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**"Can't you trust me? I'm an honest man."**

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## **JEPPE ON THE HILL**

OR

## **THE TRANSFORMED PEASANT**

**A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS**

**TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH  
OF LUDVIG HOLBERG**

BY  
**WALDEMAR C. WESTERGAARD**  
AND  
**MARTIN B. RUUD**

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF HOLBERG BY MORRIS  
JOHNSON AND AN INTRODUCTION BY  
W. C. WESTERGAARD

**FIRST PLAYED IN COPENHAGEN IN 1722**

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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## **LUDVIG HOLBERG**

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In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries two great spiritual movements spread over Europe, the Renaissance and the Reformation. The former was confined principally to southern Europe, and did not influence the life or literature of the Scandinavian countries to any great extent. The Reformation, however, caused a new and brief literary era, especially in Denmark, where the mother tongue was again accorded its proper place, and the people again began to think of a national future.

Much had conspired to make the people of Europe lose faith in the old ideas. Copernicus had demonstrated that the earth was only a planet in an immense system, and Kepler and Galileo had taught that the earth circled about the sun, and that there was order and regularity in the movements of the heavenly bodies. Finally Newton announced his principle that the law of gravitation governed each and every one of these movements. All this together with the geographical discoveries of Columbus, Magellan, De Gama and others, revolutionized people's ideas of the universe and of the earth.

In December, 1684, just two weeks before Newton gave his first public lecture explaining his discovery, a child who was destined to become the founder of the Danish-Norwegian literature was born in Bergen, Norway. That child was Ludvig Holberg. His parents died while the boy was but a few years old, and he was brought up by relatives. Too weakly and small to become a military man as his father had been, he was sent to the "Latin School" at Bergen. Eighteen years old he became a student at the University of Copenhagen. Two years later he became a student of theology. Lack of means compelled him to return to Bergen as a private tutor. But he soon determined to travel, and with a small sum of money he set out for Amsterdam. After considerable sickness and misfortune he returned to Norway. In 1706 there followed a journey to England, where two years were spent, largely in study at Oxford. Later he made four other journeys to foreign countries. Two years were spent in France, and about a year in Italy.

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What were the conditions under which Holberg grew up? And what did he experience abroad? Turning to Denmark we find the religious, political and educational status very low. We can get an idea of the prevailing nature of government when we learn that Christian the Sixth was spoken of in a university address as a king whom God himself "fills with his wisdom, honors with his friendship, strengthens by his teachings, satisfies with his communications, perfects with Divine power, a man with whom he shares His creative strength, one who is beautified by God's image," and "whose plans evolve from the thoughts of the Almighty!"

In the religious field, conditions were no better. Intolerance and persecution were the rule. He who dared depart from the dry orthodox dogmas was promptly dealt with by law. Coupled with this intolerance was a huge mass of superstition that hung as a depressing cloud over the people. An eclipse, a comet or some strange phenomenon was believed to portend some dire manifestation of the wrath of heaven and bespoke as a certainty the judgment of God! Belief in witch-craft was common. Only fourteen years before Holberg's birth, seven witches were burned at one time in Christiania.

The theology of the day was such as to hinder educational activity. There was only one student of law, for instance, to several hundred students of theology. A little philosophy was taught, but chiefly to aid in carrying on meaningless theological dissertations.

During Holberg's youth the social and literary conditions in Denmark were slavishly dependent upon those of foreign countries. Latin was the approved literary language. The new nobility was largely German, consequently German was the language of the court. German was also spoken to a great extent among the artisans and merchants as these classes were largely of the same origin as the nobility. Those of the middle class who aspired to social distinction necessarily wore powdered wigs and spoke French. These conditions limited the use of the mother tongue to the farmers, the fishermen and the lower classes, whose work was frowned at and whose social condition was as wretched as it was despised.

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Holberg, however, soon acquired different ideas of government religion and education, of social customs and of literature than those described. He did not believe that the Scriptures were at variance with all other doctrines except that of "divine right." He believed in a monarchical government, but his theory was that government should be a contract between ruler and people as it was in England and Holland. This was the first time such a doctrine was taught in Denmark.

Religious compulsion and persecution was also vigorously opposed by Holberg. He knew but one kind of justifiable fanaticism he said, and that was fanaticism against the spirit of religious intolerance. The prevalent belief in witch-craft, too, was a subject against which Holberg frequently directed his satire.

As far as science and philosophy is concerned, it is sufficient to say that he was guided by the English philosophers of the time who held that experience was the safest guide to knowledge. In Holland he was influenced by Pierre Bayle and LeClerc. In France, Montesquieu, Montaigne, and Moliere were his teachers, while in Germany he was not influenced to any great extent.

Holberg's great work consisted in what he did to better the condition of the common people and to popularize the Danish language. But what was the reason that Holberg was able to take the most desirable teachings and customs, from England, France and Holland, and introduce them among the Scandinavian people? To begin with we must remember that his childhood was spent in Norway's most cosmopolitan city, Bergen. This gave him his desire to travel. His contact with people of wide experience in many different countries would certainly not lessen his liberal tendencies. Then too while at first his journeys were caused by mere curiosity, he soon determined to travel for a purpose. He wished to teach his countrymen. When abroad he made careful observations. Foreign customs were constantly compared with those of Denmark and Norway. But though he was liberal, he knew the art of moderation. While much that was foreign could be used to good advantage, there was also a great deal that was undesirable. His judgments were remarkably free. They were founded on his own observations, not on the opinion of others. His liberal, cosmopolitan views his keen critical discernment, his energy and application in his work account for his far reaching influence.

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There remains for us to notice how the people were influenced by the work of this man. Holberg wrote for and about the common people. But in all his writings we observe his remarkable moderation. He knew that if he were to begin his educational campaign by an open attack on prevailing conditions, too much opposition would be the result. He sought the confidence and good will of the reader, and then by his wealth of wit and satire the reader was led to laugh at his own faults. But it was not enough to tear down; construction was as necessary as destruction. The satirical poems, such as "Klim's Underground Journey" and "Peder Paars" brought the people's faults to view, but desirable virtues to take their place were just as effectively presented in his "Epistles" and "Moral Thoughts," virtues which were also exemplified in the author's private life.

Holberg's writings created a proper recognition of the mother-tongue, and awakened a new interest in reading especially among the middle and poorer classes. His writings created in the people an interest in themselves and in their land, such as they had not possessed before. It taught them to cherish the best that was Danish, to substitute the sturdy noble products of their own land for the ephemeric forms which ignorance and slavish imitation had brought from foreign countries. It helped them to realize themselves and it gave them prospects for a bright future as a nation. In Ludvig Holberg we see today, not only the founder of the Norwegian-Danish literature, the satirical author of "Peder Paars" or "Nils Klim's Underground Journey," not only a philosopher and historian, but a teacher who impressed his individuality on a whole people, and one whose influence as a mighty power for good is felt today not only in Scandinavian literature, but in all Scandinavian culture as well.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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"Jeppe on the Hill" (Jeppe paa Bjerget) is probably the best known of Holberg's many comedies. It was first presented in the Danish Theatre in 1722, and has since then been played times without number and with continued appreciation. It is a plain picture of peasant life, with the ludicrous side turned out, of course, but so faithful in detail and comprehensive in character that it has become known as the best expression of medieval conditions in the Scandinavian language, the classic representation of the medieval peasant in northern Europe. The plot of the play is briefly thus:

Jeppe, the principal character, is a poor oppressed peasant, abused by his wife and trodden down by his superiors. We are introduced in the opening scene to his wife, Nille, a veritable Xanthippe transplanted to the eighteenth century. With her shrill voice and stout whip,—Master Erik, by name,—she drives him out at an unreasonably early hour to go an unreasonable long distance for an insignificant amount of soap. She is, in fact, a true counterpart of Dame Van Winkle, wielding authority over a poor, weak Rip. Without so much as a cup of coffee, he starts with his dozen pence with which he is to make his purchase. On the way he stops in at the rascally innkeeper's, Jakob Skomager's, who induces the vacillating Jeppe to part little by little with his money until the poor peasant finds himself "broke," and with nothing to show for his departed coin but a "glorious drunk." After a soliloquy in which he calls to mind his past life, especially his brief experience in the army, he is overcome by his intoxication and falls in a drunken stupor by the wayside. In this senseless condition he is found by his "liege lord and master," the nobleman, and his servants. They decide to play a joke on the fellow; they dress him in the baron's clothes, take him to the castle and put him in the baron's bed, and then wait near by to see the show.

