia is the matter.

(*Noise of some one in the hall.*)

CARVE. (*Startled.*) Surely that's some one in the hall.

PASCOE. Keep perfectly calm, my man. It's my assistant. I left the door open on purpose for him. He's got the poultice and things. (*In a loud voice as he finishes the injection.*) Come along, come along there. This way.

(*Enter EDWARD HORNING with poultice, lint, bandages, etc.*)

PASCOE. Found the antiphlogistine?[17]

EDWARD. Yes. (*He looks at patient, and exchanges a glance with PASCOE.*)

PASCOE. Where's the bedroom?

CARVE. There's one there. (*Pointing to double doors.*)

PASCOE. (*To HORNING.*) We'll get him into bed now. (*To CARVE.*) Bed ready?

CARVE. Yes. I—I think he was just making it up.

PASCOE. (*Startled.*) Does he make up his own bed?

CARVE. (*Perceiving the mistake, but resuming his calm.*) Always.

PASCOE. (*Controlling his astonishment; looking through double doors and opening them wider. To HORNING.*) Yes, this will do. Put those things down here a minute while we lift him.

(*PASCOE and HORNING then carry the inanimate form of SHAWN into the room behind, while CARVE hovers about uselessly.*)

CARVE. Can I do anything?

PASCOE. (*Indicating a chair furthest away from the double doors.*) You see that chair?

CARVE. I see it.

PASCOE. Go and sit on it.

(*Exeunt PASCOE and HORNING, back, closing double door's.*) [18] (*After walking about, CARVE sits down on another chair. A bell rings twice. He pays no attention. Then enter JANET CANNOT, L. CARVE jumps up, but is inarticulate, though very favourably interested.*)

JANET. (*Smiling sympathetically.*) I rang twice.

CARVE. The bell must be out of order.

JANET. I couldn't be sure, but I don't think it's the bell that's out of order.

CARVE. Oh! You think I'm out of order.

JANET. No. I was thinking that you'd only just come into the house—all you famous folk—and you hadn't quite got it straight yet—as it were. (*Looking vaguely at room.*)

CARVE. All we famous folk?

JANET. Well—I don't know myself about that sort of thing.

CARVE. What sort of thing?

JANET. Picture-painting, isn't it? I mean real pictures done by hand, coloured—

CARVE. Ah—yes.

JANET. (*After a slight pause.*) It struck me all of a sudden, while I was waiting at the door, that it might have been left open on purpose.

CARVE. The front door? On purpose? What for?

JANET. Oh—for some one particular to walk in without any fuss. So in I stepped.

[19]

CARVE. You're the young lady that Mr. Shawn's expecting— — (*Going towards passage.*)

JANET. (*Stopping him.*) It's shut now. You don't want *everybody* walking in, do you?

CARVE. (*Looking at JANET with pleasure.*) So you're the young lady— Mrs. — Miss — —

JANET. (*Ignoring his question.*) Was it a message you had for me?

CARVE. No, no. Not a message.... But—the fact is, we're rather upset here for the moment.

JANET. Yes. Illness.

CARVE. Now, if it isn't an indiscreet question, how *did* you know that there was illness?

JANET. I was standing looking at this house and wondering whether I shouldn't do better to go right back home there and then. But "No," I said, "I've begun, and I'll go through with it."—Well, I was standing there when what should I see but a parlour maid pop up from the area steps next door, and she says to me over the railings, "The doctor's just been." Just like that, excited. So I said, "Thank you, miss." I hope it's nothing serious?

CARVE. Pneumonia.

JANET. Pneumonia. What a mercy!

CARVE. Mercy?

JANET. If you look at it sensibly it's about [20]the best illness anybody could have in hot weather like this. You've got to keep them warm. The weather does it for you. If it was typhoid now, and

you'd got to keep them cool—that *would* be awkward. Not but it passes me how anybody can catch pneumonia in August.

CARVE. Coming over from the Continent.

JANET. Oh! the Continent. It's not Mr. Shawn that's ill?

CARVE. (*Hesitating.*) Mr. Shawn? Oh no, no! It's Ilam Carve.

JANET. (*Half whispering. Awed.*) Oh, *him!* Poor thing. And nobody but men in the house.

CARVE. And who told you *that*?

JANET. Well! (*waves her hand to indicate the state of the room, smiling indulgently*) I always feel sorry for gentlemen when they have to manage for themselves, even if they're well and hearty. But when it comes to illness—I can't bear to think about it. Still, everybody has their own notions of comfort. And I've no doubt he'll very soon be better.

