

The Project Gutenberg eBook of La Tontine, by Alain René Le Sage

This is a *copyrighted* Project Gutenberg eBook, details below.

Title: La Tontine

Author: Alain René Le Sage

Translator: Frank J. Morlock

Release date: April 1, 2004 [EBook #11946]

Most recently updated: December 26, 2020

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LA TONTINE ***

Produced by Dagny

This Etext is for private use only. No republication for profit in print or other media may be made without the express consent of the Copyright Holder. The Copyright Holder is especially concerned about performance rights in any media on stage, cinema, or television, or audio or any other media, including readings for which an entrance fee or the like is charge. Permissions should be addressed to: Frank Morlock, 6006 Greenbelt Rd, #312, Greenbelt, MD 20770, USA or frankmorlock@msn.com. Other works by this author may be found at <http://www.cadytech.com/dumas/personnage.asp?key=130>

La Tontine

One Act by Le Sage

Translated and Adapted by

Frank J. Morlock

C 1986

CHARACTERS

English: Original French:

Dr. Peacock M. Trousse-Galant

Flem M. Bolus

Worthy Eraste

Harriet Marianne

Jeremy Crispin

Dudley Ambrose

Trippet Frosine

St. Slaughter * Sergeant

Soldiers

* This character and the soldiers may be omitted in production.

Five men, two women

Scene: Dr. Peacock's house.

Flem Truly, Dr. Peacock, you're a clever man. I've been a pharmacist for twenty-five years and never met a doctor who practiced medicine like you.

Peacock Indeed, no other doctor of my acquaintance has penetrated nature as deeply as I have. But I don't like to praise myself; I can't stand flattery. I want you to come home with me to discuss an important matter. Now, has any one asked for me while I was away? TRIPPET, hey, TRIPPET!

Trippet (entering)

How you do scream! Well, sir, what can I do for you?

Peacock

Has Lady Bellaston asked for me?

Trippet

No, sir.

Peacock

So much the better. It's a sign her medication is working. How about Judge Glanville—has he called?

Trippet

Yes, sir.

Peacock Good. It's to tell me that the purge I gave him yesterday has cured him of his pleurisy.

Trippet The poor man died during the night. His son came to tell you. He was in a fury and cursed you and Mr. Flem. I took your part and he cursed me out, too. Happily, I can deal with that. I listened to him very calmly.

Peacock What right has he to complain? I gave him the best treatment. I bled him more than twenty times and purged him frequently. He ought to be cured according to the books.

Trippet

And died according to bell and candle.

Peacock

Get out of here, impudence. Leave criticizing doctors to the surgeons.

(Exit Trippet.)

Flem Between you and me, Dr. Peacock, I don't have a high opinion of that purge.

Peacock

It worked effectively most of the time—excepting the Judge.

Flem

Also, excepting your wife who you buried last year.

Peacock

Right.

Flem

That merits some concern.

Peacock Not at all. A good doctor pursues his calling without any regard to a bad result. Otherwise, teaching in medical school might be called into question and where would we be then?

Flem

That's another matter.

Peacock

I never deviate from established practice.

Flem
You do wisely.

Peacock
Well now, let's talk of the business I brought you here for. You know I've always regarded you as my best friend.

Flem You are right to do so. I have been a friend of your family for many years. It was I who furnished the drugs during your father's last illness.

Peacock I thank you for it. Ever since I've written my prescriptions only for you.

Flem
Oh! For that, yes.

Peacock Moreover, I've had you get rid of inexpensive, useless drugs. And whenever I write a prescription, I never forget to write it for five or six grains more than the patient needs.

Flem
And I always put in seven or eight grains less than you prescribe. That way I save the life of the patient and your reputation.

Peacock Consider the way we work together. I prescribe imaginary medicines found only in your apothecary shop. I praise their healthfulness, their propriety, and your skill in blending drugs.

Flem And for my part, I never miss a chance to praise you. I speak of your miraculous cures—which, in truth, I've seen very few of.

Peacock
Thus, we help one another.