When he awakes he is certainly the transformed—and perplexed—peasant. He is quite overcome by the splendor of his surroundings, thinks at one moment that he is in a dream, and next decides that he must be in paradise; he calls for his wife, receives no reply, and wonders whether he is really himself or someone else. He tries in vain to connect the past with the present. When the uniformed servants answer his cry for help the situation becomes comical indeed. When Jeppe is finally convinced by servants and doctors that he is the baron, he assumes his new role with a vengeance and begins by tyrannizing over the servants and calling them to account. He does not forget to satisfy his desire for good things to eat and drink and after some fast music and a dance with the overseer's wife, he is overcome once more, this time by the wines and excitement, and falls again into a stupor of intoxication. He is dressed in his old clothes and put back on the dungheap where he first was found. When he awakes he finds himself by the old familiar wayside in all his old toggery,—plain "Jeppe on the Hill" once more. He is now thoroughly convinced that he really was in paradise, and begins to take another nap in the hope of again coming into his former glory, but when his wife, Nille, steals up and administers a resounding whack on his back with old Master Erik, he is convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that he is in paradise no longer. The situation is further complicated for poor Jeppe and made the more ludicrous to the spectators when he is hauled before a magistrate for taking possession of the baron's house and tyrannizing over his servants. At the mock trial, which is one of the most humorous situations in the play, he stands ready to embrace the lawyer who defends him while he is wishing he could knock down or hang the lawyer who accuses him.

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When he finds himself solemnly condemned to die by poison and hanging, he implores in vain for pardon, asks for some whiskey to keep up his courage, bids farewell to wife, family and dumb friends, and falls as before into a deep stupor. As he gradually regains consciousness, it is but to find himself hanging from the gallows,—by the arm pits, to be sure, but looking dead enough to cause his wife a few brief moments of remorse for her past treatment of her departed spouse. After he has been sentenced to life again by the same court that sentenced him to death before, the magistrate gives him four Rixdollars, a great sum for him, and he finds himself again the same old "Jeppe." When at last he is free, and the cause of his perplexities and bewildering metamorphoses has been revealed to him in startling fashion by the irrepressible Magnus, his chagrin is deep, indeed. The play closes after the old fashion by the reappearance of the perpetrators, the baron and his attendants, the former drawing the moral from the incident.

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Such is the simple plot of this immortal comedy. Now a few words as to its significance. Jeppe, the hero and central figure of the play, is a type of the oppressed, circumscribed, and despirited serf of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, despised by his superiors and abused by his wife, drunken as an almost inevitable result of his condition and mercilessly driven from his own home. Drink is practically his only recourse and is to him the nearest and easiest approach to happiness. It is as the eminent Danish critic, Brandes, suggests, a sort of other life to Jeppe,—it is

to him what music and poetry is to us. What may we gather from his reminiscences as he calls them up in his intoxication? His soldier days, his smattering of German, and his campaigns are particularly vivid, and although the latter were probably not especially glorious, they furnish him his proudest memories. Indeed the most honorable words he could put in the mouth of the sexton as he imagined him at his own funeral are those words so unspeakably comical, that "he lived like a soldier and died like a soldier."

What does this peasant know, and where did he get his knowledge? The source is not far to seek. His figures have the flavor of the stable and the Bible and he is far more certain of his use of the former than of the latter. He has also come by just enough of folklore to misapply it, as note his reference to Abner and Roland. Who are his most intimate friends? There is Mo'ns Christofferson who gives him excellent advice which he fails to follow, but dearest of all is his dappled horse, a trifle lazier, if such a thing is possible, than himself. But poor he has always been, and while baron he shows that he knows to a much greater degree than the baron himself the value of money; for though he has, so far as he knows, more money than he has ever seen in all his peasant days, he remains niggardly in his use of it even when he has all he wants.

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What is this man's highest idea of enjoyment, what does he demand when his greatest wish can be fulfilled? Simply a good bed, fine clothes, plenty to eat, sweet wine in abundance, many servants, and a handmaid. If he has any greater ambition it would be to have more and better things to eat and drink, and more and finer things to wear. It is but natural that "he who works like a horse will enjoy himself like a dog." With such ideals it is easy to see how he could imagine that he had been suddenly transported into heaven. With the feeling that his lord's chief business is to pilfer his hard-earned money; that the sexton is a personage whose chief virtue is a powerful voice; and that lawyers and magistrates are black-robed blackguards who juggle with equal facility with justice and Latin phrases, we can see that Jeppe's idea of law and authority was not very exalted. His highest idea of justice was embodied in his toast, "God keep our friends, and may the devil take all our enemies!"

Though he is a peasant he knows life and human nature and has, too, a philosophy of life,—a philosophy which to him is his salvation. He does not look on life in any bitter or hopeless way, yet he has that distrust and suspicion so characteristic of the Danish peasant. He is always master of the situation, and is cautious and sly enough never to allow himself to be caught off his guard. He weeps in sheer gratitude when his lawyer defends him, and he offers him a chew of his tobacco, but when the lawyer answers that he did it from a sense of Christian charity he answers, sarcastically, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Lawyer, I had not thought you people were so honest." In the last act (Act V., Scene 2) we see another illustration of his native shrewdness. When he has been sentenced back to life we would naturally expect a profuse expression of gratitude from Jeppe on his delivery from death. But when the judge says to him, "Thank us, that we have been so gracious as to sentence you back to life," Jeppe gives the unexpected answer that "if you had not hanged me yourself, I should have been glad to thank you that you let me down again."

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While a mere peasant he appears dull and common-place enough, but give him the opportunity which he gets from the second act and on, and he displays a surprising readiness in his efforts to solve the perplexing problems he has had placed before him. The question of existence or non-existence which he has to answer might well perplex a sage; but while Jeppe is not quite able to unravel the situation, he makes rare use of the powers of logic at his command. When at last he is asked to face death, he does so with resignation, for he has not had much to be thankful for in life. In the supposed hour of his death he turns, not to the Bible of which he is so blissfully ignorant, but to that never-failing comforter through life—the whiskey bottle. When he bids farewell, as he supposes, to this world, he includes the whole circle of his interest, and says, "Goodbye," and "Thanks for good company" to his family and his animal friends, including his dappled horse, his faithful dog, and even "Mo'ns," his black cat.

We have then in Jeppe a character furnishing on the one hand entertainment to the young and light of heart, and on the other an interesting study for the psychologist, the statesman, the socialist, the historian and the philanthropist.

Thus the author has depicted through the various burlesque and humorous situations of a comedy a concrete yet typical character, he has given us the pathetic history of a poor, oppressed peasant, a whole human life from the cradle to the grave.

—W. C. W.

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# Jeppe on the Hill



## Jeppe on the Hill

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

[Pg xvi]

As played in the original language at the Metropolitan Theater, Grand Forks, N. D., May 17, 1906.

Jeppe on the Hill	John M. Anderson
Nille, his wife	W. C. Westergaard
Baron Nilus	Olger Burtness
Secretary	Henry Kylo
Valet	Norris Nelson
Erik, lackey	Magnus Ruud
Second lackey	Bernhard Sandlie
Jakob Skomager, innkeeper	Edward Hansen
Two Doctors	{ Ingvold Knudson
Overseer	{ Nels Dolve
Overseer's wife	Reuben Stee
The Judge	M. Ruud
Two Lawyers	{ O. B. Burtness
Magnus	{ Martin B. Ruud
	{ N. O. Dolve
	H. Kylo

Armed men, attendants, etc.

The scene, a peasant village in Sealand, Denmark; time, about the year 1700.

## JEPPE ON THE HILL

[Pg 17]

### ACT I.

#### Scene 1.

**Nille** (alone)—I don't believe there is such a lazy rascal in the whole district as my husband. I can hardly wake him up when I pull him out of bed by the hair. To-day the rascal knows that it is market day, but still he lies and sleeps so long. Herr Paul said to me lately, "Nille, you are too hard on your husband. He is and ought to be master of the household." But I answered him, "No, my dear Herr Paul, if I should let him boss this house for a single year then neither the landlord would get his rent nor the rector his fee, since he would squander in drink all that I have in the house. Should I let such a man rule this household, who is ready to sell farm, wife, children—yes, even himself—for drink?" Whereupon Herr Paul became silent and thoughtfully stroked his chin. The overseer of the estate sides with me and says, "Little woman, don't you mind what the preacher says. Although the ritual says that you must honor and obey your husband, your lease, which is newer than the ritual, says that you must keep up your place and pay your rent, which it would be impossible for you to do if you did not drag your old man out of bed by the hair every morning and drive him to work." Just now I jerked him out of bed and went out to the barn to see

how the work was getting on, and when I came back he was sitting with his trousers over one leg, and so the switch had to be taken off the peg and my good old Jeppe dressed down until he became quite awake again. The only thing he is afraid of is Master Erick, (that is what I call the switch.) Hey, Jeppe, aren't you up yet, you lazy bones? Would you like to speak with Master Erik once more? Hey, Jeppe, come out!

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## Scene 2.

**Jeppe**—I must have time to put on my clothes, mustn't I? You don't want me to come out like a pig without trousers and without coat.

**Nille**—Haven't you had time, you wretch, to put on ten pairs of trousers since I woke you up this morning?

**Jeppe** (cautiously)—Have you put Master Erik away, Nille?

**Nille**—Yes, I have, but I know where I can find him again, if you don't get around in a hurry. Come here! See how he crawls along! Come here! You've got to go to town to buy two pounds of soft soap; here is the money. But listen! If you are not back again inside of four hours Master Erik shall dance a polka on your back.

