JEPPE OF THE HILL

Ludvig Holberg

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INTRODUCTION

Ludvig Holberg is generally considered the most remarkable of Danish writers. Though he produced books on international law, finance, and history, as well as satires, biographies, and moral essays, he is chiefly celebrated for his comedies, which still nearly two hundred years after then composition delight large audiences in Denmark, and bid fair to be immortal. These comedies were the fruit of the author's actual experience; they are closely related to his other works and reflect the range and diversity of his pursuits. To understand fully Holberg's creations, one must first become acquainted with the events of his life.

Ludvig Holberg was born in Bergen, December 3, 1684, of good parentage on both sides. His mother was a granddaughter of a distinguished bishop, and his father an army officer who had risen from the ranks by personal merit. Bergen had long been a trading−post of the Hanseatic League, and in the seventeenth centurv was distinctly cosmopolitan in character. Perhaps as a result of his environment, Holberg seemed early to have acquired a desire to travel. In any case, he devoted most of the years of his young manhood to seeing the woild.

In 1704, shortly after receiving his degree at the University of Copenhagen, he made a journey to the Netherlands. About a year later, he went to England, where he spent more than two years, partly in Oxford and partly in London, studying history and absorbing new ideas. In

1708, as the tutor of a young Danish boy, he visited Dresden, Leipzig, and Halle. Soon after his return to Copenhagen, he obtained a small stipend in a foundation for students, called Borch's College, While there he wrote two historical treatises of enough value to win him an appointment as "extraordinary" professor in the university. Though this position gave him the right to the first vacancy that might occur in the faculty, it did not entitle him to any salary, and it was only through the good offices of a friend at court that he obtained a stipend of about $150 a year for four years, during which time he was to be a sort of travelling fellow of the university. In the spring of 1714, Holberg, then thirty years of age, left Copenhagen for his fourth journey abroad.

This excursion was far more extensive and picturesque than any he had undertaken before. He travelled first to Paris, by way of Amsterdam and Brussels, and later to Genoa and Rome, by way of Marseilles. Except for the necessary sea voyages, most of the journey was made on foot. After staying in Rome for six months, harassed the entire time by malarial fever, he turned his face towards home. In order to escape the discomforts and perils of travel by sea, he decided to return to Paris overland, and walked from Rome to Florence in fourteen days. Finding his health improved by the regular exercise, he continued on foot over the Alps to Lyons, and subsequently to Paris and Copenhagen, where he arrived in the autumn of 1716. Holberg had gone abroad to satisfy his keen intellectual curiosity; he remained to study in foreign lands, and to observe life as a philosopher and artist. Without his seemingly aimless years of wandering, he might conceivably have become an able historian; he could hardly have developed his brilliant talent for satire and comedy.

When Holberg returned home, he found no vacancy in the faculty. While waiting in penury for the death of some professor, he wrote one of his most successful works of scholarship, an Introduction to International Law. At last,

in December, 1717, he inherited, as it were, the chair of metaphysics in the university, being thus forced to begin his academic career by teaching a subject that he held in contempt. Fortunately this situation was not permanent. In 1719, he became professor of Latin; in the following year, a member of the university council; later in life, professor of history, the subject he liked best; and finally he was elected treasurer of the corporation. Holberg was thus associated all his life with academic pursuits. The greater part of his intellectual work was devoted to regular university duties and to the composition of scholarly treatises and moral essays, while the writing of the comedies that won him permanent fame formed but a short interlude in his busy life. He became a dramatist almost by chance.

In 1721, some influential citizens of Copenhagen decided that the time was ripe for establishing native drama in Denmark. A company was formed under the direction of a cashiered French actor, Montaigu, who obtained royal permission to bring out plays in Danish. Holberg, having become well known by his mock−heroic poem Peder Paars, was at once invited to furnish the company with original comedies, and responded enthusiastically. For the next few months he wrote with almost incredible swiftness, and by the time the theatre was opened, on August 23, 1722, he had finished five of his best plays, among which were Jeppe of the Hill (Jeppe paa Bjerget) and The Political Tinker (Den politiske Kandestober). During the six years in which the company eked out its precarious existence, Holberg produced twenty−six comedies, most of which were successfully performed. His literary fecundity seems the more remarkable when it is remembered that he had no Danish models.

The theatre was not well supported by the public. After the first year, the receipts of an evening amounted to no more than $13, and sometimes the actors were compelled to tell the spectators who had gathered that they could not afford to present the play to so small an audience. In 1728, the company was at last granted a royal subvention of about $2500 a year by Frederick VI, and it had begun to play under the proud title of Royal Actors, when Copenhagen was swept by a devastating fire. The theatre itself was not destroyed, but the town was so badly impoverished that for the moment all forms of public amusement had to be discontinued. Furthermore, the pietists, to whose doctrines the crown prince was a devout adherent, asserted that the fire was God's scourge for the wickedness of Copenhagen, the most impudent form of which, they believed, was the drama. Before conditions in the city were enough improved to warrant the resumption of his subsidy to the actors, the king died, on October 12, 1730. Under the reign of his pietistic successor, Christian VI (1730−1746), no dramatic performances of any sort were sanctioned; the theatre building was sold at auction, the company disbanded, and Holberg ceased writing plays.

In the year of Christian VI's accession to the throne, Holberg was made Professor of History at the university. Pietist though he was, the new monarch was an enthusiastic patron of scholarship, and during his reign Holberg devoted himself almost exclusively to research, particularly for his History of Denmark, on which his present reputation as an historian rests. The one important work of pure literature that he produced at this time was his Niels Klim's Subterranean Journey (1741), written in Latin, and published in Leipzig to evade the Danish censor. It is an account of a series of visits that Niels Klim pays to certain strange nations within the hollow of the earth. Like Robinson Crusoe, its partial prototype, it contains much pointed satire on the customs of contemporary society. It was soon translated into most other languages of Europe, and it is one of the very few among Holberg's works that have been put into English in any form.

At the death of Christian VI, in 1746, the obscurantist character of the court immediately changed. One of the first forms of amusement to be restored was the Danish theatre. Although Holberg had no official connection with the actors, he seems to have agreed to advise them about their repertory, and soon his association with the stage revived his inteiest in dramatic composition. During the year 1751−52, he wrote six new plays, but they lacked the spirited criticism of contemporary society which gave life to his earlier work. They are either founded on Latin models, or are heavily didactic plays, in which the author's humor fails under the burden of the moral.

The latter part of Holberg's life was spent in peace and affluence. His interests were more and more devoted to his large estates, and particularly to improving the conditions under which his own peasants labored. In 1747, he was

elevated to the rank of baron, after bequeathing his estates to the crown to endow the old academy at Soroe. He died on January 28, 1754, and was buried in the abbey church of Soroe, beside the great Bishop Absalom.

The plays in this volume will give a fair idea of Holberg's best work. They are all domestic comedies of character, in which the foibles of some one central figure are held up to ridicule, particularly as they are revealed in his relations with a well−defined family group. The scene in such comedies, usually the home of a peasant or a member of the bourgeoisie, is pictured with uncompromising realism. Holberg insisted that his audiences should see everything that he saw. If a Danish peasant actually lay at times in a drunken stupor on a dunghill, he saw no reason why Jeppe should not appear on the stage in an equally disgusting condition. If a peasant girl in life was not averse to simpering vulgarity, why should Lisbed talk any more circumspectly to Erasmus Montanus? Holberg, however, had none of the interest of the modern scientific naturalist in analyses of motive and conduct. His sense of fact was, therefore, picturesque rather than profound. Yet he never wasted his accurate realism upon insignificant things. Vulgar facts invariably led beyond themselves to situations of universal interest and significance.

"Jeppe of the Hill" is a very old story The original version is found in the "Arabian Nights," and it has been told over and over again. Shakespeare embodies it in "The Taming of the Shrew," and seven other versions occur in Elizabethan literature alone. This hackneyed farce, amplified by material from Biedermann's "Utopia," Holberg made the vehicle of profound delineation of character Dr. Georg Brandes says of Jeppe, "All that we should like to know of a man when we become acquainted with him, and much more than we usually do know of men with whom we become acquainted in real life or in drama, we know of Jeppe. All our questions are answered." [Footnote: "Om Ludvig Holbergs Jeppe paa Bjerget,"] We know not only how he has lived, but even how he will meet death. Jeppe possesses enough of the common stuff of human nature always to awaken comprehension and delight; yet he is more than an extraordinarily complete and convincing individual, and his story is more than an amusing farce. Widely prevalent social conditions of a past time are here expressed in human terms of lasting truth and vitality. In Jeppe the peasant of the eighteenth−century Sjaelland lives for all time.

