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What Would Mrs. Maethinkar Say?



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A COMEDIETTA

By DAN MILLIKIN

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JUDGE ASPENLEAF

MRS. ASPENLEAF

DOCTOR MACTHINKAR

REGINALD ASPENLEAF

PENELOPE MACTHINKAR

OWEN

MARIE

SCENE:—A large Sitting-room in Judge Aspenleaf's Mansion.

What Would Mrs. Macthinkar Say?

Curtain goes up to the notes of a hand-organ, loud and strident. Reginald is seen in a rolling chair, with pillows and afghan. Owen is attending him. They are discovered at the left upper part of the stage, where a window is seen or suggested.

REG. (*Whining most dismally.*) Take me away; oh, DO take me away from that noise!

OW. Yes, sir; I will, sir. (*He wheels the chair down to the center.*) 'T is awful music, sir.

REG. Close the window, Owen; please do. You must want me to die! Call that MUSIC! (*Owen flies to close the window.*)

DON'T shake the floor so. DON'T make so much noise. You know I can't stand noise. Don't the doctor say so, you big brute?

OW. He does, sir.

The sound of the organ dies away as if in the distance.

REG. Is the Italian going away?

OW. (*Goes very lightly to make an observation.*) He is, sir,—him and the other monkey.

REG. Oh, don't try to be funny. You know I can't endure that when I am so weak. Don't I hear another noise?

OW. 'T is only a horse, sir.

REG. How can you say ONLY? You know the tread of a horse is dreadful—simply DREADFUL! Oh, dear! I believe the horse is stopping.

OW. 'T is sir. 'T is Doctor Macthinkar gettin' out of it.

REG. No, no, no, NO! Out of the CARRIAGE, you mean.

OW. Yes, sir. The horse never c'd get out of the carriage, sir.

REG. Oh, dear, Owen; I wish you would stop that deluge of "sirs." It's very tiresome.

OW. Yes, sir; 't is sir, indeed, sir.

REG. There you go again. Can't you say plain YES and be done with it?

OW. Oh, yes, sir, That's aisy, sir.

REG. And plain, NO?

OW. Oh, yes, sir,—NO, sir, I mean, sir. Yes, sir; I can say NO, sir.

Reginald beats the air feebly, in despair.

REG. Was that really the doctor?

OW. (*Runs once more to the window.*) 'T was indeed, sir. He must be in the house by this.

REG. I won't see him! Go tell him so! He can't do me any good. Go tell him!

OW. Oh, he's the dear man, sir, and the friend of the family; an' y' know, sir, it's not for me,—

Enter Mrs. Aspenleaf R. U. She flies to Reginald, strokes his brow and swoops to kiss him while she gushes over him. He dodges and moans.

MRS. A. How's my darling boy this morning? Feeling better since the last little nap, I know. Kiss its mother good morning.

Enter Judge Aspenleaf, R. U.

ASP. Ah, Reginald! Feeling better this morning, I know. *He touches R's hand as he passes to L. and sits near the window.*

REG. Go on, Owen, I say! Don't touch me, Mother! You irritate me continually. I won't see that fool doctor this morning. I MUST have SOME quiet, I tell you.

Mrs. A. flutters over him caressingly, now on one side of the chair and now on the other, as he turns his head from side to side, dodging her.

MRS. A. Oh, Reggie, dear, don't say you won't see the dear old Doctor. He is such a good friend of ours, and he has been so patient with you.

REG. Confound his patience! Haven't I been patient with him?

ASP. (*Coming forward.*) Macthinkar is making a very careful study of your case, Reginald.

REG. Confound his study! I'm no case! I want to be let alone, I tell you!

MRS. A. And Reggie, dear, he has such a lovely daughter, and she has just come home from Europe, and she's so accomplished.

REG. Confound his daughter!

MRS. A. Yes, love; anything you say. She came home yesterday, a perfect beauty they say; and the dear old Doctor will hardly let her leave him for a minute.

REG. Let him have her! Or let the devil fly away with her! I don't want her.

OW. (*Has edged away to R. F., grinning.*) See, now, where nervous prostration will bring a man!