**Jeppe**—How can I walk four miles in four hours?

**Nille**—Who says you are to walk, you rascal? You shall run! I have told you what to do once, now do as you please.

## Scene 3.

**Jeppe** (alone)—There that sow goes in to eat breakfast, and I, poor man, must walk four miles before I can get anything to eat; can anyone have such a damned woman as I have? I really believe she is a cousin to Lucifer. Folks around here say that Jeppe drinks, but they don't say why Jeppe drinks; why, I never got so many poundings in the ten years I was in the army as I get every day from that awful woman. She pounds me, the overseer drives me to work like a beast; and the sexton pays court to my wife. Mustn't I drink, mustn't I use all the means nature has given us to drive away sorrow? If I were a fool, such things wouldn't trouble me so much, and then I wouldn't drink; but it is certain that I am a clever man, and therefore I feel such things more than others, so I must drink. My neighbor, Mo'ns Christopherson, often tells me, as he is my friend: "Confound you, Jeppe, why don't you defend yourself, then the old woman will come to her senses." But I can't strike back for three reasons. First, because I haven't any courage; second, because of that damned Master Erik hanging behind the bed, which my back cannot think of without crying; third, because I am, if I do say it myself, a good sort of soul and a good Christian, who never seeks revenge. I am so kind-hearted that I have never even wished that the old woman would die. On the contrary, when she lay sick of jaundice last year, I wished that she would live; for, as hell is already full of bad women, Lucifer would probably send her back, and then she would be still worse than before. But if the sexton died, then I would be glad, for my own sake as well as for others; since he does me only harm and is of no use to the congregation. He is an ignorant devil, for he has no voice at all for singing, nor can he cast an honest wax candle. No, then his predecessor, Christopher, was a different sort of a person. He beat twelve sextons at singing in his day, such a voice had he. One time I got into a quarrel with the deacon, while Nille was listening, and when he scolded me for being run by my wife, I said: "The devil take you, Sexton Mads." But what happened? Master Erik was taken from the wall to settle the quarrel and my back got so sore that I had to beg the sexton's pardon and thank him, mind you, that he, a learned man, would honor my house by his visits. Since that time I have never thought of making any opposition. Oh, yes, yes, Mo'ns Christopherson! You and other peasants whose wives have no Master Erik hanging behind the bed, can talk like that. If I had a single wish in the world it would be either that my wife had no arms or I no back; since she may use her tongue as much as she likes. But I'll have to stop in at Jakob Skomager's on the way. He'll give me a penny's worth of brandy on credit all right; for I must have something to quench my thirst. Hey, Jakob Skomager! Are you up yet? Open the door, Jakob!

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## Scene 4.

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**Jakob Skomager** (in his shirt). **Jeppe**.

**Jakob**—Who the devil comes here so early?

**Jeppe**—Good morning, Jakob Skomager.

**Jakob**—Thank you, Jeppe! You're around pretty early to-day.

**Jeppe**—Give me a penny worth of brandy, Jakob.

**Jakob**—Very well, hand me the penny.

**Jeppe**—You'll get that to-morrow when I come back.

**Jakob**—Jakob Skomager doesn't sell whiskey on credit; you have a penny or two, I know.

**Jeppe**—The devil I have, Jakob! Except a few shillings my wife gave me to buy soap for in town.

**Jakob**—I know you can beat down the price a couple of pence; what is your purchase, Jeppe?

**Jeppe**—I am to buy two pounds of soft soap.

**Jakob**—Why, can't you say that you gave a couple pence more per pound than you paid?

**Jeppe**—I'm so afraid that my wife will find it out, and then bad luck to me!

**Jakob**—Pshaw! How'll she find that out? Can't you swear that you spent all your money? You're a dunce.

**Jeppe**—True enough, Jakob, that's what I can do.

**Jakob**—Give me the penny then.

**Jeppe**—There! but you must give me back a ha'penny.

**Jakob** (comes with a glass and drinks Jeppe's health). Your health, Jeppe!

**Jeppe** (looks at glass)—You drank like a fish.

**Jakob**—Well! Don't you know it is customary for the host to drink to the health of the guests?

**Jeppe**—I know; but may the devil take the one who first started that custom! Your health, Jakob!

**Jakob**—Thanks, Jeppe! You will have to take something for the other ha'penny, too. You can't bring it back. Or perhaps you want to have a glass of whiskey to your credit when you come back from town. For, by my faith, I haven't a single ha'penny.

**Jeppe**—The devil I will; if I must spend it, I'll do it now, for then I can feel that I have something in my stomach; but if you drink of it, too, I won't pay.

**Jakob**—Your health, Jeppe!

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**Jeppe**—God keep our friends and the devil take all our enemies! Ah, that felt good!

**Jakob**—Happy journey, Jeppe!

**Jeppe**—Thanks, Jakob Skomager!

## Scene 5.

**Jeppe** (alone, becomes happy and begins to sing)—

"A white hen and a speckled hen  
They started to fight the cock, etc."

Ah! If only I dared to drink another penny's worth! Ah! if I only dared to drink just one more penny's worth! I believe I'll do it. No, I will be sorry if I do. Could I only get away from the inn then there would be no trouble, but there seems to be some one that holds me back. I must go in again. But what are you doing, Jeppe? I seem to see Nille standing before me with Master Erik in her hand. I must turn back. Ah! if I only dared drink one more penny's worth! My stomach says, you shall; my back, you shall not; which shall I then obey? Is not my stomach more important than my back? I say yes. Shall I knock? Hey! Jakob Skomager, come out!—but that damned woman comes to my mind again! If only she would strike so my back didn't hurt so bad, I wouldn't mind it at all; but she hits me like—Ah! God held me, poor man, what shall I do? Restrain yourself, Jeppe! Isn't it a shame that you should make yourself miserable for the sake of a glass of rotten whiskey? No, it sha'n't happen this time,—I must away. Ah! if I only dared to drink one more penny's worth. It was my bad luck that I first got a taste for it; now I can't get away. Get there, legs! Blast you if you don't go! No, the rascals will not, they want to go back to the inn; my limbs make war upon each other. Will you go, you dogs! you beasts! you rascallions! No, the devil take them, they want to go back to the inn; I have more trouble with my legs, to make them go away from the inn than to get my piebald mare out of the stable. Ah! if I only dared to drink one single penny's worth more! Who knows if Jakob Skomager won't trust me for a penny or two if I ask him real nice. Hey, Jakob! Another whiskey for tuppence!

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## Scene 6.

### Jakob. Jeppe.

**Jakob**—Hello, Jeppe! Have you come back? I knew you didn't get enough. What does one glass amount to? That will hardly wet the throat.

**Jeppe**—Sure enough, Jakob! Gi' me another glass! (aside) When I once have drunk it, then I guess he will have to trust me, whether he wants to or not.

**Jakob**—Here's the drink, Jeppe, but the money first.

**Jeppe**—I s'pose you can trust me while I drink, as the old saying goes.

**Jakob**—We don't care for any old sayings here, Jeppe! If you won't pay in advance you'll not get a drop. We have sworn off trusting anybody, even the overseer himself.

**Jeppe** (weeping)—Can't you trust me, I am an honest man?

**Jakob**—No credit, Jeppe.

**Jeppe**—Take the money then, you rascal!. Now it is done, drink now, Jeppe! (drinks). Ah! that feels good.



**Jakob**—Yes, that's the kind of stuff to warm a fellow's inside!

**Jeppe**—The best thing about whiskey is that it gives a man such spirit. Now I think neither of my wife nor Master Erik, so changed have I become after the last glass. Do you know this song, Jakob? (Sings.)

Little Kirsten and Herr Peder they sat at the table, Peteheia,  
A spoke so many a jesting word, Polemeia.  
In the summer sing the merry starling, Peteheia,  
May the devil take Nille, the wicked wench, Polemeia,  
I took a walk in bright green wood, Peteheia,  
The sexton, he is a rascally dog, Polemeia,  
I seated myself on my dapple gray horse, Peteheia,  
The sexton, he is a downright beast, Polemeia,  
But, if you will know the name of my wife, —!

I wrote that song myself, Jakob!

**Jakob**—The devil you did!

**Jeppe**—Jeppe is not so stupid as you think. I have also made a song about the shoemaker which runs thus: [Pg 23]

The Shoemaker with his fiddle and his drum, Philebom, Philebom.

**Jakob**—Why, you fool, that's a song for fiddlers.

**Jeppe**—Yes, sure enough. Look here, Jakob. Give me another dram!

**Jakob**—Good, now I can see that you are a fine fellow and don't begrudge my house an honest penny.

**Jeppe**—Hey, Jakob! Just give me for tuppence.

**Jakob**—Very well!

**Jeppe** (sings again)—

The earth drinks up the water,  
The sea drinks up the sun;  
The sun drinks up the ocean,  
Everything drinks in this world.  
Why should I not then  
Drink with all the rest?