Flem And, I tell all the patients who come to me about you, praise you to the skies, and belittle or disparage all other doctors without exception.

Peacock We do everything that a doctor and a pharmacist can do for each other. We work in perfect harmony. And, to further our friendship, I am going to tell you about a little investment I have made. I've taken out a ten thousand pound Tontine on him.

Flem
Flem
You? (puzzled) Why?

Peacock (superciliously)
You know what a Tontine is, of course?

Flem Certainly, a Tontine is—a Tontine is—(helplessly) What the devil is a Tontine?

Peacock (smugly triumphant) It's a last man out club. The survivor gets all the money from all the policies.

Flem
That's clever. So if you die—

Peacock (slightly exasperated)
The policy's not on my life—but on that of a peasant of sixty who you wouldn't take to be forty. He's the father of one of my servants. He's in unusually good shape.

Flem
Well?

Peacock I've taken out this policy on him and he's agreed to make me a beneficiary in return for free medical care.

Flem
That's a clever idea.

Peacock
A fellow like that, in my hands, will become immortal.

Flem
Sooner than later.

Peacock
Suppose that he only lives, say one hundred years.

Flem
All right, one hundred years.

Peacock Isn't it certain, that in fifteen or twenty years, he'll be the only person in his group?

Flem
In all likelihood.

Peacock Five years later, he'll be the only one. Therefore, I'll receive all the money for twenty years.

Flem
The reasoning is clear. You've put your money to good use.

Peacock
I'm delighted you approve my project. And you are a beneficiary, too.
Because, I mean to marry you to my daughter.

Flem
Sir, that's an honor that—

Peacock No compliments. And, for the dowry, I'm going to give you half the immense revenue from this insurance policy which you cannot fail to collect. And no, I'm going to show you our gold mine. You'll have to agree he's an excellent specimen.

(Exit Peacock into his house.)

Flem What a man Doctor Peacock is! Some people think he's a little crazy; but what's just happened would go a long way to disabuse them.

(Peacock returns from the house leading Dudley, a sturdy old peasant.)

Peacock
Have a look at this young fellah! Ever see a better built body?

Flem
Never.

Peacock
What do you say to those eyes?

Flem
Really bright.

Peacock
How do you find his skin tone?

Flem
Beautiful.

Peacock (to Dudley)
Open your mouth. (to Flem) Look at those teeth. Perfect condition.

Flem
He hasn't even got a cavity.

Peacock (to Dudley)
Let's hear your voice.

Dudley
Hem! Hem! Hem!

Peacock
Like thunder! Constitution of an ox.

Flem

Amazing.

Peacock
And his legs—stout and firm.

Flem
He's got all the signs of long life.

Peacock
Look at that chest.

Flem
Broad and strong. You've made quite a bargain, Doctor.

Peacock
We're going to get rich, Mr. Flem.

Flem
This peasant is a kind of Peruvian gold mine.

Peacock. Answer my questions, Dudley. When you went to bed last night, did it take you a long time to get to sleep?

Dudley
Soon as my head hits the pillow—poof—I was asleep.

Flem
Sleeps easily.

Dudley
And I wake up at dawn.

Peacock
And wakes with a ravenous appetite that I have difficulty to control.

Dudley (laughing)
Oh, as to that, Doctor, you keep me well regulated.

Peacock How he roars! This roaring is no good for him. It comes from too many vessels in contact with the diaphragm. To remedy this defect we ought to give him a purge.

Dudley (crying)
Another purge! Woe is me.

Peacock Preceded by a tonic composed of softening laxatives to prevent dry stools. Go quickly, Mr. Flem, and prepare some suppositories and bring them back here.

Flem
Back in a flash.

(Exit Flem.)

Peacock As soon as you possibly can. This business is serious and requires diligence.

Dudley Can't you leave me without tormenting me, Doctor? For the last three days, ever since I put myself in your hands, you've already purged me twice. I want to have lunch and enjoy it.

Peacock Blood isn't necessary to preserve life. I know what I'm doing. I am more interested in keeping you alive than you yourself. Listen, my friend, as soon as I have bled you, I'll cook up a delicious lunch.