A. Reginald, you must be a little reasonable, sick or well. You need never see the girl, unless you want to, but you must see her father. I do not wish to cross you in anything, but I must say with all the firmness of an Aspenleaf, that I expect my son to treat my friend with courtesy in my house. Owen! (*Glancing backward to R. U.*) See if you cannot be of some assistance to the doctor.

Enter Dr. Mact. with a satchel in each hand, a polished box under one arm and a large cylinder under the other. He is also embarrassed by a cane. Endeavoring to remove his hat, he drops the cylinder with a clang. Owen and Judge A. relieve him of his other impediments. Mact. sinks into a chair at F., mops himself with handkerchief and reaches for his patient's hand. It is petulantly withdrawn. He has already made sundry ejaculations and begins talking as he sits down.

MACT. Ah, bless me sowl! I had not expectit to come in so noisily. How's the sick lad? (*Reginald flings a corner of the afghan over his face, but the Doctor is oblivious.*) Aspenleaf, my good friend, I am constrained to remark 'at ye have the battery on its end and (*A. makes haste to correct the position of*

the box.) we are without information as to the effect upon the polarity of the current. Electricity is a wonderful phenomenon, Mrs. Aspenleaf.

MRS. A. Isn't it just too funny what they can do with electricity? And you're going to try it on Reggie, aren't you. I know he'll be delighted!

Reggie kicks violently.

MACT. Aye, he will. The treatment I have devised causes a violent tickling and sometimes the sensation of something crawling upon the skin, but it can hardly be called painful.

Reggie groans.

Ultimately, if life is prolonged, the treatment is absolutely exhilaratin'. Owen, y' have yon cylinder of oxygen where the temperature is excessive? It has the sound of an empty can, but strange to say the vessel is full of oxygen gas at a pressure of about seventy or eighty atmospheres.

A. Why, Macthinkar, no vessel can stand such a pressure! The statutes will apply to the shipper of such a deadly thing and to common carriers as well. (*He moves away while talking.*)

MACT. Aye, but the carriers only accept yon cylinder under special contracts, and the shipper puts on a tag especially cautioning all against jarring and high temperature. 'Tis VERRA dangersome.

Owen has the cylinder in his arms, closely hugged. While he expatiates, Macthinkar raps it with his knuckles. The two Aspenleafs retire far up the stage, one to the right and the other to the left. All talk at once, the cue being Macthinkar's remark to Owen,

"Dinna hug the can so tightly, man; ye'll have it warmer every minute!" (*He continues,*) "And dinna drop it, either! You should be calm and gentle in the handling of all terrible explosives. Me heart was in me mouth a bit ago when I dropped the thing. I could tell ye, lad, a tale of a careless, lubberly sort of a thing (a porter he was), who had the entire abdominal parietes blown away by compressed gases. He would not obey orders,

an' now he sees his mistake in the better land wheer I hope we're all goin, lad." (*Meanwhile Owen is protesting and begging,*) "I'm not huggin' it, Doctor. I'm not hot, I tell you. I have a chill on me. Take it from me, Doctor, for the love o' mercy. Me parents is old, an' I'm thinkin' of marriage, etc., etc." (*In his far corner of the stage Judge Aspenleaf roars,*) "In the name of all common sense, why did you bring that condemned thing here? Have it out, Macthinkar; I don't ASK it, understand; I COMMAND IT! A man's house is his castle, and I simply will not permit these dangerous experiments, no matter how kindly they are meant. TAKE THE INFERNAL THING OUT!" (*Mrs. Aspenleaf flutters over to the Judge, then down to Reginald's chair, then scurries back to her safe corner, where she holds her fan open and peers around it at the infernal machine.*) "You're quite right, my dear. It is an outrage to bring such a thing into the house, and so funny of Doctor Macthinkar. Do we agitate you, Reggie, dear? Compose yourself! Don't lose control of yourself! Remember that you are an Aspenleaf. We will have the thing out in a moment, if it doesn't blow up. Be brave, Reggie, dear! (*Meanwhile Reginald has been feebly crying,*) "Take it away, take it away! 'Twill make a noise when it goes off, and I hate noise! Take it away, Doctor! Keep still, all of you! I won't use his old gas, anyway! Take me away!"