The Political Tinker, while it contains no such deep study of personality as Jeppe of the Hill, is no less clearly a comedy of character and no less obviously a good human satire. In it the foibles of the central figure are displayed more definitely in their relation to the rest of his family. [Footnote: The play is probably founded upon the story of the political upholsterer which appears in an essay of The Tatler. For a general discussion of Holberg's relations to foreign literature, the reader is referred to The Comedies of Holberg, by O. J. Campbell, Jr. (Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, vol. iii, Harvard University Press, 1914). This is the only full treatment of Holberg in English. Ed.] "The satire," says Holberg, in his introduction to the first published edition of the play, "is directed against those boasters among common people in free cities who sit in taverns and criticise the mayor and Council; they know everything and yet nothing.... I doubt if any one can show me a comedy more honorable and more moral.... The comedy, besides, is not less merry than moral, for it has kept spectators laughing from beginning to end, and for that reason, of all my comedies, it is played with the greatest profit for those concerned." The word "moral" as applied to this work illustrates the somewhat unusual meaning which Holberg attaches to it. Though he is continually at pains to speak of his "moral" comedies, it is manners and not morals that he satirizes. He is interested, not so much in effecting a fundamental reform in the lives of his characters, as in giving them a little social sense. He preaches, not against distinct moral turpitude like hypocrisy and avarice, but against inordinate affection for lap−dogs (Melampe), pietistic objections to masked balls {Masquerades}, and superstitious belief in legerdemain (Witchcraft). Holberg voices the urbane humanistic spirit that characterized the eighteenth century at its best.

Erasmus Montanus seems at first sight a mere farce, in which the author ridicules academic pedantry and the vapid formalism of logic as once taught at the University of Copenhagen. But it is much more than that. Holberg gives us a memorable series of genre paintings of Danish life of his day, and at the same time presents a situation of universal interest. Erasmus is a prig who has adopted some new ideas, not so much from righteous conviction as from the feeling that they will give him intellectual caste. His revolutionary theories raise an uproar in the

village. Each apostle of the old order opposes them in his characteristic way, and Erasmus has not enough real faith within himself to prevail against the combined attacks of the Philistines; he renounces with oaths the assertions that the world is round. Still, there is nothing tragic in his renunciation, for we feel that he is as great a fool as any one in the play. Erasmus Montanus is a pure comedy, in which the author's humor plays freely upon all the figures in the drama; and it is just because the characters rather than the action absorb our interest that we do not regard it as a farce. Professor Vilhelm Andersen correctly described it as a "Danish culture−comedy of universal significance."

Holberg is often called the Danish Moliere. It is true that he learned many lessons of technique from the great trench dramatist, and borrowed freely and often from his work; but he differs from Moliere both in the quality of his humor and in the spirit that animates his critical view of life. He might as justly be called the Danish Plautus, or the Danish Spectator. The truth is, not only that Holberg possessed a profoundly original comic spirit, but also that his work is clearly related to many dramatic and literary traditions besides those of French comedy, notably to the commedia dell'arte, and the essays of The Tatler and The Spectator. Out of these various and diverse elements, nevertheless, he contrived to construct dramas at once original and national.

In a large sense, Holberg's comedies arc closely related to the rest of his work. His treatises, histories, essays, satires, and comedies are all diverse expressions of one definite purpose. Holberg's early life and natural cosmopolitan interests made him a citizen of eighteenth−century Europe, as a whole, and he strove steadily to bear the intellectual light of that urbane age to his native country, then backward in culture. Holberg professor, scholar, and philosopher seized with avidity the opportunity to write comedy, not from a desire to display his own versatility, or from an absorbing devotion to the drama as a form of art, but because he believed that through his plays he could fulfil most completely what he conceived to be his intellectual mission.

OSCAR JAMES CAMPBELL, JR.

May 20, 1914

JEPPE OF THE HILL OR THE TRANSFORMED PEASANT [JEPPE PAA BIERGET]

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS 1722

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JEPPE OF THE HILL, a peasant.

NILLE, his wife.

JACOB SHOEMAKER, an innkeeper.

BARON NILUS, lord of the district.

Secretary to the Baron.

ERIC, a lackey.

A Valet.

MAGNUS, the village gossip.

A Judge, two Lawyers, two Doctors, a Bailiff and his Wife, Lackeys, Retainers, and others.

ACTS I, IV, AND V

SCENE: A village road; on the left, Jeppe's house; on the right, Jacob Shoemaker's inn. The court in Act IV is held in the open, and a tree is used for the gallows in Act V.

ACT II

A bedroom in the Baron's castle.

ACT III

Dining−room in the same.

ACT I

SCENE I

(Nille, alone.)

NILLE. I hardly believe there's such another lazy lout in all the village as my husband, it's as much as I can do to get him up in the morning by pulling him out of bed by the hair. The scoundrel knows to−day is market−day, and yet he lies there asleep at this hour of the morning. The pastor said to me the other day, "Nille, you are much too hard on your husband; he is and he ought to be the master of the house." But I answered him, "No, my good pastor! If I should let my husband have his way in the household for a year, the gentry wouldn't get their rent nor the pastor his offering, for in that length of time he would turn all there was in the place into drink. Ought I let a man rule the household who is perfectly ready to sell his belongings and wife and children and even himself for brandy?" The pastor had nothing to say to that, but stood there stroking his chin. The bailiff agrees with me, and says, "My dear woman, pay no attention to the pastor. It's in the wedding−service, to be sure, that you must honor and obey your husband, but it's in your lease, which is more recent than the service, that you shall keep up your farm and meet your rent a thing you can never do unless you haul your husband about by the hair every day and beat him to his work."

I pulled him out of bed just now and went out to the barn to see how things were getting along, when I came in again, he was sitting on a chair, asleep, with his breeches saving your presence pulled on one leg; so the switch had to come down from the hook, and my good Jeppe got a basting till he was wide awake again. The only thing he is afraid of is "Master Eric," as I call the switch. Hey, Jeppe, you cur, haven't you got into your clothes yet? Would you like to talk to Master Eric some more? Hey, Jeppe! Come in here!

SCENE 2

(Enter Jeppe.)

JEPPE. I've got to have time to get dressed, Nille! I can't go to town like a hog without my breeches or my jacket.

NILLE. Scurvy−neck! Haven't you had time to put on ten pairs of breeches since I waked you this morning?

JEPPE. Have you put away Master Eric, Nille?

NILLE. Yes, I have, but I know mighty well where to find him again, if you don't step lively. Come here! See how he crawls. Come here! You must go to town and buy me two pounds of soft soap, here's the money for it.

But see here, if you're not back on this very spot inside of four hours, Master Eric will dance the polka on your back.

JEPPE. How can I walk four leagues in four hours, Nille?

NILLE. Who said anything about walking, you cuckold? You run . I've said my say once for all, now do as you like. [Exit Nille.]

SCENE 3

JEPPE. Now the sow's going in to eat her breakfast, while I, poor devil, must walk four leagues without bite or sup. Could any man have such a damnable wife as I have? I honestly think she's own cousin to Lucifer. Folks in the village say that Jeppe drinks, but they don't say why Jeppe drinks: I didn't get as many blows in all the ten years I was in the militia as I get in one day from my malicious wife. She beats me, the bailiff drives me to work as if I were an animal, and the deacon makes a cuckold of me. Haven't I good reason to drink? Don't I have to use the means nature gives us to drive away our troubles? If I were a dolt, I shouldn't take it to heart so, and I shouldn't drink so much, either; but it's a well−known fact that I am an intelligent man; so I feel such things more than others would, and that's why I have to drink. My neighbor Moens Christoffersen often says to me, speaking as my good friend, "May the devil gnaw your fat belly, Jeppe! You must hit back, if you want your old woman to behave." But I can't do anything to protect myself, for three reasons: in the the first place, because I haven't any courage; in the second, because of that damned Master Eric hanging behind the bed, which my back can't think of without blubbering; and thirdly, because I am, if I do say it who shouldn't, a meek soul and a good Christian, who never tries to revenge himself, even on the deacon who puts one horn on me after another. I put my mite in the plate for him on the three holy−days, although he hasn't the decency to give me so much as one mug of ale all the year round. Nothing ever wounded me more deeply than the cutting speech he made me last year: I was telling how once a savage bull, that had never been afraid of any man, took fright at the sight of me; and he answered, "Don't you see how that happened, Jeppe? The bull saw that you had bigger horns than he, so he didn't think it prudent to lock horns with his superior." I call you to witness, good people, if such words would not pierce an honorable man to the marrow of his bones. Still, I am so gentle that I have never even wished my wife dead. On the contrary, when she lay sick of a jaundice last year, I hoped she might live; for as hell is already full of bad women, Lucifer might send her back again, and then she'd be worse than ever. But if the deacon should die, I should be glad, for my own sake and for others' as well, for he does me nothing but evil and is no use to the parish. He's an ignorant devil, for he can't sing a note, much less mould a decent wax candle. Oh, but his predecessor, Christoffer, was a different sort of fellow. He had such a voice in his time that he sang down twelve deacons in the Credo. Once I started to quarrel openly with the deacon, when Nille herself heard him call me a cuckold. I said, "May the devil be your cuckold, deacon!" But what good did it do? Master Eric came right down off the wall to stop the quarrel, and my back got such a drubbing that I had to ask the deacon's leave to thank him, that he, as a well−educated man, should do such an honor to our house. Since that time I haven't thought of making any opposition. Yes, yes, Moens Christoffersen! You and the other peasants can very well talk, because your wives haven't any Master Eric hanging behind the bed. If I had one wish in the world, it would be either that my wife had no arms, or that I had no back. She may use her mouth as much as she pleases. But I must stop at Jacob Shoemaker's on the way he'll surely let me have a pennyworth of brandy on credit for I must have something to quench my thirst. Hey, Jacob Shoemaker! Are you up yet? Open the door, Jacob!

