

# **THE POLITICAL TINKER**

Ludvig Holberg



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# THE POLITICAL TINKER

# THE POLITICAL TINKER

## Ludvig Holberg

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### **THE POLITICAL TINKER**

[DEN POLITISKE KANDESTOBER]

**A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS**

1722–1731

### **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

**HERMAN VON BREMEN, a tinker.** GESKE, his wife. ENGELKE, his daughter.

**HENRICH } ANNEKE }**– his servants. PEITER }

**ANTONIUS,** Engelke's lover.

**JENS, a tavern-keeper } RICHARD, a brushmaker } Members of the GERT, a furrier }**– Collegium Politicum. SIVERT, a baggage inspector } FRANZ, a cutler }

**ABRAHAMS } SANDERUS }**– Practical jokers.

**MADAME ABRAHAMS.** MADAME SANDERUS. ARIANKE, a blacksmith's wife.

**A Man pretending to be Alderman of the Hatters' Guild, Petitioners, Women, Boys, Lackeys, and others.**

**ACTS I and III**

**SCENE:** Hamburg. A street, showing Herman's house.

**ACTS II, IV, and V**

**A room in Herman's house.**

THE POLITICAL TINKER

**ACT I**

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE I

(A Street in front of Herman von Bremen's house. Antonius is standing before the door.)

**ANTONIUS.** I swear my heart's in my mouth, for I've got to talk to Master Herman and ask him for his daughter, to whom I've been engaged for ever so long, but secretly. This is the third start I have made, but each time I have turned back again. If it were not for the disgrace of it, and the reproaches I should have to take from my mother, it would be the same story over again. This bashfulness of mine is an inborn weakness, and it's not easy to get the better of it. Each time I go to knock on the door, it is as if some one were holding back my hand. But courage, Antonius, is half the battle! There is no help for it, you must go on. I should spruce myself up a bit first, for they say Master Herman is getting finicky of late. (He takes off his neck-band and ties it on again, takes a comb from his pocket and combs his hair, and dusts his shoes.) Now, I think I will do. This is the moment to knock. See! as sure as I'm an honest man, it's just as if someone were holding back my hand. Come, courage, Antonius! I know that you haven't done anything wrong. The worst that can happen to you is a "no." (He knocks.)



## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 2

**Enter Henrich, eating a sandwich.**

**HENRICH.** Your servant, Master Antonius. Whom do you want to see?

**ANTONIUS.** I wanted to talk with Master Herman, if he was alone.

**HENRICH.** Oh, yes, certainly he is alone. He is at his reading .

**ANTONIUS.** Then he is more God-fearing than I am.

**HENRICH.** If an ordinance were issued decreeing that the Hercules should count as a book of sermons, I believe he could qualify as a preacher.

**ANTONIUS.** Then has he time to spare from his work for reading such books as that?

**HENRICH.** You must realize that the master has two professions : he is both tinker and politician.

**ANTONIUS.** The two don't seem to go together very well.

**HENRICH.** The same idea has occurred to us. For when he does a piece of work, which is rarely, there is such a political look to the job that we have to do it all over again. But if you want to talk to him, go right into the sitting-room.

**ANTONIUS.** I have an important errand, Henrich, for between you and me, I want to ask him for his daughter, whom I've been engaged to for a long time.

**HENRICH.** My word, that is an important errand, indeed. But listen, Master Antonius, you must not take it amiss if I warn you of just one thing: if you want your suit to prosper, you must tune up your language and make a graceful speech, for he has become devilish particular recently.

**ANTONIUS.** No, I can't do that, Henrich! I'm a good workman, and I've never learned to pass compliments. I can only speak out straight and plain that I love his daughter and want her for my wife.

**HENRICH.** Nothing more? Then I'll risk my neck that you don't get her. At the very least you must start with "Whereas" or "Inasmuch ." You must realize, Master Antonius, that you have to do with a learned man, who spends his days and nights in reading political works, till he's on the verge of madness. The one thing that he's found fault with lately about the people in the house is that we have such vulgar ways with us all, and myself especially—he never mentions me without calling me "You low, dirty rascal." A week or so ago he swore by the devil that Mother Geske should wear an Adrienne; still, he didn't make any headway, because mistress is an old-fashioned God-fearing woman, who had rather lay down her life than part with her lapelled bodice. He is always about to bring forth something or other, the devil knows what. So if you wish to succeed in your wooing, you had better take my advice.

**ANTONIUS.** Well, on my word, I don't believe in beating about the bush. I go straight to the point. [Exit into house.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 3

**HENRICH.** The greatest difficulty about proposing is to hit on something to start off with. I went courting once myself, but for two weeks I couldn't make up my mind what to say. I knew, of course, that you ought to begin with "Whereas" or "Inasmuch," but the trouble was that I couldn't pick out the next word to hitch on to that "Whereas ." So I didn't bother about it any longer, but went and bought a formula for eightpence from Jacob the schoolmaster—he sells them for that. But it all went wrong with me, for when I got into the middle of my speech I couldn't remember the rest of it, and I was ashamed to pull the paper out of my pocket. I swear I could recite the thing both before and afterwards like my paternoster; yet when I came to use it I stuck fast. It went like this:

**"With humble wishes for your good health, I, Henrich Andersen, have come here deliberately of my own free will and on my own initiative to inform you that I am no more of a stock and a stone than others, and inasmuch as every creature on earth, even the dumb brute, is subject to love, I, unworthy as I am, have come in the name of God and Honor to beg and urge you to be the darling of my heart—" (To the audience)** If any one will pay me back my eightpence, I will turn the thing over to him, for I believe that any one who made such a speech could get any good man's daughter that he had a mind to. Will you give me sixpence, then? Honestly, I paid eightpence for it myself. I'm damned if I sell it for less. But here comes the old man. I must be off. [Exit.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 4

**Enter Herman and Antonius.**

**HERMAN.** Many thanks, Monsieur Antonius, for your kind offer. You are a fine worthy fellow. I feel sure that you could take good care of my daughter. But I should very much like to have a son-in-law who had studied his politics.

**ANTONIUS.** But, my dear Monsieur Herman von Bremen, no one can support a wife and family on that!

**HERMAN.** You think not? Do you suppose I intend to die a tinker? You shall see, before half a year is over. I hope, when I have read through *The European Herald*, that I shall be urged to take a place in the council. I have already got *The Political Dessert* at my fingers' ends, but that is not enough. Confound the author! He might have spun it out a little. You know the book, of course?

**ANTONIUS.** No, not I.

**HERMAN.** Then I will lend you my copy. It is as good as it is brief. I have learned all my statecraft from that book, together with the *Herculus* and the *Herculiscus*.

**ANTONIUS.** That last one—isn't that just a romance?

**HERMAN.** Indeed it is, and I wish the world were full of such romances. I was at a certain place yesterday, and a man of the foremost rank whispered in my ear: "Any one who has read that book with understanding may fill the most important posts, ay, rule a whole nation."

**ANTONIUS.** Very good, master, but when I take to reading, I neglect my trade.

**HERMAN.** I tell you, monsieur, that I do not expect to confine myself to tinkering forever. I should have abandoned it long since, for hundreds of fine men here in town have said to me, "Herman von Bremen, you ought to be something else." It was only the other day that one of the burgomasters let fall these words in the council: "Herman von Bremen could surely be something more than a tinker. That man has stuff in him that many of us in the council itself might be glad to own." From which you may conclude that I shall not die a tinker. And therefore I wish to have a son-in-law who will apply himself to affairs of state, for I hope that in time both he and I shall become members of the council. And now, if you will start in with *The Political Dessert*, I shall examine you every Saturday evening and see what progress you make.

**ANTONIUS.** No, indeed, I will not. I am too old to go to school all over again.

**HERMAN.** Then you are not the sort to be my son-in-law. Adieu ! [Exit.]

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 5

**Enter Geske.**

**GESKE.** It is awful about my husband; he is never at home attending to business. I would give a good deal to find out where he keeps himself. But look, here is Monsieur Antonius! Are you all alone? Won't you come in?

**ANTONIUS.** No, thank you, mother, I am not worthy of that.

**GESKE.** What nonsense is this?

**ANTONIUS.** Your husband has his head full of political whims, and has a burgomastership on his brain. He turns up his nose at working-people like me and my kind. He imagines that he is cleverer than the notary public himself.

**GESKE.** The fool! The idiot! Will you heed him? I believe he's more likely to become a vagrant and have to beg his bread, than to become a burgomaster. Dear Antonius! you mustn't pay attention to him, and you mustn't lose the affection you have for my daughter.

**ANTONIUS.** Von Bremen swears she shall take no one who is not a politician.

**GESKE.** I'll wring her neck before I see her married to a politician. In the old days they used to call a rogue a politician.

**ANTONIUS.** Nor do I wish to become one. I want to earn my living honestly as a wheelwright. That trade gave my honored father his daily bread, and I hope it will feed me, too. But here comes a boy who seems to be looking for you.

**Enter boy.**

**GESKE.** What do you want, my boy?

**BOY.** I want to talk to Master Herman.

**GESKE.** He's not at home. Won't you tell me?

**BOY.** I was to find out for my mistress, if the dish was done that she ordered three weeks ago. We have sent after it twenty times, but they always put us off with talk.

**GESKE.** Ask your mistress, my son, please not to be angry. It will surely be done to-morrow. [Exit Boy.  
[Enter another Boy.]

**SECOND BOY.** I am to find out once and for all if the soup-plates will ever be finished. They could have been made and worn out since we ordered them. Mistress swore you shouldn't do any work for us again in a hurry.

**GESKE.** Listen, my dear child, when you order anything again, order it from me. At times my husband has bats in his belfry, and it does no good to talk to him. Believe me, on my word, it will be done by Saturday. Good-bye. (Exit Boy.) You see, my dear Antonius, how it goes in our house. We lose one job after another from my husband's neglect.

**ANTONIUS.** Is he never at home?

**GESKE.** Seldom; and when he is, he builds castles in the air so that he has no thought for work. I ask nothing of him except that he keep an eye on the workmen, for if he does anything himself, the apprentices have to do it over again. Here is Henrich: he will tell you what I say is true.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 6

(Enter Henrich.)

**HENRICH.** There's a man out here, mistress, who wants to be paid for the eight barrels of coal we got yesterday.

**GESKE.** Where can I get the money from? He will have to wait till my husband comes home. Can't you tell me where my husband is all day long?

**HENRICH.** If you will keep quiet about it, I can tell you right enough.

**GESKE.** I swear, Henrich, that I won't give you away.

**HENRICH.** There's a college that meets every day—Collegium Politicum, they call it—where a dozen or more people come together and chatter about affairs of state.