**Jakob**—Your health, Jeppe!

**Jeppe**—Mir zu.

**Jakob**—Good luck with half of it!

**Jeppe**—Ich tank ju, Jakob! Drik man, datt dig di Dyvel haal, datt ist dig vel undt.

**Jakob**—I hear you can talk German, Jeppe.

**Jeppe**—Sure, that's nothing new, but I don't usually talk it except when I'm drunk.

**Jakob**—Then you surely talk at least once a day.

**Jeppe**—I have been in the army ten years and should I not know my own language?

**Jakob**—Why, that's right, Jeppe! We were in the same campaign for two years.

**Jeppe**—Sure enough, I remember now. You were hung, weren't you, when you deserted at Wismar?

**Jakob**—I was to have been hanged, but was pardoned. "There is many a slip between the cup and the lip."

**Jeppe**—It is too bad that you weren't hanged, Jakob; but weren't you along in that action which took place on the plain—well, you know where—

**Jakob**—Ah! where haven't I been along?

**Jeppe**—I'll never forget the first volley the Swedes fired. I believe there fell three thousand if not four thousand men at one time. (Hic.) Dasz ging fordyvelet zu, Jakob. Du kandst wohl das ihukommen; ich kann nich negten dat ik jo bange var in dat slag. [Pg 24]

**Jakob**—Yes, yes, death is pretty hard to meet; a fellow is so pious when he meets the enemy.

**Jeppe**—Yes, quite true; I don't know how it was, but I lay and read the whole night before the action in David's "Psalter."

**Jakob**—I wonder that you who have been a soldier will let your wife tyrannize over you the way she does.

**Jeppe**—I! If I only had her here! Then you would see how I should pound her! One more glass, Jakob! I have eight pence left yet! (Aside) When I have drunk them up, I shall drink on credit. Give me a mug of beer on that.

In Leipsig was a man,

In Leipsig was a man,  
In Leipsig was a good for nix,  
In Leipsig was a good for nix,  
The man he took himself a wife, etc.,  
In Leipsig was a man.

**Jakob**—Your health, Jeppe!

**Jeppe**—Hey! He—y! He—Here's to you and to me and to all good friends! He—Hey!

**Jakob**—Don't you want to drink the overseer's health?

**Jeppe**—Very well; give me another penny's worth. The overseer is a decent sort of fellow. When we put a dollar in his hand he will swear by his soul before his master that we cannot pay our land rent. I'll be hanged, if I have any money left—you will give me a few drinks more on credit, won't you?

**Jakob**—No, Jeppe, you can't stand any more now. I'm not the fellow who will allow his guests to overdo things in his house and let them drink more than is good for them. I would rather lose my living, for it is a sin.

**Jeppe**—Hey, one more drink.

**Jakob**—No, Jeppe, now I won't give you any more; remember that you have a long way to go.

**Jeppe**—Dog! Scoundrel! Beast! Rascal! Hey! He—y!

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**Jakob**—Goodbye, Jeppe! happy journey!

## Scene 7.

**Jeppe** (alone)—Ah, Jeppe, you are as full as a tick! My legs will hardly carry me. Will you stand, you rascals, or won't you? Hey, there, what time is it! Hey, Jakob, villain, scoundrel. Hey! Just one more drink! Will you stand, you dogs? No, the devil take me if they will stand. Thanks, Jakob Skomager. Let's have another! Listen, comrade! Where's the road to the town? Stand, I tell you! Look, the beast is drunk. You drank like a toper, Jakob. Do you call that a drink of whiskey—you measure like a Turk.

(While he is speaking he falls and remains lying.)

## Scene 8.

### Baron Nilus. His Secretary. A Valet. Two Lackeys.

**Baron**—The prospects for a good crop are very promising. Just see how nice the barley stands.

**Secretary**—Yes, that is quite true, your Grace; but that means that a bushel of barley will not bring a higher price than five marks.

**Baron**—That makes no difference. The peasants always do better when the times are good.

**Secretary**—I don't know how it is, my lord, the peasants always complain and ask for seed grain whether the season is good or bad. When they have anything they drink all the more. Here is an innkeeper in the neighborhood by the name of Jakob Skomager who does much to make the peasants poor. They say that he puts salt in the beer so that the more they drink, the more they shall thirst.

**Baron**—We must get that fellow out of the way. But what is that lying there in the road? Why, that's a dead man. One hears of nothing but accidents. Run over there, one of you, and see what it is.

**A lackey**—That is Jeppe on the Hill, who has the shrewish wife. Wake up, Jeppe. No, he wouldn't wake up if we pounded him and pulled him around by the hair.

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**Baron**—Just let him be, I would like to play a little trick on him. You used to be quite inventive fellows, can you devise something now to amuse me?

**Secretary**—It seems to me it would be clever if we tied a paper collar around his neck or clipped his hair.

**The valet**—It seems to me that it would be even more clever if we daubed his face with ink and stationed someone to see how his wife would receive him when he came home in such a predicament.

**Baron**—That's all very well, but what will you wager that Erik can devise something more clever than that? Give us your opinion, Erik!

**Erik, lackey**—It is my opinion that his clothes should all be taken off and that he should be laid in my lord's best bed, and in the morning when he awakes we should all act as though he were the lord of the manor, so that he should not know who or where he was. And when we have made him believe that he is the baron, we should make him as drunk again as he now is and lay him, in his old clothes, on the same dung heap. If this plan is carefully executed, it would have a strange effect and he would make himself believe either that he had dreamed about such glories or that he had really been in Paradise.

**Baron**—Erik, you are a great man and therefore you have only great ideas. But now if he should

wake up in the meantime?

**Erik**—I am very sure that he will not, my lord. Since the same Jeppe on the Hill is one of the soundest sleepers in the whole district. Why, they tried the other year to fasten a rocket to the back of his neck, but even when the rocket was fired off he didn't wake up from his sleep.

**Baron**—Let us then proceed. Take him away immediately, clothe him in a fine shirt and lay him in my best bed.

(Curtain.)

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## ACT II.

[Pg 27]

### Scene 1.

#### Jeppe.

(Jeppe is represented lying in the Baron's bed, a gold embroidered dressing gown on a chair; he awakes, rubs his eyes, looks around and becomes frightened; rubs his eyes again, feels of his head and finds a gold embroidered nightcap; he moistens his eyelids, rubs them again, turns the nightcap around and examines it, looks at his fine shirt, at the robe, at everything, with strange grimaces. Meanwhile soft music is heard, at which Jeppe folds his hands and weeps; when the music stops he begins to speak.)

But what is this? What sort of splendor is this and how have I come here? Do I dream, or am I awake? No, I am quite awake. Where is my wife, where are my children, where is my house, and where is Jeppe? Everything is changed, myself, too. Ah, what can it be? What can it be? (He calls softly and fearfully.) Nille! Nille! Nille! I believe that I have got into Heaven, Nille, and that without deserving it. But, can it be me? It seems to me it is; then again, it seems to me it isn't. When I feel of my back, which is still sore from the blows I got, when I hear myself speak, when I feel of my hollow tooth, it seems to me that it's me. When, on the other hand, I look at my cap, my shirt, and on all the fine things before me, and hear the beautiful music, I'll be hanged if I can get it into my head that it's me. No, it isn't me. I am a scoundrel a thousand times if it's me! But I wonder if I am dreaming. It doesn't seem so. I'll try to pinch my arm; if it doesn't hurt, then I dream; if it hurts, then I don't dream.—Yes, I felt it, I am awake; to be sure I am awake; no one can deny that. Because if I were not awake I could not—but how can I be awake when I stop to think? It cannot fail then that I am Jeppe on the Hill; I certainly know that I am a poor peasant, a serf, a rascal, a scoundrel, a hungry maggot, a poor worm! But how can I at the same time be king and lord of the castle? No, it must be only a dream. Therefore, it is best to have patience till I wake up. (The music is again heard and Jeppe begins to cry.) Ah! But can a person hear such things in his sleep? That is impossible! But if it is a dream, then I wish that I may never wake up again, and if I am mad, then may I never become sane; for I should sue the doctor who cured me and curse him who woke me up. But I neither dream nor am mad, for I can remember my whole life. I remember that my sainted father was Niels on the Hill, my grandfather, Jeppe on the Hill, my wife's name is Nille, her switch, Master Erik, my sons, Hans, Christopher and Niels. But see! Now I know: it is the other life, it is paradise, it is heaven! I must have drunk too much yesterday at Jakob Skomager's, died and immediately come to heaven. Death cannot be so awful as they would make one believe, since I didn't even feel it. Now, perhaps, Herr Jesper is standing this minute in the pulpit making a funeral sermon over my body and saying: Such was the end of Jeppe on the Hill; he lived like a soldier and died like a soldier. Of course, one might question whether I died on land or sea, since I went out of the world pretty well soaked. Ah, Jeppe, this is something different from going four miles to town to buy soap, from lying on straw and from getting whipped by your wife. Ah! To what bliss have not your suffering and dark days been transformed? Ah! I must weep from joy when I think that this has come to me through no merit of my own. But one thing comes to my mind: I am so thirsty that my lips are nearly parched. If I should wish myself alive again, it would be only that I might get a mug of beer to quench my thirst; for what good does all this glory do me when I must die again of thirst? I remember the preacher has often said that one neither hungers nor thirsts in heaven and further that one finds there all his deceased friends. But I am nearly dying from thirst. I am also quite alone; I don't see a soul. I ought to find my grandfather at least, who was such a decent person that he never left a shilling of debt to his landlord. Of course, I know that many people have lived just as decent lives as I have, why, then, should I alone come to heaven? Therefore, it can't be heaven. But what can it be? I am not asleep, I am not awake; I am not dead, I am not alive; I am not crazy, I am not sane; I am Jeppe on the Hill, I am not Jeppe on the Hill; I am poor, I am rich; I am a poor peasant, I am a king. Ah!—Ah!—Ah! Help! Help! Help!