The uproar ceases when Macthinkar takes the cylinder and produces a wrench. Owen and Reggie continue their deprecatory groans. Macthinkar sits, gives the wrench a few turns and remarks,

Me good people, ye have been unduly agitated. I have inadvertently bro't an empty cylinder and left the charged cylinder at me office.

Judge A., Mrs. A., and Owen gradually come out of their corners, for Owen fled to the extreme wing when relieved of his burden, and Macthinkar continues. The cylinder is between his legs as he sits at ease, and he occasionally

taps it with the wrench, and each clanging sound causes Reggie to twist in his chair.

Takin' ye good people all 'round, ye remind me verra much of a circumstance at happent in me native village, aboot ten miles from the birthplace o' Bobbie Burns. Ma father told me it when I was no more than eight years old, and I still think it verra amusin'.

Reginald has feebly beckoned Owen to his chair. Owen bends over him to receive his commands. He slowly moves the chair up the stage.

The tale is about a man who had twalve dowters.

Ow. (*Aside.*) It's the same old story, sir.

Exeunt Reginald and Owen, slowly, at R. U.

The Aspenleafs are well forward, listening to Doctor Macthinkar.

MACT. Aye, there were twalve dowters, and no son.

A. Wife, we must switch him off, some way. It takes fifteen minutes for that story to come to an end.

MRS. A. Doctor, I think it is time for some tea, just to settle our nerves. (*She strikes a bell.*) What do you say to a cup of our tea from Russia?

A. Brewed in Russian style, Doctor.

MRS. A. With a slice of lemon in it, Doctor.

A. And a spoonful of rum, Doctor.

MACT. A spoonful! I thowt the Russians were heavy drinkers. But to my story:

Enter Marie.

A. Very well. You shall put in the rum to suit yourself.

MRS. A. Marie, bring us some tea—the Russian tea.

MARIE. Will madame have ze rumm, also.

MACT. Assuredly! Bring the rum, tho' ye forget the tea.

They stare at each other, each evidently amused. Exit Marie.

Who is the little curlew?

A. That's Mrs. Aspenleaf's latest maid—not the last, I fear. This time it is a French production. She

has a French tongue, French heels, and plain American common sense.

MACT. I have a smattering of French. I must furbish it up and have some polyglot conversation with her. It will greatly improve my linguistics.

A. Well, maybe, maybe! But what would Mrs. Mac-thinkar say?

Marie returns and serves the tea, slightly hindered, from time to time, by Mrs. Aspenleaf.

Where's the boy?

MRS. A. Well, if that isn't the funniest thing. Owen has wheeled him out, and we never noticed it.

A. Good for him, isn't it, Doctor Macthinkar? It's pleasant on the porch. He may get an appetite there.

MACT. Ah! I was about to make minute inquiry as to his appetite.

A. I think it's near zero. What do you say, my dear?

MRS. A. Oh, I do not believe he can live long on his present diet. He doesn't eat more than a chameleon every day.

MACT. A chamele—

MRS. A. Oh, positively, no, Doctor. The poor, dear little darlings! It's a shame to bring the little things away from Florida and—other tropical countries, Doctor.

MACT. Yes, yes; but as to his appetite,—

MRS. A. Why I've told you all about it: I said that he ate no more than a chameleon.

MACT. Aye, you said ONE EACH DAY! Now *de gustibus non disputandum*, but I must say I would not eat one of the miserable reptiles,—no matter how cooked,—not for the half of auld Scotland!

MRS. A. Oh, I didn't mean THAT. Reggie don't eat chameleons. What I mean is—is,— Don't you know, they eat flies?