**GESKE.** Where does the meeting take place?

**HENRICH.** You mustn't call it a meeting, it is a Collegium.

**GESKE.** Where does the Collegium meet, then?

**HENRICH.** It meets in turn, now at one member's house, now at another's. To-day—don't tell on me—it will meet here.

**GESKE.** Ha, ha! Now I understand why he wants to have me out to-day calling on Arianke, the smith's wife.

**HENRICH.** You might go out, but come back in an hour and surprise them. Yesterday this Collegium of theirs met at Jens the tavern-keeper's. I saw them all there sitting at a table, and the master at the head of it.

**GESKE.** Did you know any of them?

**HENRICH.** I should say I did—all of them. Let me see: master and the tavern-keeper makes two, and Franz the cutler, three; Christopher the painter, four; Gilbert the paper-hanger, five; Christian the dyer, six; Gert the furrier, seven; Henning the brewer, eight; Sivert the baggage inspector, nine; Niels the clerk, ten; David the schoolmaster, eleven; and Richard the brushmaker, twelve.

**ANTONIUS.** They are fine fellows to discuss affairs of state! Didn't you hear what they talked about?

**HENRICH.** I heard well enough, but I understood very little. I heard them depose emperors and kings and electors, and set up others in their places. Then they talked about excise and consumption, about the stupid people who were in the council, and about the development of Hamburg and the promotion of trade; they looked things up in books and traced things out on maps. Richard the brushmaker sat with a toothpick in his hand; so I think he must be the secretary of their council.

**ANTONIUS.** Ha, ha, ha! The first time I see him I shall certainly say, "Good-day, Mr. Secretary!"

**HENRICH.** Yes, but don't you give me away. To the devil with fellows who put down kings and princes and even burgomaster and council!

**GESKE.** Does my husband join in the talk, too?

**HENRICH.** Not much. He just sits and ponders and takes snuff while the others talk, and when they have talked it all out, he gives his decision.

**GESKE.** Didn't he see you there?

**HENRICH.** He didn't see me because I was in another room, but if he had, his dignity wouldn't have allowed him to recognize me, for he had the air of a colonel, or of the first burgomaster when he gives audience to a minister. As soon as people get into colleges they gather a sort of mist before their eyes, and they can't see even their best friends.

**GESKE.** Oh, unfortunate creature that I am! That husband of mine will surely get us into trouble if the burgomaster and the council find he is setting up to reform the government. The good gentlemen don't want any reform here in Hamburg. You just see if we don't have a guard in front of the house before we know it, and my poor Herman von Bremen will be dragged off to jail.

**HENRICH.** That may happen, like enough; for the council has never had more power than now, ever since the troops were camped in Hamburg. All the citizens together aren't powerful enough to take his part.

**ANTONIUS.** Nonsense! Such fellows are only to be laughed at. What can a tinker, a painter, or a maker of brushes know about statecraft? The council is more likely to be amused than to be anxious about it.

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**GESKE.** I will see if I can't surprise them. Let us go in till they come. [Exeunt.

THE POLITICAL TINKER

**ACT II**

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 1

(A Room in Herman's house. Herman and Henrich are making preparations for the meeting.)

**HERMAN.** Henrich, get everything ready: mugs and pipes on the table. They will be here in a minute. (Henrich sets everything in order. One by one the members of the Collegium Politicum enter and sit at the table. Herman takes the seat at the head of the table.) Welcome to you all, good sirs. Where did we leave off last time?

**RICHARD.** I think it was the interests of Germany.

**GERT.** That is right. I remember now. That will all be decided at the next session of the Reichstag. I wish I might be there for an hour: I should whisper something into the ear of the Elector of Mainz that he would thank me for. Those good people do not understand on what the interests of Germany depend. Where has one ever heard of an imperial capital like Vienna without a fleet or, at the very least, galleys? They could just as well maintain a war-fleet for the defence of the kingdom. There are surely war-taxes enough, and imperial subsidies. See how much more shrewd the Turk is. We can never learn to make war from any one better than from him. There are certainly plenty of forests both in Austria and in Prague, if one only will use them, to make ships, or masts, for that matter. If we had a fleet in Austria, or in Prague, the Turks and the French would give up besieging Vienna, you may be sure, and we could go straight to Constantinople. But no one thinks of such a thing.

**SIVERT.** No, never a mother's soul of them. Our forefathers had more sense. It is all a question of preparation. Germany is no bigger now than it was in the old days when we not only defended ourselves honorably against all our neighbors, but took in large parts of France besides, and besieged Paris by land and sea.

**FRANZ.** But Paris is not a seaport, is it?

**SIVERT.** Then I must have my map all wrong. I know well enough where Paris is. Here is England, clear enough, right where I have my finger; here flows the Channel; here is Bordeaux; and here is Paris.

**FRANZ.** No, brother, here is Germany, and here, right next, is France, which is joined on to Germany; ergo Paris cannot be a seaport.

**SIVERT.** Isn't there any seacoast to France, then?

**FRANZ.** Certainly not. A Frenchman who has not travelled abroad has never heard about ships and boats. Just ask Master Herman. Is it not as I say, Master Herman?

**HERMAN.** I shall settle the dispute at once. Henrich, give us the map of Europe—Danckwart's map.

**JENS.** Here is one, but it is a bit torn.

**HERMAN.** That makes no difference. I know well enough where Paris is, and I only need the map to convince the others. Now, look, Sivert, here is Germany.

**SIVERT.** That's right. I can see that by the Danube, which is here. (As he points out the Danube he upsets a mug with his elbow, and the map is flooded.)

**JENS.** The Danube is flowing too strongly. (All laugh.)

**HERMAN.** Listen, my friends. We are talking too much about foreign affairs. Let us discuss Hamburg for a while—that subject will give us material enough. I have often pondered on the question of how it happens that we own no cities in India, but are forced to buy the wares of others. That is a matter that the burgomaster and council ought to consider.

**RICHARD.** Don't speak of the burgomaster and council. If we wait until they think of it, we shall wait a long time. Here in Hamburg a burgomaster is commended for nothing but holding the law-abiding burgesses in subjection.

**HERMAN.** I believe, my good friends, that it is not too late: for why should not the king of India trade with us as well as with the Hollanders, who have nothing to send out there but cheese and butter, which usually spoil on the way? I maintain that we should do well to send a proposal to the council to that effect. How many of us are here?

**JENS.** We are only six, for I don't believe the other six are coming.

**HERMAN.** That is enough. What is your opinion, Mr. Tavern-keeper? Let us vote.

**JENS.** I am entirely opposed to that plan, because such voyages take away from the city a great many good men from whom I get my daily penny.



## THE POLITICAL TINKER

**SIVERT.** I hold that we ought to consider the development of the city rather than our own interests, and that Master Herman's proposal is the most admirable that can ever be made. The more trade we have, the more the city must flourish; the more ships that come in, the better for us minor officials. But the latter is not the main reason I have for favoring this plan. The city's need and its progress are the only things that persuade me to support such a scheme.

**GERT.** I can by no means agree to this proposal. I advise instead the founding of a company in Greenland and on Davis Strait, for that trade is much better and more useful to the state.

**FRANZ.** I see that Gert's vote regards his own advantage more than the welfare of the republic; for people do not need a furrier so much on the voyages to India as on voyages to the North. For my part, I contend that India surpasses all in importance; in India you can often trade a knife, a fork, or a pair of scissors with the savages for its full weight in gold. We must contrive it so that the plan we put before the council will not smell of self-interest, or else we shall get nowhere with it.

**RICHARD.** I am of the same opinion as Niels the clerk.

**HERMAN.** You certainly vote like a brushmaker. Niels the clerk is not here. But what is the woman doing here? Good Heavens, it is my wife!

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 2

(Enter Geske.)

**GESKE.** Is this where you are, you dawdler? It would be better if you were at work on something, or at least superintending your workmen; for we lose one job after another from your neglect.

**HERMAN.** Quiet, wife! You will be Madam Burgomaster before you know it. Do you think that I go out just to pass the time? Ay, I do ten times as much work as all of you in the house: the rest of you work with your hands only; I work with my brain.

**GESKE.** All crazy people work that way, building castles in the air just as you do, cudgelling their brains with bosh and nonsense, imagining that they are doing something of importance when it is really nothing at all.

**GERT.** If she were my wife, she would not talk that way more than once.

**FRANZ.** I see that Gert's vote regards his own advantage more than the welfare of the republic; for people do not need a furrier so much on the voyages to India as on voyages to the North. For my part, I contend that India surpasses all in importance; in India you can often trade a knife, a fork, or a pair of scissors with the savages for its full weight in gold. We must contrive it so that the plan we put before the council will not smell of self-interest, or else we shall get nowhere with it.

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## THE POLITICAL TINKER

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**GERT.** If she were my wife, she would not talk that way more than once.

**HERMAN.** Ah, Gert, a statesman must pay no attention to that sort of thing. Two or three years ago I should have made my wife's back smart for such words, but since I have begun to look into works on politics, I have learned to despise such trifles. Qui nesclt simulare, nescit regnare, says an ancient statesman, who was no fool. I think his name was Agrippa, or Albertus Magnus. It is a fundamental principle of all the politics in the world; for he who cannot endure an evil speech from an angry and unreasonable woman is not fit to hold any high office. Self-control is the highest virtue and the jewel which most adorns rulers and magistrates. Therefore I maintain that no one should sit in our council here in the city until he has given proof of his self-control, and made it clear that he can take words of abuse, blows, and boxes on the ear. I am by nature quick-tempered, but I try to overcome it by study. I once read in the preface of a book called The Political Stockfish that when one is overwhelmed with anger he must count twenty, and his anger will pass.

**GERT.** It would do me no good to count up to a hundred.

**HERMAN.** Then you are good for nothing but a subordinate. Henrich, give my wife a mug of ale at the side table.

**GESKE.** Oh, you beast! Do you think I have come here to drink?

**HERMAN.** One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen—Now, it is all over. Listen, mother, you must not speak so harshly to your husband—it sounds utterly vulgar.

**GESKE.** Is it aristocratic to beg? Hasn't any woman reason enough to scold when she has such a good-for-nothing for a husband—a man who neglects his house like this, and leaves his wife and children in want?

**HERMAN.** Henrich, give her a glass of brandy, for she has worked herself into a passion.

**GESKE.** Henrich, give my husband a couple of boxes on the ear, the scoundrel!

**HENRICH.** You must do that yourself. I decline such a commission.

**GESKE.** Then I take it on myself. (Boxes both his ears.)

**HERMAN.** One, two, three—(counts to twenty, starts to strike her, but begins counting again). Eighteen, nineteen, twenty—If I hadn't been a statesman, you would have caught it that time!