SCENE 4

(Enter Jacob Shoemaker, in his shirt.)

JACOB. Who the dickens wants to get in so early?

JEPPE. Good morning to you, Jacob Shoemaker.

JACOB. Thank you, Jeppe! You are up and about bright and early to−day.

JEPPE. Let us have a pennyworth of brandy, Jacob!

JACOB. With all my heart, when you show me the penny.

JEPPE. I'll give it to you when I come back here tomorrow.

JACOB. Jacob Shoemaker doesn't give credit, I know you must have a penny or two about you to pay with.

JEPPE. Honestly, Jacob, I have nothing but what my wife gave me to spend in town for her.

JACOB. You can easily beat them down a few pence on what you buy. What is it you're to get her?

JEPPE. I have to buy two pounds of soft soap.

JACOB. Why, can't you tell her the soap cost a penny or two more than you give for it?

JEPPE. I'm so afraid my wife would find out about it, and then I'd be in trouble.

JACOB. Nonsense! How could she find out? Can't you swear that you paid out all the money? You're as stupid as an ox.

JEPPE. That's true, Jacob! I can do that well enough.

JACOB. Out with your penny.

JEPPE. Here you are, but you must give me a penny change.

JACOB (coming in with the glass; drinks to him). Your health, Jeppe!

JEPPE. What a lot you take, you rogue!

JACOB. Oh, yes, but it's the custom for the host to drink his guest's health.

JEPPE. I know it is, but bad luck to the man that started the custom. Your health, Jacob!

JACOB. Thanks, Jeppe! You'll drink the other pennyworth next, so there's no use your troubling about change. Or do you want a glass to your credit when you come again? For I give you my word I haven't any change.

JEPPE. I'm damned if I do! If it's got to be spent, it might as well be spent now, so that I can feel I have something under my belt; but if you drink any of it, I won't pay.

JACOB. Your health!

JEPPE. God save our friends and ill befall our enemies. That does my belly good. Um−m−m.

JACOB. Good luck on your way, Jeppe.

JEPPE. Thanks, Jacob Shoemaker. (Exit Jacob.)

SCENE 5

(Jeppe feels happy and begins to sing.)

A white hen and a speckled hen
Got into a row with a rooster

Oh, if I only dared drink another pennyworth! Oh, if I only dared drink another pennyworth! I think I'll do it. No, ill will come of it. If I could once get the inn out of my sight, I shouldn't need to; but it's as if some one were holding me back. I've got to go in again. But what is this you are doing, Jeppe? I seem to see Nille standing in my path with Master Eric in her hand. I must turn round again. Oh, if I only dared drink another pennyworth! My belly says, "Do it;" my back, "Don't." Which shall I obey? Isn't my belly bigger than my back? I think it is. Shall I knock? Hey, Jacob Shoemaker, come out here! But that cursed woman comes before my eyes again. If she only didn't break the bones of my back when she beats me, I'd let her go to the devil, but she lays on like ... Oh, God help me, miserable creature! What shall I do? Control your nature, Jeppe! Isn't it a shame to get into trouble for a paltry glass of brandy? No, I shan't do it this time; I must go on. Oh, if I only dared drink another pennyworth! It was my undoing that I got a taste of it; now I can't get away from it. Go on, legs! May the devil split you if you don't! Marry, the rogues won't budge. They want to go back to the inn. My limbs wage war on each other: my belly and my legs want to go to the inn, and my back wants to go to town. Will you go on, you dogs! you beasts! you scurvy wretches! The devil take them, they will go back to the inn; I have more trouble getting my own legs away from the inn than I have getting my piebald horse out of the stable. Oh, if I only dared drink another pennyworth! Who knows but Jacob Shoemaker might trust me for a penny or two, if I begged enough? Hey, Jacob! Another twopenny glass of brandy!

SCENE 6

(Enter Jacob)

JACOB. Hello, Jeppe! back again? I thought you had had too little. What good is a farthing's worth of brandy? That's hardly enough to wet your whistle.

JEPPE. That's so, Jacob! I'll spend another farthing! (Aside .) Once I've got it down, he'll have to trust me whether he wants to or not.

JACOB. Here's your farthing's worth of brandy, Jeppe, but money first.

JEPPE. You certainly can trust me while I'm drinking, as the proverb says.

JACOB. We don't give credit on proverbs, Jeppe! If you don't pay up, you won't get a drop; we have sworn off trusting any one, even the bailiff himself.

JEPPE (weeping). Can't you really trust me? I'm an honest man .

JACOB. No credit.

JEPPE. Here's your twopence, then, you beggar! Now it's done, drink, Jeppe! Oh, that goes to the right spot.

JACOB. It certainly does warm a man's insides.

JEPPE. The best thing about brandy is that it gives you courage. Now I don't think any more about my wife or Master Eric, I've been so changed by that last glass. Do you know this song, Jacob?

Heir Peder and Kirsten sat at the table, Peteheia!
Said all the bad words that they were able, Polemeia!
In summer the happy starlings sing, Peteheia!
May devil take Nille, the dirty thing, Polemeia!
One day I went out upon the grass, Peteheia!
The deacon, he is a hangman's ass, Polemeia!
On my dappled horse I ride to the east, Peteheia!
The deacon, he is a nasty beast, Polemeia!
If you would know my wife's real name, Peteheia!
I'll tell you: it is Lust and Shame, Polemeia!

I made up that song myself, Jacob!

JACOB. The devil you did!

JEPPE. Jeppe's not as dull as you think: I've also made up a song about shoemakers, which goes like this:

The shoemaker sits with his big bass viol, Philepom, Philepom !

JACOB. You poor fool, that's about a fiddler.

JEPPE. So it is. See here, Jacob! Give me twopence worth more of brandy.

JACOB. All right; I see you're a good fellow; you don't grudge spending a penny or two in my house.

JEPPE. Hey, Jacob! make it fourpence.

JACOB. Certainly.

JEPPE. (singing again).

The earth drinks water,
The sea drinks sun,
The sun drinks sea,
Everything on earth drinks;
Why not me?

JACOB. Your health, Jeppe!

JEPPE. Mir zu!

JACOB. Here's to you in half of it!

JEPPE. Ich tank you, Jacob. Drink, man, and the devil take you and welcome!

JACOB. I see that you can talk German.

JEPPE. Yes, I have for a long time, but I don't like to except when I'm full.

JACOB. Then you must speak it at least once a day.

JEPPE. I was ten years m the militia, don't you think I ought to understand the language?

JACOB. I know, Jeppe! We were in the same company for two years.

JEPPE. So we were; I remember it now. You were hanged once when you ran away at Vissmar.

JACOB. I was going to be hanged, but I was pardoned. A miss is as good as a mile.

JEPPE. It's too bad you weren't hanged, Jacob! But weren't you with us at the auction on the heath you know the one?

JACOB. Why, where wasn't I with you?

JEPPE. I never shall forget the first salt the Swedes made. I think 3000 men or even 4000 fell all at once. Das ging fordeviled zu, Jacob! Du kannst das wohl rememberen. Ich kan nicht deny dass ich bange war at dat battle.

JACOB: Yes, yes, death is hard to face; a man always feels pious when he goes against the enemy.

Jeppe. Yes, that's so. I don't know how it happens. For I spent the whole night before the auction reading the Qualms of David.

JACOB. I wonder that you, who have been a soldier, should let yourself be browbeaten by your wife.

JEPPE. I? If I only could have her here now, you'd see how I should drub her! Another glass, Jacob! I still have eightpence, and when that's all drunk up I shall drink on credit. Give me a mug of ale, too. (Sings.)

In Leipzig war ein Mann,
In Leipzig war ein Mann,
In Leipzig war ein lederner Mann,
In Leipzig war ein lederner Mann,
In Leipzig war ein Mann.

Der Mann sie nahm ein Frau

JACOB. Your health, Jeppe!

JEPPE. Hey! he y! he y!

Here's to you, and here's to me,
And here's to all the company!

JACOB. Won't you drink the bailiff's health?

JEPPE. Sure enough; give me credit for another penny−worth. The bailiff is an honest man; when we slip a rix−dollar into his fist, he'll swear to his lordship that we can't pay our rent. Now I'm a villain if I have any more money; you must trust me for a farthing or two.

JACOB. No, Jeppe, you can't stand any more now. I'm not the kind of man to let his patrons force themselves to drink more than is good for them. I'd rather lose my trade than do that. It would be a sin .

JEPPE. Just another farthing's worth!

JACOB. No, Jeppe, you can't have any more. Just think what a long way you have to walk.

JEPPE. Cur! Carrion! Beast! Scoundrel! Hey, hey, h e y!

JACOB. Good−bye, Jeppe! Good luck to you!

[Exit Jacob.]

SCENE 7

JEPPE. Oh, Jeppe, you are as full as a beast! My legs don't want to carry me. Will you stand still, you carrion? Let's see, what time is it? Hey, Jacob, you dog of a shoemaker! I want another drink. Will you stay still, you dogs! May the devil take me if they will keep quiet. Thank you, Jacob Shoemaker! I'll have another. Listen, friend! which way does the road to town go? Stand still, I say! See, the brute is full. You drank like a rogue, Jacob! Is that a farthing's worth of brandy ... You pour like a Turk. (As he speaks, he falls and lies on the ground.)

