

ACT I.

FIRST SCENE.

[A stage. Darkness. We cannot see the stage. It may be a mountain-top or the big intestine of a sunk submarine. Shaft of weak light reveals a figure. We make it out to be a man. ~~and~~ He talks. We haven't got to listen to him or even see him. In fact we can eliminate him altogether. He is both extraneous and unnecessary. Whatever he says and does have no bearing on what follows. But he is an obstinate character; he insists on making an appearance. We shall meet him again].

MAN. I am called Lingus. I'm a pedestrian troubadour and a bit mad. Most like the rest - they don't know it. I like to confide in you. I cannot. To tell you what this is - when it takes place and where. But I cannot tell you because I don't know. Between you and me I don't think that neither he, the puppet master, really knows. He tells me this: You are nothing - he refers to me, me, I'm nothing! I come out, like the vapour of soap and become solid. You see me, he says, and the other solid ~~beams~~, like ^{we are} real. But we are not real. We are simply automata with a shape and conceived to kick. We ~~remain~~ ^{are} humming, even if we kick, by the inexorable laws of chance. You see us, maybe feel and suffer with us. We engage your attention. But you cannot be involved with us unless ^{struck by a sharp light - the} ~~we strike you by~~ realisation of our own reality. But we are outward and some of us are full of ~~curiosities~~.

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Footnote:

Since the settlement of Utrecht in 1713 England only twice engaged in wars of her own making and not on the side of some other power only twice. ~~And~~ Those two were colonial wars. The first was the American war of independence when as a result of a treaty negotiated by Benjamin Franklin and the French in 1778 the French promised to make common cause with the American Colonies till independence was won. Spain ~~and Holland~~ and the Netherlands intervened in that war against Britain and seized the first by seizing British posts in Florida and the second by fighting actively against Britain. Catherine the II of Russia formed a League of Armed Neutrality which proved of assistance to the revolutionaries. Britain was defeated militarily and diplomatically and the American colonies won their independence.

The second was the South African war at the close of last century. Feeling and interest rallied practically the whole of Europe against Britain. An ~~series~~ ^{initial} of military reverse had a sobering effect on British overconfidence but ~~not~~ the European Germans' attitude during that period was decisive in preventing a continental bloc from being formed against Britain. Britain woke up with a startle to the danger ~~was~~ possible by her aggressiveness.