**GERT.** If you don't keep your wife in check, I will. Get out of here. Go! Out with you!

[Exit Geske, still scolding.]

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 3

**GERT.** I'll teach her to keep quiet at home another time. I confess that if it is statesmanlike to let yourself be dragged about by the hair by your wife, I shall never be a statesman.

**HERMAN.** Oh, qui nescit simulare, nescit regnare; that is easily said, but less easily done. I admit it was a great indignity my wife did me. I believe I shall run after her yet and beat her on the street. But one, two, three, four (and so on), nineteen, twenty. Now, that's all over. Let us talk of other things.

**FRANZ.** The women have altogether too much to say here in Hamburg.

**GERT.** Yes, that is so. I have often thought of bringing forward a proposal on the subject. But it is dangerous to fall out with them. Still, the proposal has its good points.

**HERMAN.** What is the proposal?

**GERT.** It consists of several articles. First, I argue that the marriage contract should not be eternal, but should be made for a term of years, so that if a man were not content with his wife, he could make a new contract with another one. A man ought to be bound, as he is with a rented house, to give a quarter's notice before moving—day, which should be at Easter or Michaelmas. If he were satisfied, the contract could be renewed. Believe me, if such a law were passed, there wouldn't be a bad woman to be found in Hamburg. Every one of them would try to gain favor in her husband's eyes so that her contract might be renewed. Have you good men anything to say against that article? Franz, you smile so knowingly, you surely have something to say against it. Let us hear it!

**FRANZ.** But couldn't a woman sometimes take the opportunity to separate from a husband who either was cruel to her or was an idler and only ate and drank, and refused to work to support his wife and children? Or she might take a fancy to some one else and make it so hot for her husband that, contrary to his intention, he would let her go. I argue that worse trouble might arise from such an arrangement. There are methods enough for coercing a woman. If every one would count twenty like you, Master Herman, when he got a box on the ear, we should have a fine lot of women. My humble opinion is that the best way when a woman is unruly is for the husband to threaten to sleep alone and share no bed with her till she improves.

**GERT.** I couldn't stick to that. To many men that would be as much of a hardship as it would be to the woman.

**FRANZ.** But a man can go elsewhere.

**GERT.** But a woman can go elsewhere.

**FRANZ.** Anyhow, Gert, let us hear the other articles.

**GERT.** I see myself! You just want to scoff some more, Nothing is so good that no fault can be found with it.

**HERMAN.** Let us talk of other things. People who heard us talk would think we were holding a consistory or a divorce court. I was thinking last night, as I lay awake, how the administration in Hamburg could be best arranged so that certain families whose members are born, as it were, to be burgomasters and councillors could be excluded from the highest positions of authority and complete freedom be introduced. I figured that the burgomasters should be taken in turn, now from one trade—guild, now from another, so that all citizens might share in the government and all classes flourish. For instance, when a goldsmith was burgomaster he could look after goldsmiths' interests, and a tailor after tailors', a tinker after tinkers'; and no one should be burgomaster for more than a month, so no one trade should prosper more than another. When the government was arranged like that, we might be called a really free people.

**ALL.** The proposition is splendid. Master Herman, you talk like a Solomon.

**FRANZ.** The plan is good enough, but—

**GERT.** You always come in with a "but." I believe your father was a butler.

**HERMAN.** Let him express his opinion. What were you going to say? What does that "but" of yours mean?

**FRANZ.** I wonder if it might not be hard at times to get a good burgomaster from every common trade? Master Herman would do, for he is well educated. But when he is dead, where shall we find another among the tinkers fitted for such responsibility? For when the republic is brought to its knees, it is not so easy to make it over into another form as it is to make over a plate or a pot that is spoiled.

**GERT.** Oh, nonsense! We shall find capable men a—plenty, and among artisans, too.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

**HERMAN.** Listen, Franz. You are still a young man and so you can't see so deep into things as the rest of us, albeit I perceive that you have a good head and in time may amount to something. I can show you, briefly, that this objection of yours has no foundation, by a consideration of ourselves alone. We are twelve men in this guild, all artisans; each one of us can surely see hundreds of mistakes which the council makes. Imagine, now, that one of us becomes burgomaster and corrects all the mistakes that we have talked about so many times and that the council cannot see. Do you suppose the city of Hamburg would lose by such a burgomaster? If you good gentlemen are so disposed, I shall make that motion.

**ALL.** Yes, indeed.

**HERMAN.** But enough of these matters. Time flies, and we have not read the newspaper yet. Henrich, let us have the latest paper.

**HENRICH.** Here are all the latest newspapers.

**HERMAN.** Give them to Richard the brushmaker, who usually does the reading.

**RICHARD.** It is reported from headquarters on the Rhine that recruits are expected.

**HERMAN.** Oh, they have reported that twelve times in succession. Skip the Rhine. I could worry myself to death when I hear of such things. What is the news from Italy?

**RICHARD.** From Italy it is reported that Prince Eugene has broken camp, crossed the Po, and gone past all the fortifications to surprise the enemy, who thereupon retreated four miles in the greatest haste. The Duke of Vendome laid waste and burned right and left in his own territory as he retreated.

**HERMAN.** Upon my soul his Excellency is struck blind. We are done for. I wouldn't give fourpence for the whole army of Italy.

**GERT.** I maintain that the prince did right, for that has always been my plan. Didn't I say last time, Franz, that they ought to do that?

**FRANZ.** I don't remember that you did.

**GERT.** Of course I have said so, a hundred times. For why should an army lie idle? The prince has done right. I dare maintain it against any one, whoever he be.

**HERMAN.** Henrich, give us a glass of brandy. I swear, gentlemen, it went black before my eyes when I heard this news read.—Your health, gentlemen!—I must admit I consider it a fatal mistake to go past all the forts.

**SIVERT.** On my word, I should have done the same thing if the army had been entrusted to me.

**FRANZ.** You will see when they make generals of baggage inspectors.

**SIVERT.** You have no call to sneer. I should have been as good as another.

**GERT.** You are right there, Sivert. The prince did well to make straight for the enemy.

**HERMAN.** Ah, my good Gert, you are much too self-satisfied. You still have something to learn.

**GERT.** But not from Franz the cutler.

(They get into a violent quarrel and talk all at once. They rise from their chairs, threaten, and shout.)

**HERMAN** [knocking on the table and bellowing]. Silence! Silence! Gentlemen! Let us say no more about it, and each one hold to his own opinion. Listen, gentlemen! Keep still, will you? Do you think that it was from fear that the Duke of Vendome retired and set fire to the countryside? No, the fellow has been reading the Chronicle of Alexander the Great, for that's what he did when Darius followed him, and thereby he won as great a victory as we won before Hochstadt.

**JENS.** It has just struck twelve by the postmaster's clock.

**HERMAN.** Then we must go.

[They go out disputing, and make a great noise as they continue the argument.]

THE POLITICAL TINKER

**ACT III**

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 1

(In front of Herman's house stand Abrahams and Sanderus, with Christopher and Jochum, their servants.)

**ABRAHAMS.** I have a story for you that will amuse the whole town. Do you know what I have arranged with three or four gentlemen here in the city?

**SANDERUS.** No, I don't know.

**ABRAHAMS.** Do you know Herman von Bremen?

**SANDERUS.** That must be the tinker who is such a great politician and who lives in this house.

**ABRAHAMS.** That's the man. I was with some of the members of the council awhile ago, and they were very angry with the fellow because he talked so boldly at the tavern about the government, and wanted to reform everything. They thought it would be worth while to set spies on him to find out just what he says, so that he could be punished as an example to others.

**SANDERUS.** It would be a good thing to punish such fellows, for they sit over a jug of ale and criticise kings and princes and magistrates and generals in a way that is dreadful to listen to. And it is dangerous, too, for the common people have not the discretion to appreciate how absurd it is for a tinker, a hatter, and a maker of brushes to talk about such things, of which they know little or nothing, and settle matters that are too much for the whole council.

**ABRAHAMS.** That is so; for that same tinker could reform the whole Roman Empire while he patched a kettle, and play both mender of dishes and mender of diets at the same time. But I did not approve the plan of those councillors, because to arrest such a man would only start an uproar among the populace and make a person of importance out of a mere fool. My idea, then, is to play a joke on him, instead, which might have better effect.

**SANDERUS.** How would you go about it?

**ABRAHAMS.** Send him a deputation, supposedly from the council, to congratulate him on his election as burgomaster, and immediately set him some hard duty to perform. Then every one will see how miserable it will make him, and he himself will realize what a difference there is between talking about an office and doing the work of it.

**SANDERUS.** But what will come of it?

**ABRAHAMS.** The result will be that he will either run away from the city out of sheer desperation, or else humbly beg for his deposition and confess his incompetence. It is only for this purpose that I have come to you, Master Sanderus, to beg your help in putting this scheme into operation, for I know that you are skilful at that sort of thing.

**SANDERUS.** That can be arranged. We will play the part of the deputation ourselves, and call on him immediately.

**ABRAHAMS.** Here is his house. Jochum or Christopher, knock, one of you, and say that two gentlemen of the council are outside and wish to talk with Herman von Bremen. (They knock.)

THE POLITICAL TINKER

SCENE 2

(Enter Herman.)

**HERMAN.** Whom do you wish to see?

**JOCHUM.** Here are two gentlemen of the council, who have the honor of waiting upon you.

**HERMAN.** Heavens! What's up? I look as dirty as a pig.

**ABRAHAMS.** Your most humble servant, honorable Burgomaster! We have been sent here by the council to congratulate you on your election to the office of burgomaster of the city; for the council, after considering your merits more than your condition and circumstances, has elected you burgomaster.

**SANDERUS.** The council looks upon it as unjust that so wise a man should be occupied with such base affairs and should bury his great talent in the earth.

**HERMAN.** Honored colleagues! Convey my respects and gratitude to the just and upright councillors and assure them of my protection. I am delighted that this idea has occurred to them, not for my own sake, but for that of the city. If I had cared for rank, I might perhaps have attained something long ago.

**ABRAHAMS.** Honored Burgomaster! The council and the burgesses can expect nothing but the prosperity of the city under so wise a magistrate.

**SANDERUS.** And for that reason they have passed over so many rich and distinguished men who have sought this high office.

**HERMAN.** Yes, yes. I hope that they will not regret their choice, either.

**ABRAHAMS and SANDERUS.** We recommend ourselves, both of us, to the favor of the honorable Burgomaster.

**HERMAN.** It will be a pleasure to do you some service. Pardon me for not attending you further.

**SANDERUS.** Oh, it would hardly be fitting for your Honor to go further.

**HERMAN** (calling one of the lackeys). Listen, my friend! Here is something for a pot of ale.

**LACKEYS.** Oh, we do not do that, your Honor.

[Exeunt Abrahams, Sanderus, and Lackeys.]