SCENE 8

(Enter Baron Nilus, Secretary, Valet, Eric, and another Lackey .)

BARON. It looks as if we were going to have a good harvest this year; see how thick that barley is growing.

SECRETARY. True, my lord, but that means that a barrel of barley won't bring more than five marks this year.

BARON. That makes no difference. The peasants are always better off in good seasons.

SECRETARY. I don't know how that may be, my lord, but the peasants always complain and ask for seed−corn, no matter whether the year is fruitful or not. When they have something, they drink so much the more. There is an inn−keeper who lives near here, called Jacob Shoemaker, who helps a good deal to keep the peasants poor; they say he puts salt in his ale to make them thirsty so they will drink more.

BARON. We shall have to drive the fellow out. But what is that lying in the road? It must be a dead man. One hears of nothing but misfortune nowadays. Run and see what it is, one of you!

LACKEY. That is Jeppe of the Hill, whose wife is such a terror. Get up, Jeppe! No, he wouldn't wake even if we pummelled him and pulled his hair.

BARON. Let him be, then. I want to play a little joke on him . You are usually full of ingenious ideas. Can't you think of something to divert me?

SECRETARY. I think it would be good fun to tie a paper collar round his neck, or else cut off his hair.

VALET. I think it would be more amusing to smear his face with ink and then send some one to see how his wife takes it when he comes home in that condition.

BARON. That's not bad. But what do you wager that Eric won't hit on something better still? Let's hear your suggestion, Eric.

ERIC. My idea is that we take off all his clothes and put him in my lord's best bed, and in the morning when he wakes, all of us treat him as if he were the lord of the domain, so he won't know how he has got so transformed. And when we have convinced him that he is the baron, we can get him drunk again, as he is now, and lay him on the same dunghill in his own old clothes. If all this is skilfully carried out, it will work wonderfully, and he will imagine that he had dreamt of his good fortune, or has actually been in paradise.

BARON. Eric, you're a big man and therefore you have big ideas. But what if we should wake him in the process?

ERIC. I'm sure we shalln't do that, my lord! for this same Jeppe is one of the heaviest sleepers in the whole district. Last year they tried setting off a rocket under his head, but when the rocket went off he never even stirred in his sleep.

BARON. Then let us do it. Drag him right off, put a fine shirt on him, and lay him in my best bed.

ACT II

SCENE I

(Jeppe is lying in the baron's bed with a cloth−of−gold dressing−gown on a chair beside him. He wakes up, ruts his eyes, looks about, and becomes frightened; he rubs them again, puts a hand to his head, and finds a gold−embroidered nightcap on it; he moistens his fingers and wipes out his eyes, then rubs them again, turns the nightcap around and looks at it, looks at the fine shirt he is wearing, at the dressing−gown and the other fine things in the room, making strange faces. Meanwhile, soft music begins to play, and Jeppe clasps his hands and weeps. When the music stops, he speaks.)

JEPPE. What is all this? What splendor! How did I get here? Am I dreaming, or am I awake? I certainly am awake. Where is my wife, where are my children, where is my house, and where is Jeppe? Everything is changed, and I am, too Oh, what does it all mean? What does it mean? (He calls softly in a frightened voice.) Nille! Nille! Nille! I think I'm in heaven Nille! and I don't deserve to be a bit . But is this myself? I think it is, and then I think it isn't. When I feel my back, which is still sore from the last beating I got, when I hear myself speak, when I stick my tongue in my hollow tooth, I think it is myself. But when I look at my nightcap, my shirt, and all the splendor before my eyes, when I hear the delicious music, then the devil split me if I can get it through my head that it is myself. No, it is not me, I'm a thousand times a low dog if it is. But am I not dreaming? I don't think I am. I'll try and pinch my arm; if it doesn't hurt, I'm dreaming. Yes, I feel it; I'm awake, sure enough; no one could argue that, because if I weren't awake, I couldn't... But how can I be awake, now that I come to think it over? There is no question that I am Jeppe of the Hill; I know that I'm a poor peasant, a bumpkin, a scoundrel, a cuckold, a hungry louse, a maggot, a lump of carrion; then how can I be an emperor and lord of a castle? No, it's nothing but a dream. So I'd better be calm and wait till I wake up. [The music strikes up again and Jeppe bursts into tears.] Oh, can a man hear things like that in his sleep? It's impossible. But if it's a dream, I hope I may never wake, and if I am crazy, I hope I may never be sane again; I'd sue the doctor that cured me, and curse the man that waked me. But I'm neither dreaming nor crazy, for I can remember everything that has happened to me: I remember that my blessed father was Niels of the Hill, my grandfather Jeppe of the Hill; my wife's name is Nille; her switch is Master Eric; my sons are Hans, Christoffer, and Niels. I've got it! I know what it is; this is the other life, this is paradise, this is heaven. I must have drunk myself to death yesterday at Jacob Shoemaker's, and when I died I went straight to heaven. Death can't be as hard to go through as they make out, for I don't feel a thing. Now, perhaps the pastor is standing this very minute in the pulpit delivering a funeral sermon over me, and is saying, "So ended Jeppe of the Hill. He lived like a soldier, and he died like a soldier." There might be some doubt as to whether I died on land or on sea, for I was easily half−seas−over when I left the world. Oh, Jeppe! how different this is from walking four leagues to town for soap, lying on straw, being beaten by your wife, and having horns

put on you by the deacon. Oh, to what delights are your troubles and your bitter days now turned! Oh, I'm ready to weep for joy, particularly when I think how all this has happened to me without my deserving it! But one thing bothers me, and that is that I'm so thirsty that my lips are sticking together. If I wanted to be alive again, it would be just so I could get a mug of ale to quench my thirst, for what good is all this finery to my eyes and ears, if I'm going to die all over again of thirst? I remember, the priest often said that man neither hungers nor thirsts in heaven, and also that a man finds all his friends there. But I'm ready to faint with thirst, and I'm all alone I don't see a soul: I should at least find my grandfather, who was such a fine man that he didn't owe his lordship a penny when he died. I'm sure lots of people have lived as good lives as I have; so why should I be the only one to go to heaven? Then it can't be heaven. But what can it be? I'm not asleep, I'm not awake, I'm not dead, I'm not alive, I'm not crazy, I'm not sane, I am Jeppe of the Hill, I'm not Jeppe of the Hill, I'm poor, I'm rich, I'm a miserable peasant, I'm an emperor. O o o ! Help! Help! Help! (He roars loudly.)

SCENE 2

(Enter the Valet, Eric, and others who have been watching his behavior from the doorway.)

VALET. I wish his lordship a very good morning. Here is the dressing−gown, if his lordship wishes to rise. Eric! run for the towel and basin.

JEPPE. Oh, worthy chamberlain! I will gladly get up, but I beg of you, don't hurt me.

VALET. God forbid that we should harm his lordship!

JEPPE. Oh, before you kill me, would you do me the kindness of telling me who I am?

VALET. Does not your lordship know who he is?

JEPPE. Yesterday I was Jeppe of the Hill, but to−day Oh, I don't know what to say.

VALET. We are glad that his lordship is in such good humor to−day as to deign to jest. But, God help us, why does my lord weep?

JEPPE. I'm not your lordship. I can take my oath on it, for, as far as I can remember, I am Jeppe Nielsen of the Hill, and one of the baron's peasants. If you will send for my wife, she'll bear witness to it, but don't let her bring Master Eric along.

ERIC. This is strange. What is the matter? Perhaps my lord is not awake, for he is not accustomed to joke like this.

JEPPE. Whether I am awake or not, I can't say, but I do know and can say that I am one of my lord's peasants, who is called Jeppe of the Hill, and I never have been a baron nor a count in all my life.

VALET. Eric! what can this mean? I am afraid my lord has been taken ill.

ERIC. I imagine he is walking in his sleep, for it often happens that people get out of bed, dress, talk, eat, and drink all while they are still asleep.

VALET. No, Eric! I think that his lordship is having hallucinations brought on by an illness, run quickly and fetch some doctors. (Exit Eric.) Oh, my lord, pray drive such thoughts from your head. His lordship will otherwise strike fear into the whole household . Does not my lord know me?

JEPPE. I don't even know myself, so how should I know you?

VALET. Is it possible that I should hear such words from my gracious lord's mouth and see him in such a plight! Alas, our unlucky house, to be plagued with an evil spell! Does not my lord remember what he did yesterday, when he went out hunting?

JEPPE. I have never done any hunting or poaching, for I know that's a thing that will get a man hard labor; no living soul can prove that I ever hunted as much as a hare in my lord's woods.

VALET. Why, my gracious lord, I was out hunting with you myself yesterday.

JEPPE. Yesterday I was at Jacob Shoemaker's, and I drank twelve pennyworth of brandy, so how could I have been hunting?

VALET. Oh, I beg his gracious lordship on my bare knees to stop talking such nonsense. Eric! have the doctors been sent for?

ERIC. Yes, they are coming immediately.

VALET. Then let us put on his lordship's dressing−gown, for perhaps he might feel better if we took him out into the open air. Will my lord be so good as to put on his dressing−gown?

JEPPE. With all my heart. You may do what you like with me, so long as you don't kill me, for I am as innocent as a babe unborn.

SCENE 3

(Enter Eric with two Doctors.)