CARVE. You think he will?

JANET. (*Blandly cheerful.*) As a general rule, you may say that people do get better. That's my experience. Of course sometimes they take a longish time. And now and then one dies—else what use would cemeteries be? [21]But as a general rule they're soon over it. Now am I going to see Mr. Shawn, or shall I—

CARVE. Well, if you *could* call again—

JANET. You say you hadn't a message?

CARVE. Not precisely a message. But if you could call again—

JANET. When?

CARVE. (*Rather eagerly.*) Any time. Any time. Soon.

JANET. Night after to-morrow?

CARVE. Why not morning?

JANET. Perhaps morning is safer. Thank you. Very well, then. Day after to-morrow.... I suppose Mr. Shawn has a rare fine situation here?

CARVE. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) Nothing to complain of, if you ask me.

(JANET offers her hand quite simply. The double doors open, CARVE looks alarmed.)

JANET. Thank you very much. I think I can open the front door myself.

CARVE. I say — you won't forget?

JANET. Well, what do *you* think?

(Exit, L.)

(Enter DR. PASCOE through double doors.)

PASCOE. (At double doors, to HORNING invisible behind.) Then there's no reason why the nurse at Edith Grove shouldn't come along here.

HORNING. (Off.) Yes. She'll be free in an hour.

[22] PASCOE. All right. I'll look in there.

HORNING. (Nervous.) What am I to do if his respiration — —

PASCOE. (Interrupting.) Don't worry. I'm not gone yet. I must just clean up my hypodermic. Shut those doors.

(HORNING obeys.)

CARVE. What's this about a nurse?

PASCOE. (Busy with syringe, water, and syringe-case.) I'm sending one in. (Ironically.) Do you see any objection?

CARVE. On the contrary, I should like him to be treated with every care. He's invaluable to me.

PASCOE. (Staggered.) Invaluable to *you*! Of course in my line of business I get used to meeting odd people — —

CARVE. (Recovering from his mistake.) But you think I carry oddness rather far?

PASCOE. The idea did pass through my mind.

CARVE. Nervousness — nothing but nervousness. I'm very nervous. And then — you know the saying — like master, like man.

PASCOE. (Indicating back room with a gesture; in a slightly more confidential tone as CARVE'S personal attractiveness gains on him.) Mr. Carve odd?

CARVE. Oh, very. Always was. Ever since I've known him. You remember his first picture at the Academy?

[23]PASCOE. No, not exactly.

CARVE. Either you remember it exactly or you don't remember it at all. Life-size picture of a policeman blowing his whistle.

PASCOE. Yes; it must have been odd, that must.

CARVE. Not a bit. The oddness of the fellow — —

PASCOE. What 'fellow' — your governor?

CARVE. (*Nods.*) His oddness came out in this way — although the thing had really a great success, from that day to this he's never painted another life-size picture of a policeman blowing his whistle.

PASCOE. I don't see anything very odd there — —

CARVE. Don't you? Well, perhaps you don't go in for art much. If you did, you'd know that the usual and correct thing for a painter who has made a great success with a life-size picture of a policeman blowing his whistle, is to keep on doing life-size pictures of a policeman blowing his whistle for ever and ever, so that the public can always count on getting from him a life-size picture of a policeman blowing his whistle.

PASCOE. I observe you are one of those comic valets. Nervousness again, no doubt.

CARVE. (*Smiling and continuing.*) Seeing the way he invariably flouted the public, it's always been a mystery to me how he managed to make a name, to say nothing of money.

[24]

PASCOE. Money! He must make pots. You say I don't go in for art much, but I always read the big sales at Christie's. Why, wasn't it that policeman picture that Lord Leonard Alcar bought for 2000 guineas last year?

CARVE. No, not Alcar. I think the bobby was last bought by Texel.

PASCOE. Texel? Who's Texel?

CARVE. Collector — United States — one of their kings, I'm told.

PASCOE. Oh, him! Controls all the ink in the United States.

CARVE. Really! That's what I should call influence. No. It was the "Pelicans feeding their Young" that Alcar bought. Four thousand. You're getting mixed up.

PASCOE. Perhaps I am. I know I'm constantly seeing Mr. Carve's name in connection with Lord Leonard Alcar's. It's a nice question which is the best known of the two.

CARVE. Then the—governor really is famous in England? You see we never come to England.