THE POLITICAL TINKER

SCENE 3

**HERMAN.** Geske! Geske!

**GESKE** (off stage). I haven't time.

**HERMAN.** Come out here! I have something to tell you that you never dreamed of in all your life.

(Enter Geske.)

**GESKE.** Now, what is it?

**HERMAN.** Have you any coffee in the house?

**GESKE.** What nonsense! When did I use coffee last?

**HERMAN.** You will need it from now on. Within half an hour you will receive calls from the wives of all the members of the council .

**GESKE.** I think the man is dreaming.

**HERMAN.** Yes, I am dreaming, in such a way that I have dreamed us into a burgomastership

**GESKE.** Listen, husband, don't make me angry again!

**You know what happened last time.**

**HERMAN.** Didn't you see the two gentlemen and their lackeys who went past?

**GESKE.** Yes, I saw them.

**HERMAN.** They stopped here, and brought me word from the council that I have been made burgomaster.

**GESKE.** The devil you have!

**HERMAN.** Now, my dear wife, see that you strive hereafter to acquire more correct manners, and that you retain none of your old tinker-tricks.

**GESKE.** Oh, is it really true, my dear husband?

**HERMAN.** It is as true as I'm standing here. Before we know it, we shall have the house full of congratulators, of most-humble-servants, of I-have-the-honors, and of I-kiss-your-handers .

**GESKE** (on her knees). Ah, my dear husband, forgive me if I have ever done you an injustice!

**HERMAN.** Everything is forgiven; only try to behave more like gentlefolk, and you shall find favor with me. But where shall we get a servant in a hurry?

**GESKE.** We must manage to get Henrich into some of your clothes until we can buy a livery. But listen, my dear: since you have become a burgomaster, I beg of you that Gert the furrier may be punished for the wrong he did me to-day.

**HERMAN.** Oh, my dear wife! The burgomaster's wife must not think of avenging the injury done to the tinker's wife. Let us call in Henrich.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 4

**GESKE.** Henrich!

**HENRICH** (off stage). Hey!

(Enter Henrich.)

**GESKE.** Henrich! you must not answer like that after this. Don't you know what has happened to us?

**HENRICH.** No, I don't know.

**GESKE.** My husband has been made burgomaster.

**HENRICH.** What of?

**GESKE.** What of? Of Hamburg!

**HENRICH.** The deuce you say! That certainly is the devil's own jump for a tinker!

**HERMAN.** Henrich, speak with more respect. You must know that you are now the lackey of a man of prominence.

**HENRICH.** Lackey! Then I don't advance nearly so much!

**HERMAN.** You shall advance in time. You may even be a reutendiener some day. Only keep still. Your duty for a few days is to act as lackey until I can get a servant.—He can wear my brown coat, my dear, till we get a livery.

**GESKE.** But I am afraid it will be much too long for him.

**HERMAN.** Of course it is too long, but a man must help himself as best he can when he's in a hurry.

**HENRICH.** Good Lord! It goes down to my heels. I shall look like a Jewish priest.

**HERMAN.** Listen, Henrich—

**HENRICH.** Yes, master.

**HERMAN.** You rascal! Don't address me by any such title any more; from henceforth, when I call, you answer "Mr. Burgomaster!" and when any one comes to ask after me, you may say, "Burgomaster von Bremenfeld is at home."

**HENRICH.** Must I say that whether your Honor is at home or not?

**HERMAN.** What nonsense! When I am not at home, you must say, "Burgomaster von Bremenfeld is not at home;" and when I do not wish to be at home, you shall say, "The burgomaster is not giving audience to-day."—Listen, my dear, you must make some coffee immediately, so that you will have something to entertain the councillors' wives with when they come. For our reputation will from now on depend on having people say, "Burgomaster von Bremenfeld gives good counsel, and his wife good coffee." I am so much afraid, my dear, that you will make some mistake before you get accustomed to the position that you have attained.—Henrich, run get a tea-table and some cups, and tell the girl to run out and get fourpence' worth of coffee—one can always buy more later.—You make it a rule, my dear, not to talk much until you learn to carry on refined conversation. You must not be too humble, either, but stand upon your dignity, and strive in every way to get the old tinkering habits out of your head, and try to imagine that you have been a burgomaster's wife for years. In the morning a tea-table must be set for callers, and in the afternoon a coffee-table, and that can be used for cards. There is a game that they call Allumber; I would give a hundred thalers if you and our daughter, Miss Engelke, knew how to play it. You must pay close attention when you see other people play, so you can learn it. You must lie abed in the morning till nine or half past, for it's only common people who get up in the summer with the sun. But on Sunday you must get up a little earlier, as I expect to take physic on that day. You must get hold of a fine snuff-box, and let it lie on the table near you when you are playing cards. When any one drinks your health, you mustn't say "Thanks," but "Tres humble servitoor." And when you yawn, you mustn't hold your hand before your mouth, because that isn't done any more among the gentry. And lastly, when you are in company, you mustn't be too squeamish, but leave your propriety a little to one side.—Listen, I forgot something : you must also get a lap-dog and love it like your own daughter, for that's fashionable. Our neighbor Arianke has a pretty dog that she might lend you till we can get one for ourselves. You must give the dog a French name, which I shall think up when I have time. It must lie in your lap constantly, and you must kiss it at least half a dozen times, when there are callers.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

**GESKE.** No, my dear husband, I can't possibly do that, for there's no telling what a dog has been lying in and getting itself all dirty—you might get a mouthful of filth or fleas.

**HERMAN.** Here, here, no nonsense! If you want to be a lady, you must act like a lady. Besides, a dog like that can supply you with conversation; when you have run short of topics, you can talk about the dog's qualities and accomplishments. Just do as I say, my dear; I understand high society better than you do. Take me as your model. You shall find that not even the smallest of my old habits will remain. It won't happen to me as it did to a butcher, once, when he was made a councillor. Whenever he had written a page and wanted to turn over the leaf, he put his pen in his mouth, as he used to do with his butcher's knife. The rest of you go in now and get things ready. I want to talk awhile with Henrich alone.

[Exit Geske.]

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 5

**HERMAN.** Listen, Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** Don't you think people will envy me because of this preferment?

**HENRICH.** Well, what do you care about people who envy you, your Honor? If only I had been made a burgomaster like that, I should have sent my enviers to death and the devil.

**HERMAN.** The one thing I am a little anxious about is the matter of small ceremonies, for the world is governed by pedantry, and people notice trifles more than solid things. If only the first day were over, when I make my entry into the City Hall, I should be glad; for as far as substantial business is concerned, that is bread and butter to me. But I must arrange how I am to meet my colleagues for the first time and make sure that I do not run counter to any of the traditional ceremonies.

**HENRICH.** Oh, fiddlesticks, Mr. Burgomaster! No true man lets himself be bound by fixed ceremonies. I, for my part, should do nothing, if I were to make my entry, except give the gentlemen of the council my hand to kiss, and wear a fine scowl on my brow so that they might gather what my intentions were, and silently make them realize that a burgomaster was no goose and no dumpling.

**HERMAN.** But think, there must be an oration at the City Hall the first day that I am introduced. I can certainly make as good a speech as any one in town, and I should make bold to preach if it were to-morrow morning. But inasmuch as I have never been present at such a ceremony before, I really don't know what is the customary formula.

**HENRICH.** Oh, sir, no one but schoolmasters limit themselves by a formula. If I were burgomaster, I should be content with a brief and emphatic address, such as this: "It may seem a rather remarkable thing, wise and noble councillors, to see a miserable tinker suddenly turned into a burgomaster—"

**HERMAN.** Fie, that would be a shabby start.

**HENRICH.** No, that wouldn't be the start. I should begin my speech like this: "I thank you, wise and noble gentlemen, for the honor you have done a wretched tinker like me in making him burgomaster—"

**HERMAN.** You always bring in your confounded "tinker." It is not proper to talk like that at the City Hall, where I must act as if I had been born a burgomaster. If I were to make such a speech, I should only be scorned and mocked. No, no, Henrich, you would make a poor orator. He is a rogue who says I was ever a tinker. I have merely tinkered a little to pass the time away when I have been tired of studying.

**HENRICH.** He is a rogue who says I was ever a tinker's apprentice.

**HERMAN.** Then why do you want me to make such a speech?

**HENRICH.** Oh, have a little patience! Your Honor is too hasty. I should politely tell them at the start that if any one made fun of me for having been a tinker, he would get into trouble. And if I noticed the least expression of mockery on any one's face, I should say, "Wise and noble sirs, do you for a moment allow yourselves to imagine that you have made me burgomaster to ridicule me: And at that I should pound hard on the desk while I spoke, so that they might see from my introductory speech that I was not to be fooled with, and that they had made a burgomaster who was the man for the place. For if his Honor lets himself be imposed on at the start, the council will continue to look on him as a rascal."

**HERMAN.** You talk like a rascal, but still I shall manage to hit on the kind of speech I want to make. Let us go in.

[Exeunt.]

THE POLITICAL TINKER

**ACT IV**

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE I

(A Room in Herman's house. Henrich, alone. He has braid on both sleeves of his coat, which reaches to his heels, and is trimmed with white paper.)

**HENRICH.** I am a cur if I can see how the council hit on the idea of making my master burgomaster, because I can see no connection between a tinker and a high official like that, unless it is that just as a tinker throws plates and dishes into a mould and melts them up into new ones, so a good burgomaster can remould the republic, when it is declining, by making good laws. But the good men did not take into consideration the fact that my master is the worst tinker in Hamburg, and therefore, if they have by any chance chosen him on that basis, he will be the worst burgomaster, too, that we have ever had. The only useful thing about their choice is that it makes me a reutendiener, and that is a position for which I have both talent and inclination, for ever since I was a boy I have enjoyed seeing people arrested. It is a good place, too, for one who knows how to make something out of it. First of all I must appear to have a great deal of say with the burgomaster, and when people get that article of faith through their heads, Henrich will make at least a hundred or two hundred thalers a year, which I shall take not out of greed, but only to show that I understand my business as reutendiener. If any one wants to talk to the burgomaster, I say he is not at home. If they say they saw him at the window, I answer that it makes no difference, he is still not at home. People in Hamburg know at once what that answer means; they slip a thaler into Henrich's hand, and his Honor promptly comes home. If he has been ill, he recovers at once; if he has had visitors, they leave at once; if he has been lying down, he gets up at once. I run about with the lackeys of the gentry, now and then, and I know well enough what goes on in those houses. In the old days when folks were as stupid as horses and asses, such things were called stealing, but now they are known as "extras," "tips," or "unclassified income." But look, here comes Anneke; she doesn't know yet about the transformation, for she still has her vulgar tinker-look and tinker-walk.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 2

[Enter Anneke.]