Dudley
Ah, that would be nice.

Peacock
I want to give you something appetizing. What do you like to eat?

Dudley
Mutton chops.

Peacock Bah! What bad spirit put such a detestable thought in your head? It's too fatty and it clogs

your bowels.

Dudley

I seem to have heard that apothecaries like jelloes.

Peacock True. But, between you and me, they only sell them. They actually prefer stuffed dates.

Dudley

Really—well, how about a nice roast beef?

Peacock

Nothing is more indigestible.

Dudley

Give me pork, then.

Peacock

Too likely to have trichinosis. Dirty.

Dudley Too dirty, too sweet, too hard, too fatty. What the devil do you want me to eat?

Peacock

An ounce of fresh cheese?

Dudley

Fresh cheese?

Peacock

With two or three glasses of laxatives.

Dudley

I am dead and buried

(Enter Trippet.)

Trippet

Sir, there's a man down there who insists on speaking to you.

Peacock (going out)

Let's see what he wants of us.

(Exit Peacock.)

Dudley

Ah!

Trippet

You sigh! What caused you to sigh like that, my poor Dudley?

Dudley

They're going to bleed me again and give me an enema.

Trippet

What's wrong with you?

Dudley They say I have extended diaphragm muscles, and I don't know how many other maladies. Yet, I don't feel a bit sick.

Trippet

That's terrible, my friend, that's terrible. Not to know what's wrong.

Dudley Since I've been in this house, I've lost more blood than I did in twenty years as a soldier.

Trippet

I believe it.

Dudley Doctor Peacock intends to make me the last survivor of my group—but if this keeps up, I won't last another month.

Trippet

That's a chance you take.

Dudley Let's speak openly. Even if I survive the bleeding, I won't survive the diet. I'll starve.

Trippet

He practices austerity in his own eating habits.

Dudley Aie! How can I resist him. He thinks I'm weak and prescribes for my maladies. He watches my food. He forbids me wine. Damn his medicine and science. It would be better not to interfere with nature.

Trippet To forbid wine to a man of your type is the same as forbidding women to a man of a different sort.

Dudley

Trippet, my dear Trippet, are you capable of pity?

Trippet

Without a doubt. What can I do for you?

Dudley You run the house. If you would give me a bottle of wine, I will owe you my life.

Trippet Heaven preserve me from doing such a thing. If the doctor has forbidden you wine then that proves it isn't good for you.

Dudley (kneeling)

I beg you, on my knees.

Trippet

Useless prayer.

Dudley

At least give me a pork chop.

Trippet

Not a slice!

Dudley Ah, if only I were young again. You'd give me the keys to the wine cellar.

Trippet

I wouldn't bet on that.

Peacock (entering and seeing Dudley on his knees to Trippet) Ah, Dudley! How passionate you are! My God! That's no way to prepare for an enema. Come along, return to your room and try to calm yourself while waiting for the return of Mr. Flem. (Dudley leaves) That's funny, really.

Trippet

Do you have any idea what he wanted from me?

Peacock

It's not really difficult to figure out. Dirty old gallows-bird.

Trippet He was trying to cajole me with his sweet talk and passionate gestures—but I'm not that kind of woman.

Peacock

Good, Trippet. Don't give in to human weakness.

Trippet

I'd let him croak before he could have any.

Peacock Now wait a minute—if he shows any signs of croaking! You must satisfy him, Trippet! Ahem! I intend that he live a long life.

Trippet

We are talking at cross-purposes.

Peacock Oh, that! Trippet, they've come to get me to see a patient—a feverish cantor who refuses to drink a purge—but before I leave, it will be easier if I talk to my daughter. Tell her to come see me. (Exit Trippet) I suppose I could find a better husband for Harriet than this Flem. For example, a bureaucrat or a down-and-out gentleman. But I prefer to pay off my own debts, not someone else's. Instead of which, I will exploit my daughter for all she is worth.

Harriet (entering)
What do you want, Daddy?