- MACT. (*Sorely puzzled.*) Aye,—they—eat—flies?.
He puts away his tea and wafers with an expression of extreme disgust.
- MRS. A. Maybe one, maybe three or four in a day, just according to luck, don't you know? Sometimes no flies for a week.
- MACT. Aye, that may be. (*Desperately puzzled.*)
- MRS. A. Well, what I meant was, Reggie doesn't eat so many—so MUCH, I mean.
- MACT. Ah, now I begin to comprehend your metaphor.
- A. Oh, you'll do, Macthinkar! You'll understand her by night. How bright the Scotch are!
- MACT. She was not so pairfectly lucid as sometimes, and I began to entertain apprehensions that the lad was reptilio-carnivorous and perhaps insectivorous.
- MRS. A. Mercy on us, Doctor! Is that very bad?
- A. Oh, don't worry over a little complication until it comes, my dear. Now, Macthinkar, will you let me offer you a hint about the boy?
- MACT. Surely, surely! Wisdom sometimes comes from the mouths of babes and—
- A. Yes, I know. I've noticed something like that in court. And Baalam's ass might possibly illuminate a medical society's discussions. But what I wanted to suggest to you is that Reggie doesn't sleep enough.
- MACT. Aye, tell me of that. I had thought the insomnia was somewhat palliatit by the last remedies.
- A. No, I don't get that impression.
- MRS. A. He doesn't sleep AT ALL.
- A. Oh, come now! That's an extravagant way of——
- MRS. A. No, he does NOT; and to witness his sufferings is just killing me. Night after night I watch the poor boy lying there, and as I listen to his heavy breathing,——
- MACT. Ah, THEN he's asleep.

MRS. A. No, Doctor! Not at all! That's Reggie's way of breathing when he's longing and waiting for the sleep that never comes. The poor boy—told—me—so,—himself. (*Weeps*) You know, Doctor, a mother cannot be deceived about her child. Can she, love? I don't blame you, Doctor, if you don't see things as I do. You've never been a mother, Doctor; have you, Doctor?

She covers her eyes with her handkerchief and rocks to and fro. Macthinkar rises, gazes upward and stretches his hand toward the heavens.

MACT. Madame, as the all-seeing God is my witness, I HAVE NOT!

A. (*In parenthesis.*) No, you don't look it, Macthinkar!

MRS. A. (*Dabbing her eyes.*) But did you ever lie awake all thro' a long night, like my poor boy, and did you ever count the clock all night long, clear round, and round, and round,—(*She is overcome by the horror of it and covers her face with her hands.*)

A. (*Aside, and smiling.*) "Round and round and round:" that would be just thirty-six hours from evening to morning!

MACT. Madame, in me profeyshional duties I have counted the clock to my sorrow, when, but for some considerations of philanthropy, I would have been in my bed, oblivious. As for my clock at home, it attends to its own countin' while I sleep like a good Christian and a weary physician. But now, my dear friend, compose yourself, and answer me this further interrogatory: Is the lad troubled with dreams?

A. (*Aside.*) DREAMS! He's an old fox!

MRS. A. Oh, yes, Doctor; the most TERRIBLE dreams. Sometimes he merely groans in his sleep; sometimes he starts up and calls out for help, so terrified he is.

A. Why, Macthinkar, you'd be a great cross-examiner.

MRS. A. I can't think his rest does him any good, that way, do you, Doctor? He must have some

unbroken rest, don't you think? It is just heart-breaking to see him dream.

MACT. Aye, it must be so, indeed; especially when he is absolutely sleepless.

MRS. A. (*Turns upon her husband, who has laughed aloud.*)
Now, what's the matter? What did I say? It's funny you always laugh when I am crying.

A. I know right well you would not wish me to take you seriously, my dear. But let us have the boy in again. Ring for Marie.

She rings.

I think it better Reginald should meet the Doctor.
Enter Marie.

Marie, go tell Mr. Reginald that we would like to speak with him.

Exit Marie.

MACT. An' now, before he comes in, I would like to give ye the nature of his complaint. Ye must not be unduly disturbed by insomnia, or by this or that symptom. Behind all the symptoms you notice is the general condition of neurasthenia,——

A. (*Very wisely*) To be sure, to be sure.

MRS. A. Oh, Doctor, you've been concealing this from us! That's incurable! I just know it is!