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[Pg 29]

(At the great commotion several people come in who in the meantime have stood by, watching to see how he would act.)

### Scene 2.

#### Valet. A lackey. Jeppe.

**Valet**—I wish your lordship a hearty good morning! Here's a gown if your lordship wishes to arise. Erik, fetch a towel and a wash basin.

**Jeppe**—Ah, my worshipful valet! I should be glad to arise, but I beg of you that you do not hurt me.

**Valet**—The Lord deliver me from doing your lordship any harm!

**Jeppe**—Ah, before you kill me, will you not do me the favor to tell me who I am?

**Valet**—Does not my lord know who he is?

**Jeppe**—Yesterday I was Jeppe on the Hill, but to-day—ah, I hardly know what to say!

**Valet**—We are glad to see that your lordship is in such good humor to-day, that you are pleased to jest; but heaven defend us, why does your lordship weep?

**Jeppe**—I am not your lordship. I can make my oath that I am not; for so far as I can remember I am Jeppe Nielsen on the Hill, one of the Baron's peasants. If you will send for my wife you shall find it out; but don't let her take Master Erik along.

**Erik, lackey**—This is strange. What can it be? Your lordship cannot be awake, since you never used to jest in this way.

**Jeppe**—Whether I am awake or not I cannot say; but one thing I can say and that is that I am one of the Baron's peasants who is called Jeppe on the Hill, and I have never been either Baron or Count in my life.

**Valet**—Erik, what can that be? I am afraid that his lordship is suffering from some strange disease. [Pg 30]

**Erik**—I imagine that he is walking in his sleep, since it frequently happens that people arise, dress, eat and drink in their sleep.

**Valet**—No, Erik, I perceive that his lordship is delirious. Go and fetch a doctor immediately. Ah, your lordship, put all such thoughts away; your lordship is frightening the whole house. Does your lordship not know me?

**Jeppe**—I don't know myself; how can I then know you?

**Valet**—Ah, is it possible that I should hear such words from the lips of my gracious lord, and see him in such a pitiable condition? Ah, our unfortunate house, which must be plagued by such sorcery! Can my lord not remember what he did yesterday when he was out on the hunt?

**Jeppe**—I have never been either hunter or poacher in my life; you know that is work which may send you to prison! Never shall any soul be able to prove that I have ever hunted a hare on the lord's estate!

**Valet**—Ah, gracious lord, I was with you on the hunt myself yesterday.

**Jeppe**—Yesterday I sat at Jakob Skomager's and drank up twelve pence worth of whiskey. How could I then have been on a hunt?

**Valet**—Ah, I implore my gracious lord on my knees that he do not indulge in such talk. Erik, were the doctors sent for?

**Erik**—Yes, they are coming soon.

**Valet**—Let us assist our lord in putting on his dressing gown. Perhaps when he comes out in the fresh air it will be better. Does our lord wish to have on his gown?

**Jeppe**—Most willingly. You may do with me what you like, if only you do not take my life, for I am as innocent as an unborn babe.

### Scene 3.

#### A valet. Erik. Jeppe. Two doctors.

**First Doctor**—We hear with great regret that your lordship is indisposed.

**Valet**—Alas, yes, doctor; he is in a pitiful state. [Pg 31]

**Second Doctor**—How is everything with you, my gracious lord?

**Jeppe**—Quite well! Except that I am rather thirsty after the whiskey which I got at Jakob Skomager's yesterday. If you will only give me a mug of beer and let me go, then they may hang you two doctors up for all I care, because I don't need any medicine.

**First Doctor**—That is certainly a clear case of hallucinations.

**Second Doctor**—But the more violent the disease is the sooner he will get over it. Let us feel our lordship's pulse. Quid tibi videtur, domine frater?

**First Doctor**—I am not of that opinion. Such strange weaknesses must be cured in another fashion. Our lordship has had an awful and gruesome dream, which has brought the blood into such commotion and so confused his brain that he imagines himself a peasant. We must try to divert him with the things in which he finds the most pleasure; give him the wines and foods which suit him best, and play for him his favorite pieces of music.

(Lively music begins.)

**Valet**—Why, that is my lord's favorite piece.

**Jeppe**—Perhaps so. Do you always have such fun in this place?

**Valet**—As often as your lordship wishes; since it is you who gives us our wages.

**Jeppe**—But it is strange that I cannot remember what I have done in the past.

**First Doctor**—That is the result of the sickness, your lordship, that one forgets everything that he has done before. I recollect that one of my neighbors a few years ago became so delirious from strong drink that he made himself believe for two days that he had no head.

**Jeppe**—I wish that Christopher, the bailiff, would get the same idea, but he must have a sickness which is just opposite to this; since he imagined that he has a big head, while he really has none at all, as one can see from his decisions.

(They all laugh at this: Ha, ha, ha.)

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**Second Doctor**—It is a pleasure to hear our lordship jest. But to come back to the story again, that same person went all over town and asked people if they had found his head, which he had lost, but he got well again and is at this day sexton in Jutland.

**Jeppe**—He might be that, even if he had not found his wits again.

(All laugh: Ha, ha, ha.)

**First Doctor**—Does my colleague remember the story of what happened ten years since to the man who imagined that his head was full of flies? He could not get rid of the notion no matter how much one argued with him, until a shrewd doctor cured him in this wise: He laid a plaster covered with dead flies on his head, and after some time he pulled it off, showed it to the patient, made him believe that they had been extracted from his head, whereupon the patient became well again.

**Second Doctor**—There are innumerable examples of such illusions. I remember also of having heard of one who made himself believe that his nose was ten feet long and warned everyone whom he met not to come too near to him.

**First Doctor**—That is what is the matter with our gracious lord. He imagines that he is a poor peasant. But he must get rid of such thoughts, then he will soon become well again.

**Jeppe**—But can it be possible that it is only imagination?

**First Doctor**—Certainly! Your lordship has heard from these stories what imagination can do.

**Jeppe**—Am I not then Jeppe on the Hill?

**Second Doctor**—No, certainly not.

**Jeppe**—Is the wicked Nille not my wife?

**First Doctor**—By no means, since my lord is a widower.

**Jeppe**—Is it then nothing but imagination that she has a switch called Master Erik?

**Second Doctor**—Purely imagination.

**Jeppe**—Is it then not true that I was to go to town yesterday to buy soap?

**First Doctor**—No.

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**Jeppe**—Nor yet, that I drank up all the money at Jakob Skomager's?

**Valet**—Why, my lord was with us on a hunt all day yesterday.

**Jeppe**—Nor yet that I am henpecked?

**Valet**—Why, your wife has been dead for many years.

**Jeppe**—Ah, I am beginning to understand my weakness. I will not think of that peasant any longer, for I see that it is nothing but a dream and a mistake. Isn't it strange though how a person can fall into such an error?

**Valet**—Will it please your lordship to take a walk in the garden while we prepare a little breakfast?

**Jeppe**—To be sure, but see that you are quick about it, for I am both hungry and thirsty.

(Curtain.)

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## ACT III.

### Scene 1.

**Jeppe. Valet. Secretary.**

(Jeppe comes in from the garden with his suite and a little table is spread before him.)

**Jeppe**—Ha! Ha! I see the table is already set.

**Valet**—Yes, everything is ready whenever it shall please your lordship to be seated.

(Jeppe seats himself. The others stand back of the chair and laugh at his awkwardness when he reaches his hand into the dish, hiccoughs over the table, and behaves very boorishly.)

**Valet**—Will my lord let us know what wine he wishes?

**Jeppe**—You know very well yourselves what wine I am used to drinking in the morning.

**Valet**—It is Rhenish wine which his lordship is accustomed to drink. If it is not to his lordship's taste he can have another kind.

**Jeppe**—It is pretty sour. You must put some mead in it to make it good, for I like sweet things.

**Valet**—Here is some Canary sack, if my lord wishes to taste it.

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**Jeppe**—That is good wine. Let's all drink together! (Every time he drinks the trumpets blow.) Hey! Watch out, fellows! One more glass of sack! Do you understand? Where did you get that ring that you have on your finger?

**Secretary**—Your lordship gave it to me yourself.

**Jeppe**—I don't remember that. Give it back to me, I must have done that while drunk. One doesn't give such rings away. I'll have to look into this and see what other things you have received. Servants shall not have more than board and wages! I swear that I do not remember of having given you anything in particular; for why should I do it? That ring is worth over a guinea. No, no, good fellows! Not so! You must not take advantage of your master's weakness and drunkenness. When I am drunk I am as likely as not to give my very trousers away; but when I have become sober I take back my gifts again. Otherwise I should catch the mischief from my wife, Nille. Hold, what am I saying? Now I am getting into those foolish ideas again and don't remember who I am. Another glass of sack. The same toast. (Trumpets blow again.) Listen to what I say, fellows! After this, remember that when I give anything away in the evening while drunk, you must give it back to me in the morning. When servants get more money than they can spend they become proud and turn up their noses at their masters. What are your wages?