FIRST DOCTOR. We hear with the greatest sorrow that his lordship is indisposed.

VALET. Yes, Doctor. He is in a serious condition.

SECOND DOCTOR. How are you feeling, gracious lord?

JEPPE. Splendidly, except that I'm a little thirsty from the brandy I drank at Jacob Shoemaker's yesterday. If some one would only give me a mug of ale and let me go, why then they might hang you and all the rest of the doctors, for I need no medicine.

FIRST DOCTOR. I call that pure hallucination, my good colleague!

SECOND DOCTOR. The more violent it is, the quicker it will spend its rage. Let us feel your lordship's pulse. Quid tibi videtur, Domine Frater?

FIRST DOCTOR. I think he should be bled immediately.

SECOND DOCTOR. I do not agree with you; such remarkable weakness must be treated otherwise. My lord has had a strange and forbidding dream, which has caused a commotion in his blood and has set his brain in such a whirl that he imagines himself to be a peasant . We must endeavor to divert his lordship with those things in which he usually takes the greatest pleasure. Give him the wines and the dishes that he likes best, and play the

music that it pleases him most to hear. (Cheerful music strikes up.)

VALET. Is not this my lord's favorite piece?

JEPPE. Like enough. Is there always such merrymaking here in the manor?

VALET. Whenever his lordship pleases, for he gives us all our board and wages.

JEPPE. But it is strange I can't remember the things I have done before.

SECOND DOCTOR. It is the result of this illness, your lordship, that one forgets all he has done previous to it. I remember, a few years ago, one of my neighbors became so confused after drinking heavily that for two days he thought he had no head.

JEPPE. I wish Squire Christoffer would do that; he must have an illness that works just the other way, for he thinks he has a great big head, while he really hasn't got one at all, as any one can tell from his decisions. (All laugh.)

SECOND DOCTOR. It is a great pleasure to us to hear his lordship jest. But to return to my story, this fellow went all over the town asking people if they had found the head he had lost; he recovered, however, and is now a sexton in Jutland.

JEPPE. He could be that even if he hadn't found his head. (All laugh again.)

FIRST DOCTOR. Does my honored colleague remember the case that occurred ten years ago, of the man who thought his head was full of flies? He could not get over the notion, no matter how much they argued with him, until a clever doctor cured him in this way: he put on his head a plaster which was covered with dead flies, and after a while took it off and showed the flies on it to the patient, who thought they had been drawn out of his head, and was immediately well again.

I also have heard of another man who, after a long fever, got the idea that if he made water the country would suffer from a flood . No one could make him think otherwise; he said he was willing to die for the common good. This is how he was cured: a message was sent to him, supposedly from the commandant, saying that the town was threatened with a siege and there was no water in the moat, and asking him to fill it to keep the enemy out. The patient was delighted to be able to save both his fatherland and himself; so he got rid of his water and of his sickness both at once.

SECOND DOCTOR. I recall another case that occurred in Germany . A nobleman came to an inn, and when he had dined and wanted to go to bed, he hung the gold chain which he wore round his neck on a nail in the wall of the bedroom. The innkeeper took careful note of this as he followed him to bed and wished him good−night. When he thought that the nobleman was asleep, he stole into the room, cut sixty links out of the chain, and hung it up again. The guest got up in the morning, had his horse saddled, and put on his clothes. But when he came to put on the chain, he noticed that it had lost half its length, and began to call out that he had been robbed. The host, who was watching outside the door, ran in, putting on an expression of the greatest consternation, and exclaimed, "Oh, what a terrible transformation!" When the guest asked him what he meant by that, he said, "Alas, my lord ! your head is as big again as it was yesterday." Then the host brought him a distorting mirror, which made everything appear twice as big as it really was. When the nobleman saw how big his head looked in the mirror, he burst into tears and said, "Oh, now I see why my chain will not go on!" Whereupon he mounted his horse, wrapping his head in his cloak, that none might see it on the road. They say that he kept the house for several days, unable to get over the idea that it was not the chain that had grown too short, but his head that had grown too big.

FIRST DOCTOR. There are countless examples of such illusions . I also remember hearing of a man who imagined his nose was ten feet long, and warned every one he met not to come too near.

SECOND FATHER. Domine Frater has undoubtedly heard the story of the man who thought he was dead? A young person got it into his head that he was dead, and consequently laid himself out on a bier, and would neither eat nor drink. His friends endeavored to show him the absurdity of his conduct and tried every means of making him eat, but in vain, for he merely dismissed them with scorn, asserting that it was contrary to all rule for the dead to eat and drink. At last an experienced physician undertook to cure him by this unusual method: He got a servant to pretend that he too was dead, and had him laid out in the same place with the patient. For a long time the two lay and looked at each other. After a while the patient began to ask the other man what he was doing there, and he answered that he was dead. Then they began to question each other as to how they had died, and both explained in full. Later, some people who had been instructed what to do came and brought the second man his supper, whereupon he sat up in his coffin and ate a hearty meal, saying to the other, "Aren't you going to eat pretty soon?" The sick man pondered over this, and asked if it was proper for a dead man to eat, and was answered that if he did not eat soon, he could not stay dead very long. He therefore allowed himself to be persuaded first to eat with the other man, subsequently to sleep, get up, dress, in fact, in all matters copy the other, until finally he came to life and regained his senses.

I could give innumerable other examples of such odd illusions . That is just what has happened in this case to make his gracious lordship think that he is a poor peasant. But if my lord will get the notion out of his head, he will speedily be himself again.

JEPPE. But can it be only illusion?

FIRST DOCTOR. Certainly; my lord has heard from these stories what illusions can do.

JEPPE. Am I not Jeppe of the Hill?

FIRST DOCTOR. Certainly not.

JEPPE. Isn't that wicked Nille my wife?

FIRST DOCTOR. By no means, for my lord is a widower.

JEPPE. Is it pure illusion that she has a switch called Master Eric?

FIRST DOCTOR. Pure illusion.

JEPPE. Isn't it true either that I was to go to town yesterday and buy soap?

FIRST DOCTOR. No.

JEPPE. Nor that I drank up the money at Jacob Shoemaker's?

VALET. Why, your lordship was with us out hunting all day yesterday.

JEPPE. Nor that I am a cuckold?

VALET. Why, her ladyship has been dead for years.

JEPPE. I'm beginning to realize my own stupidity. I won't think about the peasant any more; I see that it was a dream that led me into my delusion. It certainly is wonderful how men get such ideas.

VALET. Does my lord wish to walk in the garden for a time while we make ready his breakfast?

JEPPE. Very well; but hurry up, for I am both hungry and thirsty.

ACT III

SCENE I

(Jeppe comes in from the garden with his suite. A small table is set.)

JEPPE. Ah, ha! I see that the table is all set.

VALET. Yes, everything is ready when his lordship wishes to be seated.

(Jeppe sits down. The others stand behind his chair and laugh at his bad manners when he sticks all five fingers in the dish, belches, and blows his nose with his fingers and wipes them on his clothes.)

VALET. Will my lord order what wine he desires?

JEPPE. You know yourself what wine I usually drink in the morning.

VALET. Here is Rhine−wine, which my lord usually drinks. But if this doesn't suit his lordship's taste, he can have something else immediately.

JEPPE. That's a little too sour. Put some mead in it, and it will be all right; I am for sweet things.

VALET. Here is some port−wine, if my lord would like to taste it.

Jeppe. That's fine wine. Shout, all of you! (Each time he drinks, trumpets blow.) Hurry up, lad! another glass of pork−wine. Do you understand? Where did you get that ring on your finger?

SECRETARY. My lord gave it to me himself.

JEPPE. I don't remember it; give it back to me. I must have been drunk when I did it. A man doesn't give away rings like that for nothing. Later on I'll look into things and see what else you've got away with. Servants ought not to get anything more than board and wages. I can swear I don't remember making you any special present; why should I? That ring must be worth more than ten rix−dollars. No, no, my good fellows! That won't do at all. You must not take advantage of your master's feebleness and drunkenness. When I'm drunk, I'm perfectly ready to give away my breeches; but when I have slept off my liquor, I take back my gifts. Otherwise I should get into trouble with Nille, my old woman. But what am I saying? I am falling back into my mad notions again and don't realize who I am. Give me another glass of pork−wine. More noise! (Trumpets.) Pay attention to what I say, lads. I want you to understand that after this, if I give anything away in the evening when I'm drunk and you don't bring it back in the morning, you will have to answer for it. When servants are given more than they can eat, they get proud and turn up their noses at the master. What wages do you get?

SECRETARY. My lord has heretofore given me two hundred rix−dollars a year.

JEPPE. The devil a two hundred you get after this! What do you do to earn two hundred rix−dollars? I myself have to slave like a beast, and be on my feet in the hay loft from morning till night, and can scarcely See how I come back to my cursed peasant notions. Give me another glass of wine. (He drinks; trumpets blow again.) Two hundred rix−dollars! Why, that's pulling the very hide off your master . Listen, do you know what, you good lads? When I have dined, I have a good mind to hang half you fellows here on the estate. You'll find out that I am not to be trifled with in money matters.

VALET. We will give back all that we have received from his lordship.