MACT. Madame, compose y'rself; 't is no disease at all; 'tis simply a natural sequence of a lowered tonus of the entire complicated nervous apparatus, the ganglionic system included, and that is due, most commonly, to a diminished constructive metamorphosis and to a diminished retrograde metamorphosis as well. You get my meanin'?

A. Perfectly, perfectly!

MRS. A. Oh, Doctor, it must be simply delightful to study such wonderful things. I have always said that if I were to begin life anew I should certainly be a physician.

MACT. (*Struck dumb, at first, recovers himself. Aspenleaf laughs sardonically.*) Verra weel! Now the lad,

in the first place, wants absolute repose of mind. Secondly, he must have some passive exercise given by a masseur. Thirdly, he wants nourishment such as I may prescribe, and this must be gently forced upon him by authority. But first of all, he must have absolute mental repose. He's frettin' and fumin' and damnin', and this must be done away with. So, on all accounts, he **MUST HAVE A COMPETENT NURSE!**

MRS. A. Oh, Doctor, I don't think that will do at all. You put **ME** in the care of a nurse, (don't you know?) and she simply set me wild. Oh, dear, but I can still recall her everlasting talk.

A. Come, now, my love! Be just to her; I was obliged to check you many times in the day. You did the talking.

MRS. A. Well, I had to—I was so lonely. Oh, but the things she did to me,—to make me comfortable! And kept writing it all down, too! That was the most insolent thing! One night she wrote that I was **HYSTÉRICAL!**

A. Well, there are nurses,—and nurses.

MACT. And 't is only by the help of a stranger that I can induce in the lad that absolute repose of mind,—that lowered rate of intellection,—

A. I understand,—absolute vacuity,—mind empty for a time,—Weir Mitchell, you know, my dear.

MACT. You're on the right track, Aspenleaf, and——

MRS. A. Well, can't I do that? Can't I empty his poor mind? Who so well as his mother? I'll stay with him day and night.

A. No, don't argue the matter, dear.

Enter Owen, slowly pushing Reginald in the rolling chair.

Enter Marie, also, a moment later.

We must back the Doctor up. We must have a nurse, quiet and competent. Let's hear more from you, Doctor.

REG. (*Whining*) I won't HAVE another nurse! They're a lot of clacking fools!

MRS. A. There, love! Do you hear, Doctor? He wants his own mother's onliest care, and he shall have it! (*Hysterically.*)

A. Be firm, wife. Hear the Doctor.

MACT. Naw, lad, ye must listen to reason.

REG. Reason be hanged! I want to be let alone! Alone! Do you hear? No one must talk to me!

MACT. Verra weel, then! (*Impatiently.*) I suppose you must have a deaf-mute nurse.

REG. YES, I will; YES I WILL! (*Molto appassionato.*)

A. Impossible, my boy! Macthinkar's only——

REG. Send her to me, SEND her to me! I won't taste food till you do! She's quiet, thank God! Send her to me! You said you would!

MACT. I'll do it, lad. Only be still: these violent perturbations——

MRS. A. Why, how perfectly funny! Reggie, dear,——

REG. At last, at last, 'there's hope! I'll get well! She'll save me! Even now, I get the grace of her gentle, quiet presence. (*His voice loses the shrill quality of hysteria. He clasps his hands in ecstasy.*)

MACT. Naw, wait a bit, lad, until we confer upon this matter. I was, perhaps, unduly precipitate,——

REG. (*Screaming.*) NO! I say NO!! Send me the deaf-mute nurse! You said you would, Doctor! I have your word! Wheel me out, Owen! Can't you see that I'm gasping? (*He flings open his lounging jacket and his shirt-collar.*) Air, AIR! Quiet, QUIET! The deaf-mute nurse! (*Laughing hysterically.*)

Owen rushes him up to center door. Marie capers about and fans him with her apron.

Wait, Owen! Turn me round! God bless you, Doctor! You 've saved me! It 's noise that's killing me, and endless fuss! Give me rest, give me peace, or I'll die, I'll die!