Peacock Something you will like. I've decided to marry you. I've chosen a man for you who is extremely knowledgeable and will give you complete satisfaction.

Harriet
Oh, heaven.

Trippet (entering)
Ah!

Peacock
He's totally a skilled practitioner.

Harriet
How unhappy I am!

Peacock
Great fortitude.

Trippet
Now we're headed in different directions.

Peacock Listen! What's all this about, if you please? I haven't even told you his name—only of his worthiness, and you are making faces, both of you.

Trippet
It's not his worth that displeases—it's his incompatible qualities.

Peacock
What? What incompatible qualities?

Trippet
Eh! Yes, sir. Those qualities are certainly found in an old dotard. You are painting a wretched portrait of a handsome young man.

Peacock
But, I don't propose to marry my daughter to some old fuddy-duddy. It's Mr. Flem.

Harriet (surprised)
Mr. Flem!

Trippet (same tone)
Mr. Flem!

Peacock
Yes, Mr. Flem. He's only fifty. Not old enough to be too virtuous.

Trippet A virtuous man is not for Miss Harriet, and I am going to prove it. In order to know the worth of a virtuous husband, is it not necessary for the wife to be dispirited herself? First, give her a young man of twenty, and not only will she be fine, she'll have a reasonable husband.

Peacock Nice reasoning. A smart daughter ought not to examine her future husband too closely. She ought to consider it a pleasure to find one agreeable to her father. Understand, Harriet? Now, on my return, I expect to find you disposed to receive the hand of Mr. Flem. (exit)

Harriet Did you hear, Trippet? Is there a misfortune equal to mine? Isn't it enough to lose hope of being with Worthy? Now, I must reconcile myself to becoming the wife of this detestable Mr. Flem.

Trippet
Flem is difficult to swallow—assuredly.

Harriet Worthy, dear Worthy, what will your despair be when you hear this news?

Trippet Alas! I believe I can already see how unhappy he will be. What a lively sadness moistens his eye. What tears mix with yours. Oh, I loathe the old apothecary.

Harriet

Trippet, your joking is unseasonable.

Trippet I'm not joking. I don't know any more than you what the future will hold. But my point of view is different. You see despair and I see cause for hope. I read the future in a way that is more agreeable than you do.

Harriet You are deceiving yourself. I am already unhappy enough to be married to Mr. Flem. Without doubt, I will gag of it. But I will fulfill my destiny. The more I have to suffer, the more my character will grow.

Trippet I know very well that character thrives on hardship—but sometimes hardship corrupts a pure heart.

Harriet
I hear a noise. Someone is coming.

Trippet
Eh, Miss, it's Mr. Worthy.

Jeremy (entering with Worthy)
It's he, himself, Trippet, and your loveable Jeremy.

Trippet You come just in time, gentlemen. Help us avoid the storm that threatens us. Dr. Peacock has promised his daughter to Mr. Flem.

Jeremy To that flat-nosed pharmacist with thick glasses who works in his shop?

Trippet
Exactly.

Worthy
Is it true?

Trippet
So true that the marriage may take place at any time.

Worthy Oh, Harriet! How can you let them drag you to the altar without making the least effort in my behalf?

Harriet
What do you expect me to do, Mr. Worthy?

Jeremy Ladies, you have only to follow us to our inn. Our horses are all saddled. We will disappear with you both.

Trippet
Good idea. We'll disappear. All's fair in love and war.

Worthy Jeremy, I beg you. Think up some plan to prevent this detestable marriage.

Jeremy
That's what I'm dreaming up. Use your imagination, too, Trippet. You're good at this sort of thing.

Trippet
All right. Let's stir up our imagination.

Jeremy
Well. What have you come up with?

Trippet
Wait a while.

Jeremy
Dammit, I can't wait forever. I've already decided on the best plan.

Trippet
Let's hear it.

Jeremy
Simply to make Flem and Doctor Peacock quarrel. Won't that do it?

Trippet
Without a doubt.

Worthy
Sounds good to me.

Jeremy
Right, eh? See how easily I solve the most difficult puzzles.

Trippet
But, you haven't said how we'll do it.