JEPPE. Yes, yes, "his lordship" this, "his lordship" that! We get compliments and ceremonies cheap enough nowadays. You want to flatter me with "his lordship" until you've got all my money away from me and you are the lordships yourselves. Your mouths say "his lordship," but your hearts say "his foolship." You don't say what you mean, my lads. You servants are like Abner when he came and greeted Roland, saying, "Hail, brother," and so saying thrust a dagger into his heart. Take my word for it, Jeppe is no fool. (They all fall on their knees and beg for mercy.) Get up, lads! Wait till I have finished eating. Then I shall see how it works out and decide which of you deserve to be hanged and which don't. For the present I shall make merry.

SCENE 2

JEPPE. Where is my bailiff?

VALET. He is waiting outside.

JEPPE. Tell him to come in immediately.

[Enter the Bailiff in a coat with silver buttons and a sword−belt over his shoulder.]

BAILIFF. Has his lordship any orders?

JEPPE. Only that you are to be hanged.

BAILIFF. I have surely done no wrong, my lord! Why should I be hanged?

JEPPE. Are you not the bailiff?

BAILIFF. Yes, indeed, your lordship.

JEPPE. And yet you ask why you should be hanged?

BAILIFF. I have served your lordship so honestly and faithfully and have been so diligent in my office that your lordship has always praised me more than any other of his servants.

JEPPE. Indeed, you have been diligent in your office, as your solid silver buttons plainly show. What wages do you get?

BAILIFF. Fifty rix−dollars a year.

JEPPE [gets up and walks to and fro]. Fifty? You surely shall be hanged.

BAILIFF. It couldn't well be less, my lord, for a whole year's hard work.

JEPPE. That's just the reason you are to be hanged because you only get fifty rix−dollars. You have money enough for a coat with silver buttons, frills at your wrists, and a silk queue for your hair and all on fifty rix−dollars a year. If you didn't rob me, poor man, where else could you get it?

BAILIFF [on his knees]. Oh, gracious lord! For the sake of my unfortunate wife and innocent children, spare me!

JEPPE. Have you many children?

BAILIFF. Seven children living, my lord.

JEPPE. Ha! Ha! Seven children living! Have him hanged immediately, Sectary.

SECRETARY. Oh, gracious lord, I am no hangman.

JEPPE. If you're not, you can soon learn to be. You look fit for any trade. And when you have hanged him, I shall have you hanged yourself.

BAILIFF. Oh, gracious lord, is there no reprieve?

JEPPE [walks to and fro, sits down, drinks, and gets up again]. Half a hundred rix−dollars, a wife and seven children. If no one else will hang you, I'll do it myself. I know what sort you are, you bailiffs! I know how you have cheated me and other miserable peasants Oh, there come those damned peasant illusions into my head again. I meant to say, that I know your games and your goings−on so well, I could be a bailiff myself if I had to. You get the cream off the milk, and your master gets dung, to speak modestly. I really think that if the world keeps on, the bailiffs will all be noblemen and the noblemen all bailiffs. When a peasant slips something into your hand or your wife's, here is what your master is told: "The poor man is willing and industrious enough, but certain misfortunes have befallen him which make it impossible for him to pay: he has a poor piece of land, his cattle have got the scab," or something like that, and with such babble your master has to let himself be cheated. Take my word for it, lad! I'm not going to let myself be fooled in that way, for I'm a peasant and a peasant's son myself see how that illusion keeps cropping up! I was about to say that I am a peasant's son myself, for Abraham and Eve, our first parents, were tillers of the soil.

SECRETARY [on his knees]. Oh, gracious lord! Pray take pity on him for the sake of his unfortunate wife; for how can she live if he is not there to feed her and the children?

JEPPE. Who says they should live either? We can string them up along with him.

SECRETARY. Oh, my lord! she is such a lovely, beautiful woman .

JEPPE. So? Perhaps you are her lover, seeing you feel so badly about her. Send her here.

SCENE 3

[Enter Bailiff's wife; she kisses Jeppe's band.]

JEPPE. Are you the bailiff's wife?

WIFE. Yes, your lordship, I am.

JEPPE [takes her by the breasts]. You are pretty. Would you like to sleep with me to−night?

WIFE. My lord has only to command, for I am his servant.

JEPPE [to the Bailiff]. Do you consent to my lying with your wife to−night?

BAILIFF. I thank his lordship for doing my humble house the honor.

JEPPE. Here! Bring her a chair; she shall eat with me. [She sits at the table, and eats and drinks with him. He becomes jealous of the Secretary.] You'll get into trouble, if you look at her like that. [Whenever he looks at the Secretary, the Secretary takes his eyes off the woman and gazes at the floor. Jeppe sings an old love−ballad as he sits at the table with her. He orders a polka to be played and dances with her, but he is so drunk that he falls down three times, and finally lies where he falls and goes to sleep.]

SCENE 4

(Enter the Baron and Eric.)

BARON. He is sound asleep. Now we have played our game, but we have nearly been made the bigger fools ourselves, for he intended to tyrannize over us, so that we must either have spoiled our trick, or else have let ourselves be mauled by the rude yokel, from whose conduct one can learn how haughty and overbearing such people become when they suddenly rise from the mire to a station of worth and honor . If I had, in an unlucky moment, impersonated a secretary myself, I might have got a thrashing, and the whole affair would have been a failure, for people would have laughed more at me than at the peasant. We had better let him sleep awhile before we put him back into his dirty farm clothes again.

ERIC. Why, my lord, he is sleeping like a log; look, I can pound him and he doesn't feel it.

BARON. Take him out, then, and complete our little comedy.

ACT IV

SCENE 1

[Jeppe is lying on a dungheap in his old peasant clothes. He wakes and calls out.]

JEPPE. Hey, Sectary, Valet, Lackeys! another glass of pork−wine! [He looks about him, rubs his eyes as before, feels his head, and finds his old broad−brimmed hat on it; rubs his eyes again, turns the hat over and over, looks at his clothes, recognizes himself again, and begins to talk.] How long was Abraham in paradise? Now, alas, I recognize everything again my bed, my jacket, my old cuckold−hat, myself; this is different, Jeppe, from drinking pork−wine out of a gilt−edged glass, and sitting at a table with lackeys and a sectary behind my chair. Good fortune, worse luck, never lasts very long. Oh, that I, who such a short time ago was "my lord," should now find myself in such a miserable plight, with my fine bed turned into a dungheap, my gold−embroidered cap changed into my old cuckold−hat, my lackeys into pigs, and I myself from "my lord" to a wretched peasant once more! I thought when I woke up again I should find my fingers covered with gold rings, but, saving your presence, they're covered with something very different. I thought I should be calling servants to account, but now I must get my back ready for my home−coming, when I shall have to give an account of my own doings. I thought that when I woke up I should reach out and grasp a glass of pork−wine, but instead, to speak modestly, I get a handful of dung. Alas, Jeppe, your sojourn in paradise was pretty short, and your happiness came quickly to an end. But who knows that the same thing might not happen again if I were to lie down for a while? Oh, if it only would! Oh, if I could get back there again! [Lies down and goes to sleep.]

SCENE 2

[Enter Nille.]

NILLE. I wonder if anything has happened to him? What could it be? Either the devil has taken him, or, what I fear more, he's sitting at an inn drinking up the money. I was a goose to trust the drunkard with twelve pence at once. But what do I see? Isn't that himself lying there in the filth and snoring? Oh, miserable mortal that I am, to have such a beast for a husband! Your back will pay dearly for this! [She steals up to him and gives him a whack on the rump with Master Eric.]

JEPPE. Hey, hey! Help, help! What is that? Where am I? Who am I? Who is beating me? and why? Hey!

NILLE. I'll teach you what it is soon enough. [Beats him and pulls his hair.]

JEPPE. Oh, dear Nille, don't beat me any more; you don't know all that has happened to me.

NILLE. Where have you been all this time, you guzzler? Where is the soap you were to buy?

JEPPE. I couldn't get to town, Nille.

NILLE. Why not?

JEPPE. I was taken up to paradise on the way.

NILLE. To paradise! [Hits him.] To paradise. [Hits him again .] Are you going to make sport of me into the bargain?

JEPPE. O o o ! As true as I'm an honest man, it's so!

NILLE. What's so?

JEPPE. That I have been in paradise. [Nille repeats "in paradise," hitting him each time.] Oh, Nille, dear, don't beat me!

NILLE. Quick, confess where you've been, or I'll trounce the life out of you.

JEPPE. Oh, I'll confess, if you won't beat me any more.

NILLE. Go on, confess.

JEPPE. Swear not to beat me?

NILLE. No.

JEPPE. As true as I'm an honest man called Jeppe of the Hill, as sure as that's true, I have been in paradise and have seen things that it will stun you to hear of.

[Nille beats him again and drags him into the house by the hair .]

SCENE 3

[Enter Nille.]

NILLE. Now, then, you drunken hound! Sleep off your liquor first; then we shall have more to say about it. Such swine as you don't go to paradise! Think of it, the beast has drunk himself clean out of his wits. But if he did it at my expense, then he'll do heavy penance for it; he shan't get a thing to eat or drink for two whole days. By that time he'll get over his notions about paradise.

SCENE 4

(Enter three armed men.)

FIRST MAN. Does a man named Jeppe live here?

NILLE. Yes, he does.

FIRST MAN. Are you his wife?

NILLE. Yes, God help me, so much the worse for me.