**ANNEKE.** Ha, ha, ha! He looks like a mummer. I believe that's an Adrienne that he's got on him.

**HENRICH.** Listen, you tinker's trash! have you never seen a livery or a lackey before? Faith, these common people are like animals, they stand and stare like cows, when they see a man in different clothes one day from what he wears another.

**ANNEKE.** No, a joke's one thing, and sober truth's another. Don't you know that I've learned to tell fortunes? An old woman came here to-day who reads people's hands. I gave her a bit of bread and she taught me the art of seeing in people's hands what is going to happen to them. If I may look at your hand, I can tell your fortune at once.

**HENRICH.** Yes, yes, Anneke! Henrich isn't as stupid as you think. I smell a rat already. You have got wind of the promotion that is promised me to-day.

**ANNEKE.** No, indeed, I know nothing about it.

**HENRICH.** See how straight she keeps her face. Indeed you have heard it, and that is why you know how to tell fortunes so well. No, Henrich has an old head on his shoulders, and he can't be led by the nose.

**ANNEKE.** I give you my oath that I haven't heard a word of what you are talking about.

**HENRICH.** Haven't you been talking to madam the burgomaster's wife?

**ANNEKE.** The fellow is mad. What burgomaster's wife do I know?

**HENRICH.** Then I believe the young lady has told you.

**ANNEKE.** Here, enough of this nonsense, Henrich.

**HENRICH.** Look here, Anneke, here is my hand. Tell my fortune all you want. I see well enough that you have got wind of the affair, although you act as if you knew nothing about it. But it can do no harm to have you so wily; our whole household must be like that from now on. Now, what do you see in my hand?

**ANNEKE.** I see, Henrich, that master's custos which hangs back of the stove will dance a merry step on your back this day. Aren't you ashamed to go round like a mummer when there is so much work to do in the house, and to treat the master's coat like that?

**HENRICH.** Listen, Anneke! I can tell fortunes without reading hands. I prophesy that you are a rascal, and for your shameless talk you are going to get a box on the ear, or two, as the case may be. See, there's a prophecy come true. (Boxes her ear.)

**ANNEKE.** Ow, ow, ow! You shall pay dear for that.

**HENRICH.** Learn to show ordinary respect another time for a great gentleman's lackey—(Boxes her ear again.)

**ANNEKE.** Just you wait; mistress will be here in a minute.

**HENRICH** (again).—for the burgomaster's most distinguished servant—

**ANNEKE.** She will take it out on your back.

**HENRICH** (again).—for a reutendiener—

**ANNEKE.** Yes, yes! I say it again: that will cost you dear.

**HENRICH** (again).—for a person of great influence with the burgomaster—

**ANNEKE.** Oh, oh! No one in this house has ever struck me before.

**HENRICH** (again).—whom all the citizens will cherish and compliment henceforth.

**ANNEKE.** I think the fellow is stark mad. Oh, mistress! mistress! Come here!

**HENRICH.** Hush, hush! You will get into trouble with your mistress. I see now that you don't know what has happened, so, like a Christian, I forgive your fault. The council has unanimously elected the master burgomaster, mistress madam burgomaster, and decreed Engelke out of mere maidenhood into the degree of young lady. Therefore you can easily understand that it won't do for me to work any more. For the same reason, too, I wear this livery that you notice .

**ANNEKE.** Well, don't stand and stare at me into the bargain.

**HENRICH.** It is as I say, Anneke! Here comes the young lady, who shall vouch for my words.

THE POLITICAL TINKER



## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 3

(Enter Engelke.)

**ENGELKE.** Oh, God help me, poor creature! Now I see that all hope is gone.

**HENRICH.** Oh, my young lady, is this the time to weep, when your parents have come into such good fortune?

**ENGELKE.** Hold your tongue, Henrich, I don't want to be "my young lady."

**HENRICH.** What are you going to be, then? You're not a mere maiden, so you must be a young lady. That is surely the next degree of honor to which you rise when you lose your maidenhood.

**ENGELKE.** I had rather be a peasant's daughter. Then I could be sure of getting the man on whom I have set my heart.

**HENRICH.** Oh, is that all the young lady is crying about—that she wants to get married? Now she can get married in the shortest possible time to any man she points at, for half the town will besiege the house to be a burgomaster's son-in-law.

**ENGELKE.** I won't have any one but Antonius, whom I've already promised to marry.

**HENRICH.** Fie, Mamsell! Will you take a wheelwright now, a man I can scarcely associate with,—I, who am only a reutendiener? You should have a higher sense of honor after this.

**ENGELKE.** Be quiet, you lout! I would give up my life rather than let myself be forced to marry any one else.

**HENRICH.** Now reassure yourself, my young lady, we shall see, I and the burgomaster, if we can't help Antonius into office, and then you can take him and welcome. (Exit Engelke. Anneke weeps.) Why are you crying, Anneke?

**ANNEKE.** I am crying for joy over the fortune that has come to our house.

**HENRICH.** True enough, Anneke, you have cause to rejoice. Who the devil would have thought that such a sow as you are could ever become a lady's maid?

**ANNEKE.** And who the dickens could have thought that such a hog as you might become a reutendiener?

**HENRICH.** Listen, little girl, I haven't time to talk to you any longer now. Madam expects guests; I must prepare coffee. See, here she is; let us go. I must run get the coffee-table. [Exeunt.]

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 4

(Enter Geske with a dog in her arms. Henrich returns with the coffee-table and sets it busily.)

**GESKE.** Listen, Henrich, is there syrup in the coffee?

**HENRICH.** No, Mistress!

**GESKE.** No more "Master" and "Mistress," Henrich! I say that once for all. Run get some syrup and put it into the pot. (Exit Henrich .) I was free from all this hubbub before. But I suppose that once I am used to it, it will come easier to me.

(Enter Henrich.)

**HENRICH.** Here is the syrup.

**GESKE.** Pour it into the pot. Goodness me, some one is knocking. It must be the wives of councillors to call on me.

**HENRICH** (at the door). Whom do you want to speak to?

**GIRL.** Tell your master that he can lie like ten tinkers. I have worn out a pair of shoes running to and fro after the dripping-pan .

**HENRICH.** I say, whom do you want to speak to?

**GIRL.** I want to speak to Master Herman.

**HENRICH.** You are on a wild-goose chase. Burgomaster von Bremenfeld lives here.

**GIRL.** It is a scandal when people can't get their things done, and have to let themselves be made fools of by a miserable tinker .

**HENRICH.** If you have any fault to find with tinkers, you must go to the Council Hall; you will get justice there, or I don't know Burgomaster von Bremenfeld.

**TWO LACKEYS.** Our ladies are desirous of announcing that if it suits the convenience of Madam Burgomaster, they should like to have the honor of waiting on her.

**HENRICH** (to the Girl). Now, do you see, you scum of the earth, that it's no tinker that lives here? (To the servants.) I will inquire if the burgomaster's lady is at home.

[The Girl goes.

**HENRICH** (to Geske). Here are two councillors' ladies outside, who want to talk to the mistress.

**GESKE.** Let them in.

THE POLITICAL TINKER

SCENE 5

(Enter Madame Abrahams and Madame Sanderus. They kiss Geske's apron.)

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** We have come here to-day to offer our most humble congratulations and to témoigner the heartfelt joy and delight that we feel at your advancement, and at the same time to recommend ourselves to your favor and affection.

**GESKE.** Tres humble servitoor! I wonder if you wouldn't like to drink a cup of coffee.

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** We thank Madam Burgomaster, but this time we have come only to offer congratulations.

**GESKE.** Tres humble servitoor! But I know you like coffee. Perhaps you just want to be urged. Be so good as to sit down; the coffee is all ready. Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Gracious madam?

**GESKE.** Have you put the syrup in the coffee?

**HENRICH.** Yes, I have. [Exit.

**GESKE.** Please, good ladies, won't you have some?

**MME. SANDERUS.** I hope you will be so good as to excuse us, but we never drink coffee.

**GESKE.** Oh, nonsense, I know better I beg you be seated.

**MME. SANDERUS** (aside to Mme. Abrahams). Oh, ma soeur, I am sick at the mere thought of that syrup.

**GESKE.** Henrich, come fill the cups.

(Enter Henrich.)

**MME. SANDERUS.** That is enough, my good man. I can drink only half a cup.

**HENRICH.** I am to ask Madam Burgomaster to step in for a moment and speak to the burgomaster.

**GESKE.** Excuse me, good ladies, I must go for an instant. You shall shortly have the honor of seeing me again.

[Exeunt Henrich and Geske.]

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 6

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Whom is the joke on now, my sister, she whom we laugh at in our sleeves as we sit here, or we who have to drink coffee with syrup in it?

**MME. SANDERUS.** For Heaven's sake don't mention the syrup again! My stomach comes up into my throat when I think of it.

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** Did you notice the airs she put on when we kissed her apron? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! I shall never forget as long as I live that "Tres humble servitoor." Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

**MME. SANDERUS.** Don't laugh so loud, sister, I'm afraid they can hear it.

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** Oh, it is a real art to be able to keep from laughing. And wasn't that the sweetest dog she had in her arms? The loveliest watch-dog one might wish for. I am sure it was called "Joli" into the bargain. Heavens, heavens, how true it is, as people always say, that no one is more arrogant than those who come up from the dregs into positions of honor! That is why nothing is more dangerous than these sudden changes. People who are of good stock and are properly brought up are only too glad to stay as they were, or even to become more humble, when they rise to higher distinction. But those who grow up quickly out of nothing, like mushrooms, seem to come naturally by intolerable pride.

**MME. SANDERUS.** I wonder what the reason can be? I should think such people ought rather to be humbled by the thought of their former position.

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** The reason must be that those who come from good families have never suspected any one of despising them, and consequently don't worry about how they are received, whereas common people have always suspected every one, and think that every word and every glance is intended as a reflection on their previous state, and so they seek to assert their dignity by making themselves imperious and tyrannous. Believe me, dear sister! There is something in springing from good stock. But here comes the boy; we had better be still.

THE POLITICAL TINKER

SCENE 7

(Enter Henrich.)

**HENRICH.** The good ladies must not let the time seem long. The madam is coming back in a minute. The burgomaster has presented her with a new collar for her dog, but it was a little too wide; so the tailor is in there taking the measure of the dog's neck. As soon as that's settled, she will come back. But I hope you good ladies won't take it amiss, if I ask you a favor: will you be so good as to think of me in a little remembrance, for I have heavy work, and slave like a beast here in the house.