Jeremy Right. How to do it? Listen, hasn't some rich person recently died at their hands?

Trippet
The Judge. Judge Glanville.

Jeremy That's our luck! All we have to do is to tell the Doctor that Flem says it was the Doctor's prescription that killed the patient. At the same time, we tell Mr. Flem that the Doctor is blaming everything on the way the prescription was compounded.

Worthy
I like that idea.

Trippet
Won't work.

Harriet
Why not?

Trippet I tell you, it won't work. Mr. Flem and Dr. Peacock are too hand-in-glove. For twenty years they've been killing people—some of the nicest people in this city—and they never quarrel over it. And you think they're going to quarrel over a mere magistrate. Why, they've done in lords and ladies.

Jeremy
I've got another idea. This one is matchless. Is it true that Doctor Peacock has an insurance policy on some peasant?

Trippet
Nothing is more true.

Jeremy So much the better. This gives me the plan, which I believe, must infallibly succeed. I would like to speak to this peasant.

Trippet (pointing)
There's the door to his room. You can go in. He's alone.

Jeremy
Leave it to me. That's all I need to know.

(Exit Jeremy.)

Harriet
What do you suppose he's up to?

Worthy
I don't know, but Jeremy is a world-class trickster.

Trippet
I've got an idea of my own. See if we don't slow this marriage down.

Harriet (hugging Trippet)
You bring me back to life.

Worthy (hugging Trippet)
Me, too.

Trippet
I see it.

Harriet You don't know how much I'll owe you if you save me from this odious husband.

Trippet
Time will tell if you mean that.

Worthy
Me, too!

Trippet Poor children. It would be a terrible shame to separate you. You only want to be together.

Worthy
Here comes Jeremy.

Jeremy (returning, and still speaking to Dudley) Yes, you have only to do as I told you and you will be delivered from the Doctor's tyranny. Until we meet again. Adieu.

Trippet
What? You've already talked to Dudley?

Jeremy I only had two words to say to him. I've warned him. If he plays his role and all goes well, Miss Harriet will today change her name to Worthy. And, as for you, Trippet, I permit you to think of possessing me.

Trippet
How do you intend to work these miracles?

Jeremy I'm going to disguise myself as a Colonel. Worthy will be my Major. And, as Dr. Peacock doesn't know us because we've always been careful never to come here except when he's visiting patients—ah, what a trick I will play on him. I intend to consult him on a pretended illness. (low to Trippet) Well, Trippet, you're good at this sort of thing. What do you say to it?

Trippet
I approve of it. That's all I have to say about it.

Worthy
But, tell us everything.

Jeremy I will instruct you as we go. Let's leave now. Time is precious. I'm going to prepare everything. (to Harriet) No goodbyes, beautiful lady. (to Trippet) See you soon, you little flirt. You, Major, follow me.

(Exit Jeremy and Worthy.)

Harriet
Do you think it will work?

Trippet
Indubitably.

Harriet
Don't let me languish any more. Listen to me.

Trippet Hush! Our lovers were right to leave. Here comes Mr. Flem. Follow my lead and pretend to be delighted to marry him.

Harriet
What a bore!

Trippet
Don't complain. He can easily be fooled.

(Enter Flem.)

Trippet Ah, ah! Mr. Flem, we've heard news of you. You want to marry my mistress?

Flem It's the Doctor who's taken it into his head that I shall marry. As for myself, I never thought of Miss Harriet because of the difference in our ages.

Trippet What difference! You're joking, Mr. Flem. Do you know, you look as young as a man of twenty-five.

Flem
Well, as to that matter, I'm still juicy. Got a lot of sap left in me.

Trippet

You're cute. You have regular features, good color, noble bearing, graceful manners, and as for your figure, let Miss Harriet speak. (to Harriet) What to you say?

Harriet

Well put together.

Trippet

His hypodermic syringe is just ravishing.

Harriet

It suits him better than a sword.

Trippet And the most gallant cummerbund doesn't look better than his work apron.

Harriet

Behold a tasty, well-turned-out dish of a man.