Mrs. A. runs to him sobbing. He flings her away. Owen wheels him out at center. At that moment the hand-organ is heard, fortissimo. Owen returns with his burden, and rushes the chair over to R. Reggie, with a radiant countenance stretches out his hands toward the Doctor, down the center of the stage in front.

REG. (*Exhausted.*) Quiet, Doctor! Peace, Doctor! The deaf-mute! Bless you, Doctor!

There has been a diminuendo of the hand-organ to the vanishing-point. Owen pushes out the chair and its cargo; the passenger is feebly waving benedictions on the doctor as it passes from view. Judge Aspenleaf perceives that Marie has lingered superfluous, and he disposes of her by a wave of the hand. Macthinkar sits collapsed. Aspenleaf comes in front of him and stands with his hands in his pockets, his feet planted far apart, and so he stares at the Doctor, half-amused. Mrs. Aspenleaf has gone out with her son.—Macthinkar raises his head, wags it mournfully, looks aloft, then at the floor again, and heaves a gusty sigh.

A. Well, what next?

MACT. A maadhouse. Meself an inmate.

A. Went too fast, didn't you?

MACT. Aye, me cursed tongue was ever too nimble.

A. And a little too far, eh, old man?

MACT. A hundred leagues beyond the extremest limits of any possibeelities of performance. AND I GAVE HIM ME WORRD OF HONOR!

A. Know any deaf-mute you could convert into a nurse?

MACT. There 's no such girl in the town,—nor in the wide world. AND I GAVE 'IM MACTHINKAR'S WORD OF HONOR!

A. Well, then, you miserable old sinner, do you know any nurse you could convert into a deaf-mute?

MACT. Impossible, my dear Aspenleaf! Hey? Yes! No! Preposterous! Hoot, mon, THERE'S PENELOPE.

He springs to his feet and half embraces Aspenleaf, shakes his hand and pounds him on the back.

There 's Penelope, I tell you! She can do anything! She can untie this snarl. But Aspenleaf, Aspenleaf!

He sinks again into his chair, a boneless mass.

A. Doctor?

MACT. Aspenleaf, WHAT WAD MRS. MACTHINKAR SAY?

A. Well, she doesn't appear in this case. Who's Penelope?

MACT. Ma dowter,—ma bairnie,—long absent, and just home from Edinboro.

A. Just home from Edinboro! Deaf and dumb?

MACT. God forbid, man, unless we have her so for a season.

A. Trained nurse?

MACT. That she is, and a graduate.

A. Will she take the job?

MACT. Well, man, she is full of all goodness and gentleness and filial obedience and philanthropy. I shame to submit the case to her. She can tell us her mind with lucidity. She has much of her good mother's conversational powers.

A. Oh, hang her conversational powers! We want her to make signs.

MACT. Aye, we do.

A. Is the girl at home? Shall I—

MACT. Alas, poor Penelope! I left her reading in the carriage, at your door, and here have I been drinking tea——

A. I'll have her up, instantly.

He moves away toward the center entrance.

MACT. Aspenleaf! Do not go yet! Give me a bit to collect me thoughts before I broach this matter to her.

A. Oh, never mind your thoughts. I'll broach the matter before you see her.

Exit.

MACT. ASPENLEAF! Was there ever a man so precipitate?

Enter Mrs. Aspenleaf in a fine state of hysterics. She rushes to the Doctor, Marie at her heels, and flings her arms about his neck. At that moment he is making a profound bow and the embrace is a failure. He on one side and Marie on the other assist her to a chair.

MACT. (Aside.) Macthinkar, be a thinkin'! She must not see Penelope yet! Madame, I must implore you to go to your bed. Ye're in such a state that the cerebrum should be lowered. Let me implore you to go away and moderate this grief, and assume the supine po——

MRS. A. (*Weeping violently.*) Oh—but—he's—laughing,—Doctor,—continually! He, he, he's so overjoyed at your kindness.

MACT. He must have his way for a time, madame. Marie,—(isn't it Marie?) Have her away! Have her horizontal! Have her secludit! Her head low, remember—lower than her lower extremities.