**Secretary**—My lord has always given me two hundred a year.

**Jeppe**—You shall have the devil, not two hundred after this! What do you do to earn two hundred? I myself must work like a beast and stand in the granary from morning till evening and can hardly—See, now those peasant notions are coming into my mind again! Give me another glass of wine. (He drinks and the trumpets blow.) Two Rixdollars! Why that's simply to skin your masters. Listen! Do you know what, you fellows! When I have eaten I have a good mind to hang every other one on the estate. You must know that I am not to be trifled with in money matters.

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**Valet**—We will return everything that we have received from your lordship.

**Jeppe**—Yes, yes! Your lordship! Your lordship! Compliments and words are cheap in these times. You will flatter me with "your lordship" until you get all my money and become "my lordship" in turn. The lips may say, "Your lordship," but the heart says, "You fool." You're not saying what you think, fellows! You servants are just like Abner who came and greeted Roland with, "Hail to thee, my brother!" and at the same time struck the dagger in his heart. Believe me, Jeppe is no fool.

(They all fall on their knees and sue for pardon.)

**Jeppe**—Just rise again, my lads, until I have done eating; after that I will see how matters stand, and who deserves to be hanged. Now, I will be merry.

## Scene 2.

### Jeppe. Valet. Overseer. Secretary.

**Jeppe**—Where is my overseer?

**Valet**—He is just outside.

**Jeppe**—Let him come in at once.

**Overseer** (enters dressed in a coat with silver buttons and a sash about the waist)—Has my lord any commands?

**Jeppe**—None, except that you are to be hanged!

**Overseer**—I have done nothing wrong, my lord! Why should I be hanged?

**Jeppe**—Are you not the manager?

**Overseer**—Yes, I am, my lord.

**Jeppe**—And still you ask why you shall be hanged?

**Overseer**—You know I have served your lordship honestly and faithfully, and been so diligent in my duties that your lordship has praised me above your other servants.

**Jeppe**—Yes, to be sure you have taken good care of your office; one can see that from your silver buttons,—what do you get a year?

**Overseer**—Fifty Rixdollars a year.

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**Jeppe** (walks back and forth excitedly)—Half a hundred a year—yes, you shall immediately be hanged.

**Overseer**—It could hardly be less, gracious lord, for a whole year's hard work.

**Jeppe**—Just for that reason you shall be hanged, since you receive only fifty Rixdollars! You have money for a silver buttoned coat, for lace cuffs, a silk net for your hair, and still you get only fifty Rixdollars per year! Is it not plain that you steal from me, poor man, or where should it all come from?

**Overseer** (on his knees)—Ah, gracious lord, only spare me for the sake of my poor wife and little children.

**Jeppe**—Have you many children?

**Overseer**—I have seven children living, my lord!

**Jeppe**—Ha, ha, seven living children? Away, hang him, secretary!

**Secretary**—Oh, gracious lord, I am no hangman!

**Jeppe**—What you are not, you may become; you look as though you were equal to anything. When you have hanged him, I shall hang you afterwards myself.

**Overseer**—Ah, gracious lord! Is there no pardon?

**Jeppe** (walks back and forth, sits down to take a drink and rises again)—Half a hundred Rixdollars, wife and seven children. If no one else will hang you I will do it myself. I know very well what sort of fellows you are, you overseers; I know how you have treated me and other poor peasants—Ah, now those cursed peasant notions are coming into my head again. I mean to say I know the way you conduct yourselves so well that I myself could be overseer if I had to. You get the cream of the milk and the Baron gets—something else. I believe that if the world lasts much longer overseers will become noblemen and noblemen, overseers. When a peasant gives a little something to either you or your wives, then when you come to your master the story is: that poor man is willing and industrious enough, but various misfortunes have come on him so he cannot pay; he has a bad piece of ground, his cattle have become scabby, or something like that. With such talk the landlord must be satisfied. Believe me, my good fellows, I don't let people lead me around by the nose; since I myself am a peasant and the son of a peasant—There, now that nonsense is coming into my mind again. I said I myself am the son of a peasant, since Abraham and Eve, our first parents, were peasants.

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**Secretary** (kneels before him)—Ah, gracious lord, have pity on him for his poor wife's sake, for otherwise, how will he be able to live and support wife and children?

**Jeppe**—Who says they shall live? They can be hanged, too.

**Secretary**—Ah, my lord, she is such a fine looking woman.

**Jeppe**—Well, well, perhaps you are in love with her, since you take such an interest in her. Let her come in.

### Scene 3.

#### Overseer's wife. Jeppe. The others.

(Wife comes in and kisses him on the hand.)

**Jeppe**—Are you the overseer's wife?

**Woman**—Yes, I am, gracious lord.

**Jeppe** (pats her on the cheek)—You are real nice. Won't you sit down at the table with me?

**Woman**—My lord has only to command; I am at his service.

**Jeppe** (to the overseer)—Will you let your wife eat with me?

**Overseer**—I thank your lordship that you do me the honor.

**Jeppe**—See here, place a chair for her, she shall sit at the table with me.

(She seats herself at the table, eats and drinks with him; he becomes jealous of the secretary and whenever he looks at him, the secretary immediately looks the other way. He sings an old-fashioned love song while they are sitting at the table. Jeppe orders the musicians to play a polka and dances with her, but falls three times from drunkenness, and the fourth time he remains lying and falls asleep.)

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### Scene 4.

#### The Baron. The others.

**Baron** (who has hitherto played the part of secretary)—He sleeps soundly already. Now the game is ours; but we came near being fooled ourselves, for he was bound to tyrannize over us, whereupon we either had to spoil the joke, or allow ourselves to be maltreated by that rude peasant, from whose conduct one may learn how tyrannical and proud such people may become who through some accident or other achieve honor or position. My disguising myself as a secretary came near being my misfortune, for if I had allowed him to strike me it might have become a pretty serious affair and have made me no less than the peasant, an object of ridicule. We had better let him sleep a little now before we put him back in his filthy peasant clothes.

**Erik**—Ah, my lord, he sleeps as sound as a stone. See here! I can pound him without his feeling it.

**Baron**—Take him away, then, and complete the comedy.

(Curtain.)

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## ACT IV.

### Scene 1.

**Jeppe** (represented lying on a dung heap in his old peasant clothes, awakes and cries:—)Hey, secretary! Valets! Lackeys! One more glass of canaille sack! (Looks around and rubs his eyes, blinks as before, feels of his head, looks at his old wide brimmed hat, turns the hat around on all sides, looks at his clothes, recognizes himself, begins to speak.) How long was Abraham in Paradise? Now I recognize to my sorrow, everything, my bed, my coat, my old hat, myself; this is something else, Jeppe, than drinking canaille sack from golden goblets and sitting at table with lackeys and secretaries at one's command. Good luck never lasts very long. Ah! Ah! to think that I who was such a gracious lord only a short time ago should see myself in such a condition now; my splendid bed changed to a dungheap, my gold embroidered cap to an old, wornout hat, my lackeys to swine, and myself from a gracious lord to a miserable peasant. I expected when I woke up to find my fingers bedecked with rings, but they are (to speak reverently) bedecked with something else. I expected to call my servants to account, but now I must myself offer my own back for punishment when I come home and give an account of myself. I thought when I woke to reach for a glass of sack, but got instead something quite different. Ah! Ah! Jeppe, that stay in Paradise was but short and your happiness soon came to an end. But who knows if the same thing could not happen to me again if I lay down to rest once more? Ah! ah! if it would only come to me again! Ah! if I could only get back to Paradise. (Lies down to sleep again.)

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### Scene 2.

#### Jeppe. Nille.

**Nille**—I wonder if something has happened to him? What can this mean? Either the devil has taken him or (what I am more afraid of) he is sitting in an inn and drinking up the money. I was a fool when I trusted that drunkard with twelve pence at one time. But what do I see? Does he not lie there in the filth snoring? Ah! poor me, who must have such a beast of a husband! Your back shall pay dearly enough for this.

(Steals over to him and gives him a whack from Master Erik on the back.)

**Jeppe**—Hey! Hey! Help! Help! What is that? Where am I? Who am I? Who hits me? Why do you hit me? Hey!

**Nille**—I shall soon teach you what it is. (Strikes him again and pulls him around by the hair.)

**Jeppe**—Ah, Nille, my dear! Don't strike me any more, you don't know what has happened to me.

**Nille**—Where have you been so long, you drunken dog? Where is the soap you were to buy?

**Jeppe**—I could not get to town, Nille.

**Nille**—Why could you not get to town?

**Jeppe**—I was taken up to Paradise on the way.

**Nille**—To Paradise! (Strikes him.) To Paradise! (Strikes him again.) To Paradise! (Strikes him again.) Are you going to make fun of me besides?

**Jeppe**—Ow! Ow! Ow! As sure as I am an honest man it is not true.

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**Nille**—What is true?

**Jeppe**—That I have been in Paradise.

(Nille repeats, "In Paradise," and strikes him again.)

**Jeppe**—Ah, Nille, my dear, don't hit me any more.

**Nille**—Quick! Confess where you have been or I will murder you!

**Jeppe**—Ah, I would gladly confess where I have been if you would not strike me any more.

**Nille**—Confess, then!

**Jeppe**—Swear that you will not strike me any more, then.

**Nille**—No.

**Jeppe**—As true as I am an honest man and my name is Jeppe on the Hill, I have been in Paradise and seen things that will make you wonder when you hear them.