Flem It's delightful to me to hear such words from your mouth, dear lady. They distill an amorous syrup in my soul. Yes, my dear, I already sense the birth in my heart of a feeling for you that I had for my late wife. Haven't I told you, doll, how we lived together, my wife and I?

Harriet

Never, I assure you.

Flem

Ours will be just such a perfect union.

Trippet Tell us about it, if you please, sir. I'm just crazy to hear about happy marriages. They're so unheard of.

Flem

Madame Flem had a lively affection for me.

Trippet

Undoubtedly you deserved it.

Flem On my side, I had a particular care for her health. I didn't wait till she was sick to give her a remedy. Every day, by way of precaution, I made her take some medicine.

Trippet

Charming little man.

Flem When she was the least bit sick, I redoubled my efforts. Alas, the poor woman didn't live long.

Trippet

I believe him.

Flem She had a very delicate constitution. But, if she died, it was not for want of medication. Not for want of remedies.

Trippet

Rather the remedies were wanting.

Flem To give her a breath of life, I didn't spare a single drug in my apothecary.

Trippet

Oh, miss—what a husband.

Harriet

He's worthy of all the feeling I have for him.

Flem

You flatter me, my angel.

Harriet

No, sir. I swear, I'm not flattering you at all.

Flem For you, sweetheart, I promise to take the same care and the same attention, I lavished on my first wife.

Harriet (low to Trippet)
What an engaging prospect.

Flem
Every morning and night I will give you some little delight.

Trippet
That's bound to please her.

Flem Goodbye, beautiful star. I have to leave you to find Dudley. How impatient I am to have you joined to me. When I even think of it, I am happy.

Trippet
You love the pleasures of imagination.

Flem
Yes, but I like physical ones better.

(Exit Flem into Dudley's room.)

Trippet
Old fool.

Harriet
What a man, Trippet. I hate him more than I love Mr. Worthy.

Trippet
You hate him so much already?

Harriet
Rather than marry him, I am capable of going to the last extremities.

Trippet Stay of that mind. It may be helpful if we can't manage things in an honest way.

Harriet
Shut up, you fool, my father is coming.

Trippet
Let us continue to dissemble.

Peacock (entering)
Well! Trippet, in what frame of mind is your mistress?

Trippet In a mood to obey you. Oh, indeed, we've had a change of mind since you left. We paid attention to your wise advice. Do you know, sir, that we've learned to love old men?

Peacock
Are you serious?

Trippet Ask Mr. Flem in what manner we received him. Presently, we have eyes only for your old friend.

Peacock I don't know if you're speaking seriously, but the fact of the matter is, an older man is better.

Trippet A thousand times better. I wish someone would give me the choice between an old man and a young musketeer. It wouldn't take me long to make up my mind, let me tell you.

Peacock
In fact, an old boy tends to be very indulgent towards a young wife.

Trippet Oh, yes. In place of a young man who is indulgent only towards his friends. An old husband leaves us his wealth by dying and a young one doesn't die until he's gobbled up our dowry.

Peacock Sometimes that girl is pretty smart. Now, Harriet, I'm delighted you no longer dislike Mr. Flem—

Harriet (under her breath)
Ah, I prefer death.

Peacock
What did she say under her breath about dying?

Trippet

She says she'd rather die than lose him. She's crazy about him.

Peacock

Well, that's a passion that's arrived rather suddenly.

Trippet

And a proper one, too.

Peacock

But, it's a sort of madness, Trippet.

Trippet Assuredly. Now, if you were to forbid her to love him, she would love him even more.

Peacock

Who are these people coming here?

(Enter Jeremy and Worthy.)

Trippet

They seem to be some kind of soldiers.

Jeremy (disguised as a colonel) I am looking for Dr. Peacock. They say he looks rather large and bloated. Necessarily, it must be you.

Peacock

I am Dr. Peacock.

Jeremy Ah, sir, let me embrace you. In the fashionable world you are often spoken of. They say you are a clever doctor and your prescriptions are written in elegant Latin.

Peacock

Sir!