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** Gladly, my friend! Here is a gulden,—you will accept it.

**HENRICH.** Ah, my best thanks! I hope that I may serve you ladies again. Now, you must drink your fill while the mistress is out; she won't be angry, or if she is, I will make it all right.

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** My good man, the greatest service you can do us is not to urge us.

**HENRICH.** As I say, gentle ladies, I know the mistress won't mind; you simply must drink. Perhaps it isn't sweet enough. I will go get some more syrup.—But here she comes herself.

THE POLITICAL TINKER

**SCENE 8**

(Enter Geske.)

**GESKE.** I beg your pardon for staying away so long. ladies, you haven't drunk a thing in all this time! We simply must empty the pot, and then when you have the coffee, you must taste our ale. If I do say it it is as good as any ale in town.

**MME. SANDERUS.** Oh, I feel so very bad, you must pardon me if I am unable to stay any longer. My sister will stay and try it.

**MME. ABRAHAMS.** Oh, no, it would be a sin to desert my sister . We commend ourselves to the affection of Madam Burgomaster.

**GESKE.** Then you must have a glass of brandy—it will make you perfectly well again—it drives out the wind. Henrich! run get a glass of brandy—the lady's not feeling well.

**MME. SANDERUS.** No, excuse me; I must go. [Exeunt.]

THE POLITICAL TINKER

SCENE 9

(Enter another Councillor's Wife.)

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** Your humble servant. I have come dutifully to extend my felicitations.

(Geske reaches out her hand to be kissed, and the lady kisses it .)

**GESKE.** It will be a pleasure to me if I or the burgomaster can be of any service. Won't you sit down, please? Don't stand on ceremony, just imagine that you are among your equals.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** I am deeply obliged, madam! (Sits down.)

**GESKE.** Some of your colleagues were just here and drank some coffee with me; I think there must be a couple of cups left, if you should like some. The bottom's the best. I don't believe I can drink any more, because I've got so much in me already that my stomach's like a drum.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** I thank you humbly, but I have just had some coffee.

**GESKE.** As you wish. We gentlefolk don't urge any one. Oh, listen, dear madam—do you know of any Frenchwoman to recommend for my young lady? I want her to learn French.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** Yes, my lady, I know one who is very satisfactory.

**GESKE.** Good; but I want to have her understand at the outset that I cannot tolerate having her call me "Madame" as the French people usually do. Not that I am proud, but I have my own ideas on the point.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** Oh, no, of course she must not. But might I not also have the privilege of kissing your daughter's hand?

**GESKE.** I should be delighted. Henrich! Call the young lady and tell her that a lady of the council is here and wishes to kiss her hand.

**HENRICH.** I don't think she can come, because she's darning her stockings. [Exit.]

**GESKE.** Just listen to that lout, how he stands there and talks at random! Ha, ha, ha! He means to say "embroidering."

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 10

(Enter Arianke, the Blacksmith's Wife. (This part is played by a man.))

**ARIANKE.** Oh, my dear sister Geske! Is it true that your husband has been made burgomaster? I am as pleased as if I had been given two marks. Let us see now that you haven't become proud, but acknowledge your old cronies. (Geske does not answer?) When was your husband made burgomaster? (Geske says not a word.) You are getting absent-minded, sister. I am asking you when your husband was made burgomaster.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** You must show a little more respect, dear Madam, to a burgomaster's wife.

**ARIANKE.** No, I don't have to stand on ceremony with sister Geske, for we have been like body and soul. But what is the matter, sister? It seems to me that you have grown a bit haughty.

**GESKE.** My good woman, I don't know you.

**ARIANKE.** The Lord preserve us! When you needed money, you knew me well enough. You can't be sure but my husband may come to be the same as yours some time before he dies.

(Geske turns faint and uses a bottle of smelling-salts.)

**HENRICH.** Get out, you smith's hag! Do you think you're standing in a smithy and talking?

[Takes her by the hand and leads her off.]

**GESKE.** Oh, madam, it is a sorrow to associate with these low-born people. Henrich! you will get into trouble if you let in any more commoners' wives after this.

**HENRICH.** She was drunk as a pig; the brandy fairly stuck out off her throat.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** The incident pains me, for I fear that Madam Burgomaster has been overcome by anger. People of rank cannot endure much. The higher one advances in position, the more delicate one's health becomes.

**GESKE.** Yes, I can assure you that I am far from having the health now that I had in my former rank.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** I can believe that easily. Madam will have to take physic every day. All other burgomaster's wives have had to do it.

**HENRICH** (aside to the audience). I think, by Jove, that I haven't the health I used to have, since I became reutendiener. I've got a stitch—oh, oh!—right here in my left side. You laugh at it, good people, but I am really in earnest. Ma foi, I am afraid that before I know it I shall have gout on me.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** Madam must also engage a doctor by the year for her whole household, and he can give her some drops which she can at least leave standing in a bottle, whether she uses them or not.

**GESKE.** Yes, I certainly shall follow your advice. Henrich! Later on you must run to Doctor Hermelin's and ask him to make me a visit when he has time.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE.** I must now take my leave, madam, and commend myself to your affection.

**GESKE.** Already so commended, my dear lady! You have but to speak frankly to me or to Master Herman—I mean to Burgomaster von Bremenfeld. What service we can do to you or to those dear to you, you shall never lack.

**COUNCILLOR'S WIFE** (kissing her apron). Your most humble servant!

**GESKE.** Adieu! (Exit the Councillor's Wife.) Let us go in, for my husband is giving audience here.



THE POLITICAL TINKER

**ACT V**

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE I

(Same as Act IV. Henrich, alone.)

**HENRICH.** Well, well, here comes grist to my mill; it's the audience hour. Now, you shall see, good people, if a man who had been twenty years in the service could bear himself better than I.—There's some one knocking. Whom do you wish to see, my good men?

(Enter two Lawyers.)

**FIRST LAWYER.** We should very much like to have the honor of speaking to the burgomaster.

**HENRICH.** He is not up yet.

**FIRST LAWYER.** Not up at four in the afternoon?

**HENRICH.** Oh, he is up, to be sure, but he has gone out.

**FIRST LAWYER.** But we just met a man at the door who had been talking to him.

**HENRICH.** He really is in, but he is not well. (Aside.) These fellows are as stupid as cattle, they don't seem to grasp my meaning.

**FIRST LAWYER** (aside). I perceive, mon frere, that this fellow wants to be oiled; we must slip a gulden into his fist, and then the burgomaster will come fast enough. Listen, my friend! You will not refuse a couple of gulden to drink our healths with?

**HENRICH.** Oh, no, my dear sirs, I never take anything as a present.

**FIRST LAWYER.** What shall we do, then, mon frere? Evidently we must go away until another day.

**HENRICH** (beckons to them). Hey, gentlemen! you are in too much of a hurry. For your sake I will accept the two guldens; otherwise you might think that I was proud and our house would be ill spoken of in consequence.

**FIRST LAWYER.** Here, comrade! Here are two guldens, if you will accept them; now be good enough to obtain us an audience.

**HENRICH.** Your most humble servant. For your sake I shall do all I can. The burgomaster is really as sound as a horse, but still he is not well enough to talk with every one. But seeing that it is you, gentlemen, it is another story. If you will be so good as to wait a moment, gentlemen, I will announce you. But there's some one else knocking. Whom do you want to see, my good man?

(Enter a Man.)

**MAN** (feeling in his breeches pocket). I should like to have the honor of talking with the burgomaster.

**HENRICH** (aside). This man knows the ropes: he goes right for his pocket. (Aloud.) Yes, sir, he is at home. You may speak to him immediately.

(Henrich reaches out his hand, but the other instead of money merely pulls out his watch.)

**MAN.** I see it is already four o'clock.

**HENRICH.** Who was it you wished to see?

**MAN.** The burgomaster.

**HENRICH.** He is not at home, sir.

**MAN.** You just said that he was at home.

**HENRICH.** Perhaps I did, sir, but if I did, I made a mistake. (Exit Man. Henrich goes on, aside.) Look at that sharper! Now you shall see if the burgomaster is at your beck and call! (To the lawyers .) I shall announce you immediately. [Exit

**FIRST LAWYER.** Just see how that rascal knows how to fit into his place already. Keep good countenance, mon frere, it is we who shall start the plaguing of the good tinker. Our comrades will complete the tale. But here he comes.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 2

(Enter Herman and Henrich.)

**FIRST LAWYER.** From the bottom of our hearts we wish the honorable Burgomaster the greatest success in his high position in our city, and hope that in gentleness, foresight, and vigilance he may not fall behind his predecessors, inasmuch as his Excellency has made his way to this high office not through wealth, family, or friends, but purely by reason of his well-known great virtues, learning, and experience in affairs of state.

**HERMAN.** Tres humble servitoor!

**SECOND LAWYER.** Especially do we rejoice that we have now an administration endowed not only with almost godlike understanding—

**HERMAN.** I thank God—

**SECOND LAWYER.**—but one who has the reputation of being friendly to all and of making it his greatest delight to hear the people's grievances and to help to right them. I may say that I almost fainted with joy when I first heard the news that the choice had fallen on Burgomaster von Bremen.

**HENRICH.** You must say "Bremenfeld," gentlemen.

**SECOND LAWYER.** I humbly beg your pardon: I should say, "Burgomaster von Bremenfeld." To-day we have come here, in the first place to extend our respectful congratulations; in the second place to consult your Magnificence on a difference that has arisen between our clients, which difference we had both agreed to have judged according to the common law of the land and the statutes. But we subsequently changed our mind and decided, in order to save time and costs, to submit ourselves to your judgment, and we promise to abide by that.

(Herman sits down, leaving the others standing.)

**FIRST LAWYER.** Our clients are neighbors, but there is running water separating their land. Now it happened that three years ago the water loosened a large piece of earth from my client's estate and deposited it on my opponent's field. Shall he now own it? Is it not stated: *Nemo alterius damno debet locupletari*? Here his client wishes to enrich himself at my client's expense, which aperte conflicts with *aequitatem naturalem*. Is that not so, Mr. Burgomaster?

**HERMAN.** Of course; it is unjust to ask that. You are right, monsieur!

**SECOND LAWYER.** But does not Justinian say expressly, *libro secundo Institutionum, titulo prima, de Alluvione*...

**HERMAN.** What the deuce do I care for what Justinian or Alexander the Great says? They lived a few thousand years, perhaps, before Hamburg was founded. How can they decide in cases which didn't exist in their time?

**SECOND LAWYER.** I hope, however, that your Honor is not going to reject the laws that all Germany has submitted to.

**HERMAN.** That was not the way I meant it; you misunderstood me, I only meant to say—(He has a coughing fit.) Kindly continue your case.