(Nille thrashes him again and drags him in by the hair.)





**NILLE POUNDING JEPPE.**

**Scene 3.**

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**Nille** (alone)—There, you drunken beast! Sleep till you get sober, then we shall talk further about this matter. Such swine as you are don't get into Paradise. Only think how that beast has drunk his senses away! But if he has been enjoying himself at my expense then he shall certainly suffer for it. For two days he shall get neither food nor drink. Before that time has passed he will get over his notions of Paradise.

**Scene 4.**

**Three armed men. Nille.**

**First Soldier**—Is there a man living here by the name of Jeppe?

**Nille**—Yes, there is.

**Soldiers**—Are you his wife?

**Nille**—Yes, I am sorry to say. God help me!

**Soldiers**—We must see him.

**Nille**—He is quite drunk.

**Soldiers**—That makes no difference, away! Bring him out, or the whole house will get into trouble.

(Nille goes in, kicks Jeppe out with such force that he knocks down all three men.)

**Scene 5.**

**Three armed men. Jeppe.**

**Jeppe**—Ah! Ah! Now you see, my good fellows, what kind of wife I have to live with.

**Soldiers**—You don't deserve any other treatment, for you are a felon. (They take Jeppe away.)

**Jeppe**—What harm have I done?

**Soldiers**—You shall find that out soon enough when the court is held. (They bind him.)

**Scene 6.**

**Two lawyers. The judge. Jeppe.**

(The judge comes in with an attendant and seats himself by a table, while Jeppe is tied by the hands and brought before the court. One of the lawyers steps forward and makes his charge thus:)

**First Lawyer**—Here is a man, your honor, who, we can testify, has stolen into the Baron's house, pretended he was the Baron, put on his clothes, tyrannized over his servants, which, since it is an outrageous act, we insist, on behalf of our client that it should be punished severely, so that other

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criminals may take warning from him.

**Judge**—Are you guilty of the offence which is charged against you? Speak up. What have you to say in your own defence, for we do not wish to judge until we hear both sides?

**Jeppe**—Ah, my poor soul! What shall I say? I admit that I have deserved punishment, but only for the money which I drank up and which I was to have bought soap with; I confess, also, that I have lately been at a castle, but how I got there and how I got away from there, I do not know.

**Plaintiff (First Lawyer)**—Your honor hears from his own confession that he has drunk to excess, and in his intoxication committed such an unheard-of misdemeanor. And it now only remains to determine whether such a serious crime can be excused on the ground of drunkenness. I say no! Since if that is the case, no crime would be punished. Everyone would be seeking some such excuse and say that it was done in drunkenness; and even if he can prove himself to have been drunk, his case will not thereby be improved; for it is a rule in law that what a man does in drunkenness he shall be held responsible for when he becomes sober.

**Defendant (Second Lawyer)**—Your honor! This matter appears so strange to me that I can hardly believe it, even if there were more witnesses. How could a guileless peasant steal in upon his lordship's estate, and assume his position, without being able to assume his face or his form! How could he come into my lord's sleeping-chamber? How could he get to his wardrobe without some one seeing him? No, your honor, one can see that it is a conspiracy hatched up by the poor man's enemies. I hope, therefore, that he will be acquitted.

**Jeppe** (weeping)—Ah! God bless your lips! I have a plug of tobacco in my pocket, if you would like some; it is good enough for any honest man.

**Second Lawyer**—No thanks, keep your tobacco, Jeppe. I am defending you not for money or gifts but only from a sense of Christian charity.

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**Jeppe**—I beg your pardon, Mr. Lawyer, I had not thought that lawyers were so honest!

**First Lawyer**—That which my colleague adduces for the acquittal of this felon is based entirely on guess work. The question in this case is not whether it is probable that such a thing could occur, for it has already been proved, by witnesses as well as by his own confession, that it did occur.

**Second Lawyer**—What a man confesses through fear and intimidation cannot be considered in law. I ask, therefore, that this poor man be given time for reflection, and that he be asked the same questions once more. Listen, Jeppe, mind now what you say. Do you confess that of which you are accused?

**Jeppe**—No! I make my oath that everything which I have said before is a lie; for I have not been out of my house for three days!

**First Lawyer**—Your honor, I am firmly of the opinion that anyone who has first been proved guilty by witnesses, and later has confessed his own misdeeds should not be permitted to make a sworn statement.

**Second Lawyer**—I say yes,—

**First Lawyer**—I say no!

**Second Lawyer**—When the case is of such a peculiar nature.

**First Lawyer**—No circumstances can prevail against witnesses and the defendant's own confession.

**Jeppe** (aside)—Ah, if they could only get into a scrap with each other! In the meantime I should get hold of the judge and pound him, so he would forget both law and justice.

**Second Lawyer**—But listen, Herr Colleague! Although he confesses the deed, he has not deserved punishment; for he has committed no crime on the estate, neither murder nor robbery.

**First Lawyer**—That makes no difference; *intentio furandi* is the same as *furtum*.

**Jeppe**—Talk Danish, you dirty dog! Then we'll be able to defend ourselves all right.

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**First Lawyer**—For whether it is found that a person intends to steal, or does steal, he is a thief.

**Jeppe**—Ah, my gracious judge, I should gladly be hanged, if that lawyer could be hanged at my side.

**Second Lawyer**—Don't talk that way, Jeppe, you only injure your own cause by it.

**Jeppe**—Why don't you answer, then? (Aside.) He stands there like a dumb fool.

**Second Lawyer**—But how do you prove *furandi propositum*?

**First Lawyer**—*Quicumque in aedes alienas noctu irrumpit, tanquam fur aut nocturnus grassator existimandus est, atqui reus hic ita, ergo.*

**Second Lawyer**—*Nego majorem, quod scilicet irruperit.*

**First Lawyer**—*Res manifesta est, tot legitimis testibus exstantibus, ac confitenti reo.*

**Second Lawyer**—*Quicumque vi vel metu coactus fuerit confiteri—*

**First Lawyer**—But where is that *vis*? Where is that *metus*? That is but chicanery.

**Second Lawyer**—No, you are using chicanery.

**First Lawyer**—No honest man shall accuse me of such a thing.

(The lawyers grapple, and Jeppe runs over and pulls the wig off the first lawyer and strikes him on the head with it.)

**Judge**—Order in the courtroom! Stop, I have heard enough! (Reads his verdict:) Whereas Jeppe on the Hill, son of Niels on the Hill, and grandson of Jeppe from the same place, is proved by legal witnesses as well as by his own confession to have surreptitiously entered the Baron's castle, put on his clothes, and maltreated his servants, he is condemned to die by poison, and when he is dead his body shall be hanged on the gallows.

**Jeppe**—Ah! Ah! Gracious judge! Is there no pardon?

**Judge**—None. The sentence shall be executed immediately in my presence.

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**Jeppe**—Ah! Won't you give me a glass of whiskey before I drink the poison so that I can die like a soldier?

**Judge**—Yes, that is permitted.

**Jeppe** (drinks three glasses of whiskey, falls on his knees and asks:)—Is there then no pardon?

**Judge**—No, Jeppe! It is too late now.

**Jeppe**—Ah! But it isn't too late! The judge can surely change the sentence, and say that it was all wrong the first time. Why, that happens often, for we are all human.

**Judge**—No, you shall feel yourself in a few minutes that it is too late; for you have already taken the poison in the whiskey.

**Jeppe**—Ah, poor me! Have I already taken the poison? Ah, goodbye, Nille! Still, you fiend, you don't deserve to have me bid you farewell; goodbye Jens, Niels and Christoffer! Goodbye, my daughter Martha; goodbye, the apple of my eye! You have your father's face; we look as much alike as two drops of water. Goodbye, my dappled horse, and thanks for every time I have ridden on you; next to my own children I have loved no beast as much as you. Goodbye, Fairfax! My faithful dog and watch; goodbye Mo'ns, my black cat! Goodbye, my oxen, my sheep, my hogs, and thanks for good company and for every day I have known you. Goodbye—Ah! Now I can say nothing more, I am so weak and helpless.

(Falls over and remains lying.)

**Judge**—It works well; the drugged liquor has already done its work; he sleeps like a stone. Now hang him up; but see to it that he receives no injury from it, and that the rope comes only under his arms. Now we shall see how he acts when he awakes and finds himself hanging aloft.

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## ACT V.

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### Scene 1.

**Nille. Jeppe. Judge.**

(Jeppe is represented hanging on a gallows.)

**Nille** (tears her hair, beats her breast, and cries)—Oh! Oh! Is it possible that I shall see my husband hanging on a gallows! Ah, my dearest husband! Forgive me if I have ever done anything to harm you. Oh, oh! Now my conscience awakes; now I am sorry, but too late, that I have treated you so mean; now I begin to miss you, now I can see what an excellent husband I have lost! Oh! Oh, if I could only bring you back from death, even at the cost of my own life and blood.