PASCOE. Famous—I should think he was. Aren't they always saying he's the finest colourist since Titian? And look at his prices!

CARVE. Yes. I've looked at his prices. Titian's prices are higher, but Titian isn't what you'd call famous with the general public, is he? [25]What I want to know is—is the governor famous among the general public?

PASCOE. Yes.

CARVE. About how famous should you say he is?

PASCOE. (*Hesitating.*) Well—(*abruptly*) that's a silly question.

CARVE. No, it isn't. Is he as famous as—er—Harry Lauder?

PASCOE. (*Shakes his head.*) You mustn't go to extremes.

CARVE. Is he as famous as Harry Vardon?

PASCOE. Never heard of him.

CARVE. I only see these names in the papers. Is he as famous as Bernard Shaw?

PASCOE. Yes, I should say he was.

CARVE. Oh, well that's not so bad. Better than I thought! It's so difficult to judge where one is—er—personally concerned. Especially if you're never on the spot.

PASCOE. So it's true Mr. Carve never comes to England?

CARVE. Why should he come to England? He isn't a portrait painter. It's true he owns this house, but surely that isn't sufficient excuse for living in a place like England?

PASCOE. Of course, if you look at it like that, there's no particular attractiveness in England that I've ever seen. But that answer wouldn't satisfy Redcliffe Gardens. Redcliffe Gardens [26] is persuaded that there must be a special reason.

CARVE. Well, there is.

PASCOE. (*Interested, in spite of himself.*) Indeed!

CARVE. (*Confidentially.*) Have a cigarette? (*Offering case.*)

PASCOE. (*Staggered anew, but accepting.*) That's a swagger case.

CARVE. Oh! (*Calmly.*) He gave it me.

PASCOE. Really?

CARVE. Well, you see we're more like brothers—been together so long. He gives me his best suits too. Look at this waistcoat. (*Motions the hypnotised PASCOE to take a chair. They light their cigarettes.*)

(*Enter HORNING.*)

PASCOE. (*Somewhat impatient.*) He's not worse already?

HORNING. Where's that brandy and water?

PASCOE. Be careful. He's had about enough of that.

HORNING. Seeing I've had no dinner yet—I thought it might suit me. (*Exit with tumbler.*)

PASCOE. (*To Carve with renewed eagerness.*) So there is a special reason why you keep out of England.

CARVE. Yes—shyness.

[27] PASCOE. How—shyness?

CARVE. Just simple shyness. Shyness is a disease with the governor, a perfect disease.

PASCOE. But everyone's shy. The more experience I get the more convinced I am that we're all shy. Why, you were shy when you came to fetch me!

CARVE. Did you notice it?

PASCOE. Of course. And I was shy when I came in here. I was thinking to myself, "Now I'm going to see the great Ilam Carve ac-

tually in the flesh," and I was shy. You'd think my profession would have cured me of being shy, but not a bit. Nervous disease, of course! Ought to be treated as such. Almost universal. Besides, even if he is shy, your governor—even if he's a hundredfold shy, that's no reason for keeping out of England. Shyness is not one of those diseases you can cure by change of climate.

CARVE. Pardon me. My esteemed employer's shyness is a special shyness. He's only shy when he has to play the celebrity. So long as people take him for no one in particular he's quite all right. For instance, he's never shy with me. But instantly people approach him as the celebrity, instantly he sees in the eye of the beholder any consciousness of being in the presence of a toff—then he gets desperately shy, and his one desire is [28]to be alone at sea or to be buried somewhere deep in the bosom of the earth. (PASCOE*laughs.*) What are you laughing at? (CARVE*also laughs.*)

PASCOE. Go on, go on. I'm enjoying it.

CARVE. No, but seriously! It's true what I tell you. It amounts almost to a tragedy in the brilliant career of my esteemed. You see now that England would be impossible for him as a residence. You see, don't you?

PASCOE. Quite.

CARVE. Why, even on the Continent, in the big towns and the big hotels, we often travel incognito for safety. It's only in the country districts that he goes about under his own name.

PASCOE. So that he's really got no friends?

CARVE. None, except a few Italian and Spanish peasants—and me.

PASCOE. Well, well! It's an absolute mania then, this shyness.

CARVE. (*Slightly hurt.*) Oh, not so bad as that! And then it's only fair to say he has his moments of great daring—you may say rashness.

PASCOE. All timid people are like that.

CARVE. Are they? (*Musing.*) We're here now owing to one of his moments of rashness.