FIRST MAN. We must go in and talk with him.

NILLE. He's dead drunk.

FIRST MAN. That makes no difference; fetch him out or the whole household will suffer.

[Nille goes in, and pushes Jeppe out so hard that he knocks over one of the men and rolls on the ground with him.]

SCENE 5

JEPPE. Now, good friends, you see what a wife I have to put up with.

FIRST MAN. You deserve no better, for you're a malefactor.

JEPPE. What have I done now?

FIRST MAN. You'll see when justice takes its course.

SCENE 6

(Enter the Judge, followed by two Lawyers. He sits down. Jeppe, his hands tied behind him, is brought to the bar. One of his captors steps forward.)

FIRST MAN. Here is a man, your honor, whom we can swear to have seen sneaking into the baron's house, where he posed as his lordship, put on his clothes, and tyrannized over the servants. As this is a piece of unheard−of impudence, we demand on behalf of his lordship that it be punished with such severity that it shall serve as an example and a warning to other evil−doers.

JUDGE. Is this accusation true? Speak out whatever you may have to say in answer to it, for we do not wish to convict any one unheard.

JEPPE. Alas, what a God−forsaken man I am! What can I say? I admit I deserve punishment, but only for the money I squandered on drink instead of buying soap with it. I also admit that I have recently been in the castle, but how I got there and how I got out again, I haven't the least idea.

FIRST LAWYER. Your honor has it on his own admission: he got drunk and in his drunkenness committed this unheard−of outrage. All that remains is to decide whether the guilt of such a gross misdeed can be held devoid of criminal intent because of intoxication. I argue that it cannot, for if it could, neither fornication nor murder could be punished, for every criminal could seek that escape and assert that he had committed his crime while intoxicated. And although he can prove that he was drunk, his case is none the stronger, for the law is : What a man does under the influence of drink he shall answer for when sober. It is well known that in a recent case of the same nature the misdeed was punished, although the criminal was led into passing himself off as a lord through his own simplicity; his ignorance and foolishness could not save him from death. The penalty is imposed purely as a warning to others. I would tell the circumstances, were it not that I fear to delay justice thereby.

SECOND LAWYER. Your honor! This story appears so remarkable to me that I cannot accept it without the testimony of several witnesses. How could a simple peasant get into his lord's house and impersonate his lordship unless he could imitate his very form and features? How could he get into the lord's bedroom, how could he put on his clothes, without any one being aware of it? No, your honor, one can plainly see that this is the outcome of a conspiracy on the part of this poor man's enemies. I hope, therefore, that he may be discharged.

JEPPE [weeping]. God bless your mouth. I have a bit of tobacco in my breeches pocket which perhaps you won't refuse; it's good enough for any honorable man to chew.

SECOND LAWYER. Keep your tobacco, Jeppe! I speak for you not in the hope of receiving gifts, but merely from Christian charity.

JEPPE. Pardon me, Master Attorney! I didn't know you folks were so honorable.

FIRST LAWYER. What my colleague advances in favor of this man's acquittal is based entirely on conjecture. The question is not whether such a thing could happen or not, because that it did happen is proved both by witnesses and by the man's own confession.

SECOND LAWYER. What a man says from fear and awe has no weight as a confession. It seems to me, therefore, that it is best to give the simple fellow time to collect his wits, then question him over again.

JUDGE. Listen, Jeppe! Be careful what you say. Do you admit the charges against you?

JEPPE. No; I will swear my most sacred oath that it's all lies that I swore to before; I haven't been outside my door for the last three days.

FIRST LAWYER. Your honor, it is my humble opinion that he should not be allowed to testify on a matter already established by witnesses, particularly inasmuch as he has already confessed his misdeed.

SECOND LAWYER. I think he should.

FIRST LAWYER. I think he should not.

SECOND LAWYER. The case is of so unusual a nature

FIRST LAWYER. That does not affect witnesses and a confession .

JEPPE. Oh, if they would only go for each other's throats, then I could set upon the judge and give him such a beating he would forget both law and procedure.

SECOND LAWYER. But listen, worthy colleague! Although the deed is confessed, the man has deserved no punishment, for he did no murder nor robbery nor harm of any kind while on the premises.

FIRST LAWYER. That makes no difference! Intentio furandi is the same as furtum.

JEPPE. Talk Danish, you black hound! Then I can answer for myself.

FIRST LAWYER. For when a man is taken, whether he was about to steal or had already stolen, he is a thief.

JEPPE. Gracious judge! I am perfectly willing to be hanged if that attorney can be hanged alongside of me.

SECOND LAWYER. Stop talking like that, Jeppe! You are merely injuring your own case.

JEPPE. Then why don't you answer him? [Aside.] He stands like a dumb beast.

SECOND LAWYER. But wherein is proof of furandi propositum?

FIRST LAWYER. Quicunque; in aedes alienas noctu irrumpit tanquam fur aut nocturnus grassator existimandus est; atqui reus hic ita, ergo

SECOND LAWYER. Nego majorem, quod scilicet irruperit.

FIRST LAWYER. Res manifesta est, tot legitimis testibus existantibus, ac confitente reo.

SECOND LAWYER. Quicunque; vi vel metu coactus fuerit confiteri

FIRST LAWYER. Oh, but where is the vis? Where is the metus? That is a quibble.

SECOND LAWYER. You're the one that quibbles.

FIRST LAWYER. No honorable man shall accuse me of that.

(They grab each other by the throat, and Jeppe jumps behind them and pulls off the First Lawyer's wig.)

JUDGE. Respect for the law! Stop, I have heard enough. [Reads aloud.] Inasmuch as Jeppe of the Hill, son of Niels of the Hill, grandson of Jeppe of the same, has been proved both by legal evidence and by his own confession to have introduced himself by stealth into the Baron's castle, to have put on his clothes and maltreated his servants; he is sentenced to be put to death by poison, and when he is dead, his body to be hanged on a gallows.

JEPPE. Oh, oh, your honor! Have you no mercy?

JUDGE. None is possible. The sentence shall be carried out forthwith in the presence of the court.

JEPPE. May I have a glass of brandy first, before I drink the poison, so I can die with courage?

JUDGE. That is permissible.

JEPPE [drinks off three glasses of brandy, and falls on his knees]. Will you not have mercy?

JUDGE. No, Jeppe! It is now too late.

JEPPE. Oh, it's not too late. A judge can reverse his decision and say he judged wrong the first time. We're all merely men, so we're all likely to make mistakes.

JUDGE. No; you yourself will feel in a few minutes that it is too late, for you have already drunk the poison in the brandy.

JEPPE. Alas, what an unfortunate man I am! Have I taken the poison already? Oh, farewell, Nille! But the beast doesn't deserve that I should take leave of her. Farewell, Jens, Niels, and Christoffer ! Farewell, my daughter Marthe! Farewell, apple of my eye! I know I am your father because you were born before that deacon came around, and you take after me so we're like as two drops of water. Farewell, my piebald horse, and thank you for all the times I have ridden you; next to my own children I never loved any animal as I love you. Farewell, Feierfax, my good watchdog! Farewell, Moens, my black cat! Farewell, my oxen, my sheep, my pigs, and thank you for your good company and for every day I have known you!... Farewell,... Oh, now I can say no more, I feel so heavy and so weak. [He falls, and lies on the floor.]

JUDGE. That worked well; the sleeping−potion has already taken effect, and he is sleeping like a log. Hang him up now, but be careful not to hurt him, and see that the rope goes only under his arms. Then we shall see what he does when he wakes up and finds himself hanging.

[They drag him out.

ACT V

SCENE 1

(Jeppe is discovered hanging from a gallows. The Judge stands aside, unseen by Nille.)

NILLE. Oh, oh, can it be that I see my good husband hanging on the gallows? Oh, my dearest husband! Forgive me all the wrong I have done you. Oh, now my conscience is roused; now I repent, but too late, for the ill nature I showed you; now that I miss you, for the first time I can realize what a good husband I have lost. Oh, that I could only save you from death with my own life's blood.

[She wipes her eyes, and weeps bitterly. Meanwhile the effects of the sleeping−potion have worn off, and Jeppe wakes. He sees that be is hanging on the gallows, and that his hands are tied behind him, and he hears his wife's laments.]

JEPPE. Be calm, my dear wife, we must all go the same way. Go home and look after the house and take good care of my children. You can have my red jacket made over for little Christoffer, and what's left will do for a cap for Marthe. Above all, see to it that my piebald horse is well cared for, for I loved that beast as if he had been my own brother. If I weren't dead, I'd have more to say to you.

NILLE. O o o ! What is that? What do I hear? Can a dead man talk?

JEPPE. Don't be afraid, Nille, I shan't hurt you.

NILLE. But, my dearest husband, how can you talk when you're dead?

JEPPE. I don't know myself how it happens. But listen, my dear wife! Run like wildfire and bring me eightpence worth of brandy, for I am thirstier now than I ever was when I was alive.

NILLE. Shame, you beast! You scoundrel! You hopeless drunkard ! Haven't you drunk enough brandy in your living lifetime? Are you still thirsty, you sot, now that you are dead? I call that being a full−blown hog.

JEPPE. Shut your mouth, you scum of the earth! and run for the brandy. If you don't, devil take me if I don't haunt you in the house every night. You shall soon find out that I am not afraid of Master Eric any more, for now I can't feel a beating.