(Wipes her eyes and weeps bitterly. In the meantime the effects of the sleep-producing drink have worn off, and Jeppe wakes and sees himself hanging on a gallows with his hands tied behind his back; he hears his wife sobbing and speaks to her.)

**Jeppe**—Don't feel bad, my darling wife! We must all go this way sometime. Go home and take care of the house and look after my children. My red coat can be made over for little Christian, and what is left Martha may have for a cap. But, before all else, see to it that my dappled horse is well taken care of, for I loved that beast as if he was my own brother. If I wasn't dead I'd tell you a number of other things.

**Nille**—Oh—Oh—Oh—What is that? What do I hear? Can a dead man speak?

**Jeppe**—Do not fear, Nille; I won't hurt you.

**Nille**—Ah, my dearest husband, how can you speak when you are dead?

**Jeppe**—I don't know how it is myself. But listen, dear wife. Run like a streak and bring me eight pence worth of whiskey, for I am more thirsty now than when I was alive.

**Nille**—Fie! You beast! You rascal! You old sot! Didn't you drink whiskey enough while you were alive? Are you still thirsty, you dog, now that you are dead? You're what I call a regular hog!

**Jeppe**—Hold your tongue, you scold, and fetch the whiskey. If you don't do that I'll be hanged if I

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won't haunt the house every night. You must know that I'm not afraid of Master Erik any more, for I don't feel thrashings now. (Nille runs to the house after Master Erik, returns and thrashes him on the gallows.) Ou—Ou—Ouch! Stop, Nille! Stop! You might kill me again, Ou—Ou—Ouch!

**Judge** (interferes)—Look here, woman, you must not strike him any more. Be content; we will, for your sake, forgive your husband his offense, and sentence him to life again.

**Nille**—Ah, no, gracious lord! Just let him hang, for he is not worth the trouble.

**Judge**—Fie! You are a wicked woman! Get out of here quickly or we shall hang you up beside him. (Nille runs out.)

## Scene 2.

### Jeppe. The Court.

(Jeppe is being taken down from the gallows.)

**Jeppe**—Ah, your honor! Is it certain that I am quite alive again or am I a ghost?

**Judge**—You are quite alive; for the court which can sentence you to death can also sentence you to life. Can't you understand that?

**Jeppe**—No, I don't understand it, but I believe I am still a ghost.

**Judge**—Ah, you fool! That is easy to see. He who takes a thing from you can certainly give it back to you.

**Jeppe**—May I then try to hang the judge, just for fun, and see if I can sentence him to life again later?

**Judge**—No, that won't do; for you are no judge.

**Jeppe**—But am I then alive again?

**Judge**—Yes, you are.

**Jeppe**—So that I'm not a ghost?

**Judge**—Certainly not!

**Jeppe**—Nor a spirit?

**Judge**—No.

**Jeppe**—Am I then the same Jeppe on the Hill that I was before?

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**Judge**—To be sure!

**Jeppe**—And not a spectre?

**Judge**—No, of course not.

**Jeppe**—Will you swear that it is true?

**Judge**—I swear that you are alive.

**Jeppe**—Will you cross your heart and hope to die if it isn't true?

**Judge**—You should believe what we say without question, and thank us that we have been so merciful as to sentence you to life again.

**Jeppe**—If you had not hanged me yourselves, I should have been glad to thank you for taking me down again.

**Judge**—Be content, Jeppe, and let us know when your wife beats you again, and we shall look into the matter. See, here are four Rixdollars, which you can have a good time with for awhile, and don't forget to drink our health.

(Jeppe kisses his hand and thanks him. The judge goes away.)

## Scene 3.

**Jeppe** (alone)—Here I have lived for fifty years, and in all that time I have not gone through as much as in these two days. This is certainly a queer story, when I stop to think of it; one hour a drunken peasant, another hour baron, a third hour peasant again; now dead, now alive on a gallows,—which is the funniest of it all; maybe when live people get hanged they die, and when dead people get hanged they come to life again. I guess that a drink of whiskey would taste fine on this. Hey! Jakob Skomager, come out!

## Scene 4.

### Jakob Skomager. Jeppe.

**Jakob**—Welcome back from town! Did you get the soap for your wife?

**Jeppe**—Ay, you rascal, you must know what kind of people you are talking to! Off with your cap! for you are but an idiot compared to a fellow like me.

**Jakob**—I'd not stand such words from anyone else, Jeppe. But since you give my house a daily

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penny, I won't be too particular.

**Jeppe**—Off with your cap, you rascal!

**Jakob**—What has happened to you on the way, that you've got the big head?

**Jeppe**—You must know that I have been hanged since I spoke with you last.

**Jakob**—That is not so much to feel proud about. I don't envy you a bit. But listen, Jeppe, "where you have drunk your beer there you should show your spleen!" You become drunk at other places, but come into my house just to make a disturbance.

**Jeppe**—Quick, off with your cap, you rascal! Don't you hear that jingling in my pocket?

**Jakob** (with his hat under his arm)—Whew! Where did you get that money?

**Jeppe**—From my barony, Jakob. I'll tell you what has happened to me, but give me a glass of mead first; for I am too proud to drink Danish whiskey.

**Jakob**—Your health, Jeppe.

**Jeppe**—Now I shall tell you what has happened to me. When I left you I fell asleep; when I woke up again I was a baron, and got drunk again on canaille sack; when I got drunk of sack, I woke up on a dung-heap; when I woke up on the dung-heap, I lay down to sleep again, hoping that I would again become a baron, but I found that it doesn't always go like that; for my wife woke me up with Master Erik and dragged me in by the hair without having the least respect for such a man as I had been. When I came into the room I was kicked out head first, and saw myself surrounded by a lot of shysters, who sentenced me to death and killed me with poison; after I had been hanged I came to life again and got four Rixdollars. This is the whole story; but how such a thing could happen, I will let you imagine.

**Jakob**—Ha! Ha! Ha! It's a dream, Jeppe.

**Jeppe**—If I didn't have these four Rixdollars I'd think it was a dream, too. Give me another, Jakob, I'll not think more of that foolishness but have another good drink.

**Jakob**—Your health, Baron. Ha! Ha! Ha!

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**Jeppe**—Perhaps you can't understand this, Jakob?

**Jakob**—Not if I stood on my head.

**Jeppe**—It might be true anyway, Jakob, for you are a dunce, and don't understand such things.

## Scene 5.

### Magnus. Jeppe. Jakob.

**Magnus**—Ha! Ha! Ha! I'll tell you a confounded story about a man called Jeppe on the Hill, who was found drunk and sleeping in the field,—his clothes were changed, and he was laid in the best bed on the estate. He was made to believe that he was the Baron, then they made him drunk again, and put him back on the dung-heap. When he woke up, he imagined that he had been in paradise. I laughed till I almost died when I heard that story from the overseer's men. I would give a Rixdollar if I could get a chance to see the fool. Ha, ha, ha!

**Jeppe**—How much do I owe, Jakob?

**Jakob**—Twelve pence.

(Jeppe wipes his mouth and goes away very much ashamed.)

**Magnus**—Why did that man leave so suddenly?

**Jakob**—That is the very person on whom the trick was played.

**Magnus**—Is it possible? Then I must hurry after him. Hold on, Jeppe! One word more. How is everything getting along in the other world?

**Jeppe**—Let me go in peace.

**Magnus**—Why didn't you stay there longer?

**Jeppe**—Is that any of your business?

**Magnus**—Ay, tell us something about your journey.

**Jeppe**—Let me go, I tell you; or I shall do something to you.

**Magnus**—Ay, Jeppe, I am so anxious to find out something about it.

**Jeppe**—Jakob Skomager! Help! Will you let people be attacked in your house?

**Magnus**—I am doing you no harm, Jeppe. I only ask what you saw in the other world.

**Jeppe**—Hey! Help! Help!

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**Magnus**—Did you see any of my ancestors there?

**Jeppe**—No, your ancestors must be in the other place, where I hope you and other rascals will go when you die. (Struggles with Magnus and gets away.)

## Scene 6.

### Baron. His secretary. Valet. Two lackeys.

**Baron**—Ha, ha, ha! That joke is worth a good deal; I had not thought that it would have had such good effect. If you can amuse me as well again, Erik, you shall stand very high in my regard.

**Erik**—No, gracious lord, I dare not risk such comedy again; for if he had struck my lord, as he threatened to do, there might have been a terrible tragedy.

**Baron**—That is, by my faith, true enough. I myself feared it somewhat, but I was so interested in the outcome that I would rather have allowed myself to be struck,—yes, I believe I would rather have allowed myself to be hanged by him, Erik, than to have given the story away. You were probably of the same mind.

**Erik**—No, my lord! It would be rather strange to allow one's self to be hanged in jest, for that pleasure would be too costly.

**Baron**—Ay! Such things happen every day. If not in that manner, then in some other, do people lose their lives through some jest. For example, if a man has a weak will and knows that he is likely to lose both life and health from too much drink, still he is likely to overtask his strength and risk both for the sake of an evening's pleasure. I am convinced, Erik, that it would have been better if you had allowed yourself to be hanged rather than to have spoiled such a splendid comedy.

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### TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected.

Inconsistencies in spelling, hyphenation, and punctuation have been retained from the original.

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