Jeremy

Ah, ha! Who are these lovely ladies?

Peacock

This is my daughter and this is her maid.

Jeremy To show you how much honor I feel for you and everything that belongs to you, I insist on embracing them, too.

Harriet

Just a minute, Mr. Officer.

Trippet

Do you take us to be barmaids?

Peacock (low)

These fellows are very impertinent.

Jeremy

Have you more than one daughter?

Peacock

No, sir.

Jeremy So much the worse. When they are made like these they can be easily married off.

Peacock Well, God willing, I'm just about to marry her to an apothecary friend of mine.

Jeremy Very good idea. Your patients certainly won't have to wait for enemas and purges.

Peacock

They will lack nothing.

Jeremy

The more I look at your daughter, the more I find she looks like you.

Peacock

You're joking!

Jeremy Word of a soldier! She's you in miniature. Your eyes are the same except for the coloring. Her little nose becomes large like yours: oval face, square face; really the resemblances are astonishing in certain families.

Peacock

Come, sir, if you will. What are you getting at?

Jeremy That maid of yours is making eyes at me. Apparently, I was made to be the sport of a wench. They always tease me.

Peacock

Sir, for God's sake, tell me who you are.

Jeremy I am a colonel and you see me here with my major. I come to consult you about an illness.

Harriet

Goodbye, Mr. Colonel.

Jeremy

Why are you running off, pretty ladies?

Trippet We don't want to hear the conversation of an officer who consults a doctor.

(Exit Trippet and Harriet.)

Jeremy I want to tell you, sir—no boasting—I'm well thought of by the combat troops.

Peacock

I'm sure of it, and I congratulate you, sir.

Jeremy When there's something particularly tough to do, they always call for me. Ask my major.

Worthy

It's true.

Peacock

I believe it.

Jeremy

So, you see, I have all the honor and reputation I could wish. Unfortunately, my body isn't made of iron.

Peacock

I see.

Jeremy

I came down with asthma in Germany while I was pursuing the enemy.

Peacock

The cause of your illness is worthy of—

Jeremy Here's how it happened to me. I reconnoitred an enemy scouting party. I attacked them; they resisted. I redoubled my efforts. They regrouped. Then, they fled. I followed them, but then I was obliged to give up the pursuit. I couldn't get my breath. They said I have swollen glands. So, since then, I've been asthmatic.

Peacock (aside) He's consulting me for his own amusement—but I will mock him in his turn. (aloud) You wish a remedy that will soothe you?

Jeremy

Exactly!

Peacock

I have an infallible remedy. But, I have a scruple about curing you.

Jeremy

What's that?

Peacock

I think you should keep your asthma and seek a disability pension.

Jeremy

I like your idea.

(Enter Dudley from the house and Flem after him.)

Dudley

Murder! Help! Help! Fire!

Peacock

Why all this noise?

Jeremy What do I see? There's a face I've seen before. Yes, my word, it really is! It's Rosebud. Major, don't you recognize him?

Worthy

It's Rosebud all right. The deserter.

Dudley

Oh, yes, sir, it's me. I beg for pardon.

Jeremy

Coward! Fortune has delivered you to justice.

Dudley

Oh, Colonel, have pity on me.

Jeremy

Say, what! God! Why did you disappear without leave?

Dudley

The Captain was always beating me and there was nothing I could do!

Jeremy For God's sake, abandon the battlefield because you were beaten? To avenge yourself on your captain, couldn't you wait till after the battle? Major, call Sergeant Slaughter and some soldiers to take this deserter to the guardhouse.

(Exit Worthy to the street.)

Peacock

You never told me, you bastard, that you were a deserter.

Dudley

I never dared to tell you, sir.

Peacock

What a mess this wretch has got me in.

(Worthy returns with several soldiers.)

Sergeant Slaughter

What is it, sir?

Jeremy

Arrest that man.

Peacock

Sir, I beg you to pardon him.

Flem

We both ask you.

Jeremy (folding his arms) It upsets me, gentlemen, not to be able to do as you wish. But, when it comes to punishing infractions of military rules, I am inexorable.