[Nille runs home after Master Eric, comes out again, and beats him as be hangs.]

JEPPE. Ow, ow, ow! Stop it, Nille, stop! You'll kill me all over again. Ow! ow! ow!

THE JUDGE [coming forward]. Listen, my good woman! You must not beat him any more. Be reassured; for your sake we will pardon your husband's transgression, and furthermore sentence him back to life again.

NILLE. No, no, good sir! Let him hang, for he's not worth letting live.

JUDGE. Fie, you are a wicked woman; away with you, or we shall have you hanged alongside of him.

[Nille runs away.

SCENE 2

(Enter the Judge's servants, who take Jeppe down from the gallows .)

JEPPE. Oh, kind judge, am I surely all alive again, or am I spooking?

JUDGE. You are quite alive, for the law that can take away a man's life can also give it back again. Can you not comprehend that?

JEPPE. No, indeed, I can't get it through my head, but I keep on thinking I'm a ghost, and am spooking.

JUDGE. Foolish fellow! It's perfectly easy to understand. He who takes a thing away from you can give it back again.

JEPPE. Then may I try it and hang the judge just for fun to see if I can sentence him back to life again?

JUDGE. No, that won't work, because you're not a judge.

JEPPE. But am I really alive again?

JUDGE. Yes, you are.

JEPPE. Then I'm not just a spook?

JUDGE. Certainly not.

JEPPE. I'm not a ghost at all?

JUDGE. No.

JEPPE. Am I the same Jeppe of the Hill as I was before?

JUDGE. Yes.

JEPPE. I'm no mere spirit?

JUDGE. No, certainly not.

JEPPE. Will you give me your oath that's true?

JUDGE. Yes, I swear to it; you're alive.

JEPPE. Swear that the devil may split you if it's not so. JUDGE. Come, take our word for it, and thank us for so graciously sentencing you back to life again.

JEPPE. If you hadn't hanged me yourselves, I would gladly thank you for taking me down from the gallows.

JUDGE. Be satisfied, Jeppe! Tell us if your good wife beats you too often, and we shall find a remedy. Here are four rix−dollars with which you can make merry for a while, and don't forget to drink our health.

[Jeppe kisses his hand and thanks him.]

[Exit Judge, followed by his servants.

SCENE 3

JEPPE. Now I've lived half a hundred years, but in all that time I haven't had so much happen to me as in these two days. It is a devil of a story, now that I come to think of it: one hour a drunken peasant, the next a baron, then another hour a peasant again; now dead, now alive on a gallows, which is the most wonderful of all. Perhaps it is that when they hang living people they die, and when they hang dead people they come to life again. It seems to me that, after all, a glass of brandy would taste magnificent. Hey, Jacob Shoemaker! Come out here!

SCENE 4

[Enter Jacob Shoemaker.]

JACOB. Welcome back from town! Did you get the soap for your wife?

JEPPE. You scoundrel! You shall soon find out what sort of people you're talking to. Take off your cap, for you're no more than carrion compared to the likes of me.

JACOB. I wouldn't stand such words from any one else, Jeppe, but as you bring the house a good penny a day, I don't mind it so much .

JEPPE. Take off your cap, I say, you cobbler!

JACOB. What's happened to you on the way to make you so lofty?

JEPPE. I would have you know that I've been hanged since I saw you last.

JACOB. There's nothing so splendid about that. I don't grudge you your luck. But listen, Jeppe: where you drink your liquor, there you pour out the dregs; you have gone and got full somewhere else, and now you come here to do your brawling.

JEPPE. Quick, take off your cap, scoundrel! Don't you hear what jingles in my pocket?

JACOB (his cap under his arm). Heavens, man, where did you get the money?

JEPPE. From my barony, Jacob. I will tell you all that's happened to me; but get me a glass of mead, for I'm much too high and mighty to drink Danish brandy.

JACOB. Your health, Jeppe!

JEPPE. Now I shall tell you all that's happened to me: When I left you, I fell asleep. When I woke up, I was a baron, and got drunk all over again on pork−wine. I woke up on a dungheap and went to sleep again, hoping to sleep myself back to my baron's estate. I found it doesn't always work, for my wife woke me up again with Master Eric and pulled me home by the hair, not showing the least respect for the kind of man I had been. When I got back to my room, I was thrown out again by the neck, and found myself in the midst of a lot of constables, who sentenced me to death and killed me with poison. When I was dead, I was hanged; and when I was hanged, I came to life again; and when I came to life again, I got four rix−dollars. That is my story, but as to how it happened, I leave that to you to think out.

JACOB. Ha, ha, ha! It's all a dream, Jeppe!

JEPPE. If it weren't for my four rix−dollars here, I might think it was a dream, too. Give me another, Jacob! I shan't think about all that rubbish any more, but get myself decently drunk.

JACOB. Your health, my lord baron! Ha, ha, ha!

JEPPE. Perhaps you can't grasp it, Jacob?

JACOB. No, not if I stood on my head.

JEPPE. It can be true for all that, Jacob! For you're a dunce, and there are simpler things than this that you can't understand .

SCENE 5

[Enter Magnus.]

MAGNUS. Ha, ha, ha! I'll tell you the damn'dest tale, about a man called Jeppe of the Hill, who was found lying on the ground dead drunk: they changed his clothes and put him in the best bed up at the baron's castle, made him believe that he was the baron when he woke up, got him full, and laid him in his own dirty clothes back on the dungheap again, and when he came to, he thought he had been in paradise . I nearly laughed myself to death when I heard the story from the bailiff's men. By the Lord, I'd give a rix−dollar to see the fool! Ha, ha, ha!

JEPPE. What do I owe, Jacob?

JACOB. Twelvepence.

[Jeppe strokes his chin and goes out looking very shame−faced.

MAGNUS. Why is that fellow in such a hurry?

JACOB. It's the very man they played the joke on.

MGNUS. Is that possible? I must run after him. Listen, Jeppe ! Just a word How are things in the other world?

JEPPE. Let me be.

MAGNUS. Why didn't you stay longer?

JEPPE. What business is that of yours?

MAGNUS. Come, do tell us a little about the journey.

JEPPE. Let me be, I say, or there'll be a calamity coming to you.

MAGNUS. But, Jeppe, I am so anxious to know about it.

JEPPE. Jacob Shoemaker, help! Will you let this man do me violence in your house?

MAGNUS. I'm not doing you any harm, Jeppe, I'm just asking you what you saw in the other world.

JEPPE. Hey, help, help!

MAGNUS. Did you see any of my forefathers there?

JEPPE. No, your forefathers must all be in the other place, where you and all the rest of the carrion go when they die.

[Shakes himself loose and runs away.

SCENE 6. EPILOGUE

(Enter the Baron, his Secretary, Valet, and Lackeys.)

BARON. Ha, ha, ha! That experiment was worth money. I never thought it would work out so well. If you could amuse me like that more often, Eric, you would stand even better with me than you do now.

ERIC. No, my lord! I should not dare to play that kind of comedy again. For if he had beaten your lordship as he threatened, it would have turned into an ugly tragedy.

BARON. That's very true. I was afraid of that, but I was so much engrossed in keeping up the deception that I really think I should have let myself be pummelled, or even let you be hanged, Eric, as he threatened, rather than give it away. Didn't you feel the same?

ERIC. No, indeed, my lord! It would be an odd sensation, to let yourself be hanged for fun; that sort of fun would be too expensive .

BARON. Why, Eric, such things happen every day: people throw away their lives for fun in one way or another. For instance, a man has a weak nature and sees that he is ruining his life and his health by excessive drinking; yet he still keeps on maltreating his body and risks his life for an evening's enjoyment. Then, again: it often happens in Turkey that grand viziers are strangled or choked to death with a cord the very day they are made viziers, or a few days after; yet every one is eager to take the office, just so that he may be hanged with a great title. Still another instance: officers gladly risk body and soul to get a reputation for bravery, and fight duels about anything at all even with men known to be their superiors. I think, too, that one could find hundreds and hundreds of men in love who for the sake of a night of pleasure would let themselves be killed in the morning. And you see in sieges how soldiers will desert in droves and flock to the beleaguered city, which they know must shortly surrender, and in order to live in luxury for one day will get themselves hanged the next. One way is no more rational than the other . In olden times even philosophers used to subject themselves deliberately to misfortune in order that after their death they might be praised. Therefore, Eric, I thoroughly believe that you would rather have allowed yourself to be hanged than have spoiled our beautiful practical joke.

EPILOGUE

(Spoken by the Baron)

Of this adventure, children, the moral is quite clear: To elevate the lowly above their proper sphere Involves no less a peril than rashly tumbling down The great who rise to power by deeds of just renown. Permit the base−born yokel untutored sway to urge, The sceptre of dominion as soon becomes a scourge. Let once despotic power drive justice from the realm, In every peaceful hamlet a Nero grasps the helm. Could Phalaris or Caius in days of yore have been More merciless a tyrant than him we here have seen? Before the seat of justice had time his warmth to feel He threatened us with torture, the gallows, and the wheel. Nay, never shall we tremble beneath a boor's dictates Or set a plowman over us, as oft in ancient states For if we sought to pattern us on follies such as those, Each history of dominion in tyranny would close.