**SECOND LAWYER.** There are the words of Justinian: *Quod per alluvionem agro tuo flumen adjecit, jure gentium tibi acquiritur*.

**HERMAN.** Mr. Lawyer, you speak so devilish fast—say that over, more distinctly. (The lawyer repeats the Latin slowly.) Monsieur, you have a devilish bad Latin pronunciation. Speak your mother-tongue, and you will do better. I don't say this because I have any prejudice against Latin, for I sometimes sit and talk Latin with my servant for hours at a time. Isn't that so, Henrich?

**HENRICH.** It is wonderful to hear his Honor talk Latin; I swear the tears come into my eyes when I think of it. It is like listening to peas boiling in a pot, the words come so quickly from his mouth. The devil himself doesn't know how a man can manage to talk so fluently. But what won't long practice do for you?

**SECOND LAWYER.** Justinian's words, your Magnificence, are as follows: Whatsoever a river wears off another's field and casts up on yours, that belongs to you.

**HERMAN.** Yes, Justinian is right so far, for he was a fine man. I have much too much respect for him to question his decision.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

**FIRST LAWYER.** But, your Honor, my opponent interprets law as the devil does the Bible. He forgets what follows right after: *Per alluvionem autem videtur id adjici, quod ita paulatim adjicitur, ut intellegere non possis, quantum quoquo temporis momenta adjiciatur.*

**HERMAN.** Messieurs! I must go to the City Hall. The clock has just struck half–past four. Henrich! See to it that you adjust this suit in the entry.

**FIRST LAWYER.** Ah, your Honor! Give us your opinion in a word .

**HERMAN.** Messieurs, you are both right, each one in his own way.

**SECOND LAWYER.** How can we both be right? I maintain that if I am right, my antagonist is wrong. The law of Justinian is expressly in my favor.

**HERMAN.** Excuse me, I must be off to the City Hall immediately .

**FIRST LAWYER** (seizing hold of him). I have certainly proved that Justinian's opinion is on my side.

**HERMAN.** Yes, that is so. Justinian is for both of you. Why the devil, then, don't you compromise? You don't know Justinian as well as I do; when he wears the mantle on both shoulders, it is as much as to say: Get out, you scurvy–necks, and compromise!

**SECOND LAWYER.** Your Honor, in order to grasp the jurist's meaning correctly, one must compare one article with another. Is it not written in the very next paragraph: *Quodsi vis fluminis de tuo praedio—?*

**HERMAN.** Here, let me go, you pettifoggers! Don't you hear me say I must go to the City Hall?

**FIRST LAWYER.** Oh, your Honor! A moment! Let us now hear what Hugo Grotius says.

**HERMAN.** To the devil with both you and Hugo Grotius! What have I to do with Hugo Grotius? He was an Arminian. What in the devil have laws to do with us that people make way off in Armenia? Henrich, put them straight out the door. [Exeunt Lawyers.]

THE POLITICAL TINKER

**SCENE 3**

(Henrich remains in the entry squabbling with some one, then shoots in headfirst, followed by a man dressed up as a woman.)

**WOMAN** (taking the Burgomaster by the lapels of his and screaming) . Oh, what kind of a government is this that passes such damnable laws that a man may have two wives? Do you think that the judgment of God isn't on you?

**HERMAN**. Are you mad, woman? Who the devil ever thought of such a thing?

**WOMAN**. Hey, hey, hey! I shall not go away until I have your heart's blood!

**HERMAN**. A—ah, help! Henrich! Peiter!

(Enter Peiter. He drags the woman off. Henrich, who has been hiding, finally comes on and helps him out. Exeunt struggling.)

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 4

**HERMAN.** Henrich, there will be trouble for you if you let in any more women or lawyers after this, for both of them kill me in their own way. If any others come and want to talk to me, you must tell them to be careful not to talk Latin, as I have given it up for a special reason.

**HENRICH.** I have given it up, too, for just the same reason.

**HERMAN.** You can say that I talk only Greek.

(Another knock. Henrich goes to the door and returns with a huge bundle of papers.)

**HENRICH.** Here is a heap of papers from the syndics, which the burgomaster must look over and give his opinion on.

(Herman sits down at a table and fumbles among the papers.)

**HERMAN.** It isn't so easy to be a burgomaster as I thought, Henrich. I've got some things here to look over that the devil himself couldn't make sense of. (Begins to write, gets sweat from his brow, sits down, and scratches out what he wrote before.) Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** What's that noise you are making? Can't you keep quiet?

**HENRICH.** I'm not moving, Mr. Burgomaster.

**HERMAN** (gets up, wipes his face, and throws his wig upon the floor, to see if he can think better with his head bare. He steps over the wig, kicks it to one side, sits down to write again, and calls out). Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** You 'll get into trouble if you don't stand still. That's the second time you have interrupted my train of thought.

**HENRICH.** Honestly I didn't do anything but tuck my shirt in and measure on my leg how much too long my livery coat is.

**HERMAN** (gets up again and pummels his forehead with his fists to make the thoughts come). Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** Go out and tell the women that are hawking oysters on the street that they mustn't yell in the street I live in, because they disturb my political deliberations.

**HENRICH** (calls from the doorway, three times in succession). Listen, you oyster-women! You rabble! You carrion! You shameless wenches! You married men's whores! Is there no decency in you, that you dare to yell like that in the burgomaster's street and disturb him in his business?

**HERMAN.** Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** Shut up, you brute!

**HENRICH.** It does no good, anyhow, to shout any more, because the town is full of people like that, and as soon as one goes by another comes in his place and—

**HERMAN.** No more talk. Stand still and keep your mouth shut. (Sits down, and again scratches out what he has written; writes more, gets up, stamps in anger, and calls.) Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** I wish the devil would run off with this burgomastership. Do you want to be burgomaster in my place?

**HENRICH.** I'd rather be damned. (Aside.) And any one who would want the office deserves to be damned.

**HERMAN** (tries to sit down and go on writing, but he absent-mindedly picks the wrong place and lands on the floor). Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** I'm lying on the floor.

**HENRICH.** So I see.

**HERMAN.** Come help me up.

**HENRICH.** But the burgomaster has just said I mustn't move from where I stand.

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

**HERMAN.** That boy is damnable. (Gets up unassisted.) Isn't some one knocking?

**HENRICH.** Yes. (Goes to the door.) Whom do you want?

**CITIZEN** (off stage). I am the alderman of the hatters' guild, and I have a complaint to make to the burgomaster.

**HENRICH.** Here's the alderman of the hatters with some grievances.

**HERMAN.** Oh, I can't keep more than one thing in my head at a time. Ask him what it is. (Henrich asks what he wants.)

**CITIZEN.** It's too long. I must speak to the burgomaster in person. It can be attended to in an hour, for my complaint consists of only twenty points.

**HENRICH.** He says he must talk to the burgomaster in person, for his point consists of only twenty complaints.

**HERMAN.** Oh, God help me, poor man, I am all jumbled up in my head already. Let him in.

THE POLITICAL TINKER

**ACT FIFTH**



THE POLITICAL TINKER

**SCENE 5**

(Enter the Citizen.)

**CITIZEN.** Ah, honored Burgomaster, poor man that I am, I have suffered great injustice, which the burgomaster will at once understand when he has heard about it.

**HERMAN.** You must put it in writing.

**CITIZEN.** Here it is, all written out, in four sheets.

**HERMAN.** Henrich! Some one is knocking again.

**HENRICH.** Whom do you want to talk to?

**ANOTHER CITIZEN** (off stage). I have a complaint to lodge before the burgomaster against the alderman of the hatters' guild.

**HERMAN.** Who is that, Henrich?

**HENRICH.** It is this man's adversary.

**Herman.** Make him hand you his memorial. Both you good men wait in the anteroom meanwhile.

[Exit the Citizen.]

## THE POLITICAL TINKER

### SCENE 6

**HERMAN.** Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Yes, sir!

**HERMAN.** Can't you help me put this to rights? I don't know what to do first. Read aloud that hatter's statement.

**HENRICH** (falteringly reads). "Noble, learned, stern, and steadfast Burgomaster. As the first—fruits of the worthy company of lawful citizens of this glorious city, I the undersigned, N. N., present myself, unworthy Alderman of the worthy Hatters' Guild; and after having extended congratulations both respectful and hearty on a man so worthy and highly raised on high to so height, in deepest humility submit for your consideration one of the greatest, most dangerous, and abominable abuses which wicked times and still more wicked men have brought into practice in this city, in hope that your Magnificence will afford a remedy. This, then, is the case: The hucksters here in the city, utterly without fear or shame, openly sell and offer for sale whole pieces of a sort of cloth which they cause to be woven of beaver—indeed they even descend to the dismal audacity of having stockings made of it—though it is well known that beaver—hair belongs exclusively to our profession, whereby we poor hatters are unable at any price to obtain the hair necessary for the pursuit of our means of subsistence, especially as good people have got into such a way that few will pay, as they used to do, from ten to twenty rix—dollars for a hat, to the irreparable damage of the reputation and profit of our trade. If it might now please his Magnificence the Burgomaster to consider the appended twenty—four weighty causes and reasons which have led us hat—makers presumably to presume that we alone are entitled to work in beaver, to wit:

(1) that since ancient times it has been a universal usage and custom of the country, not only this country but over the whole world, to wear beaver hats, as can be proved by manifold citations from history and by legally sworn witnesses, (a) As to history—"

**HERMAN.** Skip the history.

**HENRICH.** "(b) As to witnesses, Adrian Nilsen, in the seventy—ninth year of his age, can remember that his father's great—grandfather said—"

**HERMAN.** Skip what he said, too.

**HENRICH.** "(2) That it is an immoderate luxury to use such expensive hair for stockings and clothes, a practice at variance with all good order and usage, especially since there are so many expensive cloths imported from England, France, and Holland that one might well be satisfied without depriving an honest man of his living—"

**HERMAN.** Enough, enough! Henrich! I see that the master is right.

**HENRICH.** But I have heard that an official ought always to hear both sides before he makes his decision. Shall I not read the opponents' retort also?

**HERMAN.** To be sure. (He hands him the other memorial.)

**HENRICH** (reads). "High—born Excellency, highly enlightened and highly statesmanlike Burgomaster. As high as your understanding soars above others', so high soared my joy above others' when I heard that you had become burgomaster; but what I have come for is because the hatters are annoying me and do not want to let me sell fabrics and stockings made of beaver. I understand well enough what they want: they want to have the business in beaver all to themselves and have beaver used for nothing but hats; but they do not understand the situation. It is idiotic to wear beaver hats: men go about with them under their arms, they are neither warm nor useful, and a straw hat would do just as well. On the other hand, beaver stockings and clothing are both warm and soft, and if the burgomaster had only tried them, as he may in time, he would see for himself."