Peacock

I will cure your asthma.

Jeremy

I should look to my pension.

Flem

I'll furnish you all the medicine you need for your old age.

Jeremy (after a struggle) No. No. (to soldiers) Hurry up, take this clown without more discussion. You will see that this poor devil will die as quickly in my hands as in yours.

(Enter Trippet and Harriet.)

Trippet

What noise is this I hear? What brouhaha are you making here?

Dudley

Intercede for me, Trippet. They want to hang me as a deserter.

Trippet Why, gentlemen, if you want to kill him, why not leave him in the hands of Dr. Peacock?

Harriet

Grant him his life, Mr. Colonel.

Jeremy

No mercy.

Harriet

Be a human being.

Trippet

We beg you.

Jeremy

Don't pester me any more. Guards! Seize him!

Peacock (aside)

It's easy to see what the outcome will be with these people. (aloud)
Listen, Mr. Colonel, so as not to waste time talking, I am going to count out a hundred gold pieces—or more.

Jeremy

I am incorruptible.

Trippet What, sir, can you resist the sound of money and the prayers of a beautiful lady?

Jeremy

How can I resist? I am not a judge. Do you take me for a judge?

Trippet Dr. Peacock has a ten thousand pound insurance policy on the life of this man.

Peacock

That's right. Would you consider going shares on him?

Jeremy

I don't know what to do.

Trippet

If you wish to kill him, let us die with him.

Jeremy

Well, then—let him run the gauntlet.

Trippet

Listen, Mr. Colonel, I've got an idea how to fix everything.

Jeremy

How? What way?

Trippet

Marry my mistress.

Jeremy What, me! For God's sake, my dear friend, if you don't have a better idea than that, Rosebud is going to hang.

Worthy

Oh, it's too much. Colonel. You've got to give it up. Free him.

Jeremy

That's easy for you to say. But, if you were in my place—the rank of Colonel would cause you to speak differently.

Worthy

No—word of honor.

Jeremy All right! You marry her and I consent at that price to spare the deserter.

Trippet

Come no, Mr. Major, consider how charming she is.

Worthy I have little taste for marriage—but to please the Colonel—I'll do it. But, only if the doctor gives me a large dowry. It is not right to marry a woman who brings nothing.

Jeremy He's right, Doctor. It's necessary to make it worth his while. Make over all your wealth to him.

Peacock Your humble servant. I prefer you to hang Mr. Rosebud. I'll be off much cheaper.

Trippet Mr. Major, you seem generous. Accept my mistress on the same terms she was to be married to Mr. Flem. That's to say, for one-half the interest on the ten thousand pounds that the Doctor has put on the head of Dudley.

Peacock

That, I can live with.

Worthy

To accommodate you, sir, I would like to consent.

Flem

And, I won't object. I free you of your promise, Doctor.

(Exit Flem.)

Dudley

But, who will care for me? The father-in-law or the son-in-law?

Peacock

I will. I will treat you as I always have.

Dudley

That being the case, I prefer to run the gauntlet.

Worthy

No, Rosebud, no. I will care for you. I will care for his health.

Jeremy I've suddenly taken it into my head to get married, too. With this flirt.

Peacock What, Colonel? You wish to marry the maid after having refused the mistress?

Jeremy I will ennoble her. There, Trippet. From wench, I make you a lady of quality.

Trippet

It won't be the first such metamorphosis.

CURTAIN

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: A few lines of dialogue have been added to the play explaining what a tontine is. Tontines were named for an Italian Banker named Tonti who discovered the scheme. Strange as it may seem this play got Le Sage in a great deal of trouble because the government was employing the Tontine as a means of raising revenue and this play was regarded as a subversive attack on the revenue system of the monarchy.

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

This particular work is one of the few individual works protected by copyright law in the United States and most of the remainder of the world, included in the Project Gutenberg collection with the permission of the copyright holder. Information on the copyright owner for this particular work and the terms of use imposed by the copyright holder on this work are set forth at the beginning of this work.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of

the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment

including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.