**HERMAN.** Stop, that is enough; this man is right, too.

**HENRICH.** But I am sure they can't both be right.

**HERMAN.** Which is right, then?

**HENRICH.** That our Lord and the burgomaster must know.

**HERMAN** (gets up and walks to and fro). This is devilish nonsense, Henrich! Can't you tell me, you stupid animal, who is right? Why should I give a dog like you board and wages? (A racket outside.) What's the noise in

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the hall?

**HENRICH.** The two citizens have each other by the hair.

**HERMAN.** Go out and bid them respect the burgomaster's house.

**HENRICH.** It is better, sir, to let them fight, so they may perhaps become good friends again all the sooner. Gracious! I think they will break in; listen how they are beating on the door! (Herman crawls under the table.) Who knocks?

**A LACKEY** (outside). I have come from a foreign resident. My master has something to discuss with the burgomaster which is most important.

**HENRICH.** Where the deuce is the burgomaster? Has the devil flown off with the burgomaster? Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN** (under the tables—whispering). Henrich! Who was that?

**HENRICH.** A foreign president wants to talk with your Honor.

**HERMAN.** Tell him to come again in half an hour, and say that there are two hat-makers here to see me whom I must despatch. Henrich! Ask the citizens to go away till to-morrow. Oh, God help me, poor man! I am so jumbled up in my head that I don't know myself what I am saying or doing. Can't you help me to get it straightened out, Henrich?

**HENRICH** (returning from the door), I know no better advice for his Honor than to go and hang himself.

**HERMAN.** Go and get me The Political Stockfish. It is lying on the sitting-room table—a German book in a white binding. Perhaps I can find in it how I should receive foreign presidents.

**HENRICH.** Does the burgomaster want mustard and butter with it?

**HERMAN.** No, it is a book in a white binding. (Exit Henrich. While he is gone Herman absent-mindedly tears the hatters' document to pieces. Reenter Henrich with the book.)

**HENRICH.** Here is the book. But what is it, sir, that you are tearing up? I believe it's the master hatters' complaint.

**HERMAN.** Oh, I did that without thinking. (He takes the book and throws it on the floor.) I believe, Henrich, I had better take your advice and hang myself.

**HENRICH.** Oh, Lord! Another knock! (Exit. Reenter in tears.) Oh, Mr. Burgomaster! Help, Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** What's up?

**HENRICH.** There is a whole regiment of sailors in front of the door yelling, "If we don't get justice, we shall smash all the burgomaster's windows in." One of them hit me in the back with a stone. Oh, oh, oh!

**HERMAN** (crawls under the table again). Henrich, ask Madam Burgomaster to come hold them in check. They may show respect for a woman.

**HENRICH.** Yes, yes, you shall see how much respect sailors have for a woman. If she goes out there, they may rape her, and then you would be worse off in the end than you were in the beginning.

**HERMAN.** Oh, but she is an old woman.

**HENRICH.** Sailors aren't so particular. I shouldn't risk my wife like that. They are knocking again. Shall I open the door?

**HERMAN.** No, I'm afraid it's the sailors. Oh, I wish I were in my grave. Henrich, run to the door and listen to see who it is.

**HENRICH.** Look, they are coming right in. It is two councillors.

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SCENE 7

(Enter Abrahams and Sanderus.)

**ABRAHAMS.** Isn't the burgomaster at home?

**HENRICH.** Yes, he's sitting under the table. Mr. Burgomaster!

**SANDERUS.** What? Are you sitting under the table, your Honor?

**HERMAN.** Oh, good sirs, I never asked to be made burgomaster. Why have you got me into all this trouble?

**ABRAHAMS.** You certainly accepted it at one time. Do come out, your Honor! We have come to point out the great wrong you did the foreign minister when you dismissed him so haughtily—because of which the city may get into difficulties. We thought that the burgomaster understood Jus publicum and ceremony better than that.

**HERMAN.** Oh, good gentlemen, you can depose me, and then I shall be relieved of a burden I am too weak to bear, and the foreign minister will get satisfaction at the same time.

**SANDERUS.** Far be it from us, your Honor, to depose you! You must come with us straight to the City Hall to consider with the syndics how the error can be remedied.

**HERMAN.** I won't go to the City Hall, even if I'm dragged by the hair. I don't want to be burgomaster, I never did want to be burgomaster, and I'd rather you killed me. I am a tinker, before God and honor, and a tinker I shall die.

**SANDERUS.** Will you make fools of the entire council? Listen, colleague, did he not accept the office of burgomaster?

**ABRAHAMS.** Certainly, and it is a fact which we have already reported to the council.

**SANDERUS.** We must consider the matter. The whole Senate is not going to allow itself to be made game of in this way. [Exeunt Abrahams and Sanderus.]

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SCENE 8

**HERMAN.** Henrich! (He comes out from under the table.)

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** What do you think these councillors are going to do to me?

**HENRICH.** I don't know; they were very angry, I could see. I am surprised that they dared use such language in the burgomaster's own room. If I had been burgomaster, I should have come right out and said to them: "Shut up, you scurvy-necks! Stick your fingers on the floor and smell whose house you are in!"

**HERMAN.** I wish you were burgomaster, Henrich! I wish you were burgomaster! Oh—oh—oh'

**HENRICH.** If I might interrupt your business, sir, I should like to make one humble request, and that is that henceforth I might be called "von Henrich."

**HERMAN.** You shameless rogue! Is this the time to come to me with such talk, now, when you see that I am caught in a net of nothing but misfortunes and troublesome business!

**HENRICH.** On my word, I don't ask out of ambition, but only to command a little respect in the house from my fellow servants, especially from Anneke, who—

**HERMAN.** If you don't shut up, I'll break your neck into little pieces! Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster!

**HERMAN.** Can't you help me get this straightened out, you stupid dog? Look here, if you don't clear up my affairs for me, there'll be trouble.

**HENRICH.** It's a wonder that you should ask such a thing of me, you who are such a clever man, and have been called to this high station solely on account of your wisdom.

**HERMAN.** Are you going to make fun of me into the bargain? (He picks up a chair and makes as if to hit him. Henrich runs out.)

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### SCENE 9

**HERMAN** (sits down with his head in his hands and ponders a long time. Then he jumps up, startled). Didn't some one knock? (Goes softly to the door, but sees no one. He sits down again, and ponders; falls to weeping, and dries his eyes with papers; he jumps up again and yells as if he were in a frenzy.) A whole pack of papers from the syndics! The alderman of the hatters! The alderman's opponent! Complaint in twenty headings! Riot of sailors! A foreign president! Impeachment by the council! Threats! Isn't there a rope here at hand? Yes, I think there really is—there's one behind the stove. (Takes the rope and prepares a noose.) It was predicted of me, that I should be elevated by my political studies. The prophecy will come true, if only the rope holds. Let the council come, then, with all their threats, I scoff at them, once I am dead. But there is one thing I could wish for—to see the author of *The Political Stockfish* hanged by my side with sixteen copies of *The Council of State and Political Dessert* hung round his neck. (Takes the book from the table and tears it apart.) You brute! You shall never mislead another honest tinker. So, that's the last bit of comfort before I die! Now I must look for a hook to hang myself from. It will be especially noteworthy to have it said after my death: "What burgomaster in Hamburg was ever more vigilant than Herman von Bremenfeld, who in his whole term of office never slept a wink?"

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SCENE 10

(Herman climbs up on a chair, where he remains all through the scene. Enter Antonius.)

**ANTONIUS.** Here, here! What the devil are you doing?

**HERMAN.** I have no intention of doing anything; on the contrary, I am about to hang myself to avoid everything. If you will keep me company, it will be a pleasure to me.

**ANTONIUS.** Indeed I will not; but what brings you to such a desperate intention?

**HERMAN.** Listen, Antonius! it won't do any good to discuss it. I am to be hanged; if it doesn't happen to-day, it will happen to-morrow. I only beg, before I die, that you will pay my respects to Madam Burgomaster and the young lady, and instruct them to give me the following epitaph:

Traveller, stand and heed!

Here hangs

Burgomaster von Bremenfeld,

Who in his whole term of office

Spent not a minute in sleep:

Go forth and do likewise.

**You may not know, dear Antonius, that I have been made burgomaster, that I have attained a position in which I don't know black from white, and where I find myself utterly incompetent; for I have observed, from the various tribulations which I have already met, that there is a great difference between being the government and criticising the government.**

**ANTONIUS.** Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

**HERMAN.** Don't laugh at me, Antonius! It is a sin to do it.

**ANTONIUS.** Ha, ha, ha! Now I see how it all works out. I was at the inn just now, and I heard people there bursting with laughter over a joke which had been played on Herman von Bremen, who had been made to believe by some young men that he had been elected burgomaster, to see how he would act. That pained me through and through and I came straight here, to warn you.

**HERMAN.** Ah, then I'm not a burgomaster at all?

**ANTONIUS.** No; the story was made out of whole cloth, to show you the foolishness of arguing about high subjects that you don't understand.

**HERMAN.** Then it's not true about the foreign president?

**ANTONIUS.** Certainly not.

**HERMAN.** Or the master hatter either?

**ANTONIUS.** All fabricated.

**HERMAN.** Nor the sailors?

**ANTONIUS.** No, no.

**HERMAN.** To the devil with hanging, then! Geske! Engelke! Peiter! Henrich! Come here, all of you!

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SCENE 11

(Enter Geske, Engelke, Peiter, Henrich.)

**HERMAN.** My dear wife! Go back to work; our burgomaster business is all over.

**GESKE.** Over?

**HERMAN.** If I were sure that you used that title out of malice, it would go hard with you.

**HENRICH.** No, indeed, I didn't, master, but it's hard to get things straight again so quickly.

**HERMAN.** Take hands, you two. So, that's the way. To-morrow we shall have a wedding. Henrich!

**HENRICH.** Mr. Burgomaster—Beg your pardon, I mean master!

**HERMAN.** Burn up all my political books, for I can't have them before my eyes any more, after the foolish ideas they put into my head. (To the audience.)

To take the leading statesman's part  
Is harder far than sneering,  
For squinting at a seaman's chart  
Is not the whole of steering:  
With books on politics at hand  
A dolt may criticise,  
But judging right our fatherland  
Is only for the wise.  
All craftsmen who have seen my fate,  
Pray, profit by its ending:  
Though all's not sound within the state,  
That's not our kind of mending.  
And when we drop our humble tools  
And set us up as thinkers,  
We look the sorry lot of fools  
That statesmen would as tinkers.