MARIE. Ah, Madame, we mus' obey Monsieur le Docteur.
They assist her to rise and go out at R. U. Before she is out of sight Aspenleaf and Penelope come in at C. Macthinkar makes frantic signs to them to remain quiet and to stay out, and at the same time he is running to and fro, hurrying Marie and her limp charge. At the last he moves the screen to great advantage.

You will lean on me, Madame. I am so strong.
Exeunt Marie and Mrs. A.

PEN. (*Airily.*) Oh, you horrible old man! You forgot me, you know you did! Left me out there with the coachman while you drank tea! What ails you, Father? Just look at your tie! Why 't is nearly under your ear. Pardon me, Judge Aspenleaf, but this dear old man must be straightened up.

She leads him a little way down the stage, adjusts the tie, tosses his hair this way and that, and gives him a loving tap on each cheek.

There you are! And Father, I'm so delighted; Judge Aspenleaf vows that he remembers me from long ago, when I was a very little girl. And he says that you have very important business with me. (*Airily.*)

A very chilling pause.

MACT. Go on, Aspenleaf! I cannot!

A. The matter relates to my son Reginald, Miss Penelope.

Her radiant manner vanishes instantly. Erect as an Indian she turns to her father, and after a long and steady look, she gives Aspenleaf permission to proceed. Each instant her chin goes higher.

PEN. Well, sir!

A. We have reason to believe that his health,—perhaps his life,—are in your hands.

PEN. (*With freezing dignity, and a frown.*) Sir, must he send ambassadors? Can he not speak for himself?

A. (*Aside.*) Now what have I done? Miss Penelope, my son is sick with an obscure malady which baffles your good father's skill.

PEN. (*Unbending.*) And I am very sorry; but—

A. If you will allow me to drive straight to the point, he cannot recover without a nurse of unique gifts.

PEN. My father can surely recommend one.

A. And he has nominated you.

PEN. (*Turns to Macthinkar and puts a world of upbraiding in one word.*) FATHER!

A. It is not alone that my son will require absolute quiet. *Aspenleaf takes a long breath before he plunges in.*

A certain whim of his, induced, I may remark, by your father, must—not—be—crossed.

She will not so much as raise an eyebrow in interrogation, and her frown deepens.

He must and will have a deaf-mute nurse!

PEN. (*Turning to Macthinkar.*) FATHER!

A. We think that you have the special knowledge and the mother-wit to play the part.

PEN. Sir!

A. You can save him!

PEN. No! No!

A. We are helpless and beaten, Miss Penelope. It is upon this very last and most foolish fancy that we build some little hope. Nay, let me tell you that he also shows for the first time in weeks, some hope and desire of recovery.

PEN. Is it possible?

A. Scorn these sick fancies if you will, scout these small hopes of ours,— No, no! I must not fret you with a father's pleadings. Turn rather to our wise old counsellor, your honored father and my friend, and your final verdict shall be unchallenged as the oracles of a fair priestess in her sacred temple.

He takes her hand, unresisted.

Forgive me if I seem to plead again, but I cannot doubt that my poor boy's life and reason,—his whole destiny, lie in these little hands.

He kisses her hands and retires, backing away from her as from royalty. She turns, gazing as if under enchantment. Even her arms do not at once fall, but remain extended toward him. Following Aspenleaf with her gaze, she has turned her back upon her father.

Enter Marie at center. She slips behind the screen, unseen.

MACT. Hey, Macthinkar! But she's verra like her mother at the same age.

Penelope turns, comes down the stage a few steps, confronts her father and looks bravely into his eyes.

Will ye help us, Penelope? WILL ye, child?

PEN. (*With the utmost vehemence,*) Will I play a fool's part, and live a lie before Reginald? No!

MACT. She's VERRA like her mother!

He walks about a small circle and faces her again.

Is this my girl 'at went into exile for long years, and slaved night and day, and faced the pestilence, to qualify herself for pure philanthropy? Is this she 'at wrote the brave letters about the joy of livin' and dyin' for mankind?

PEN. I cannot serve Reginald Aspenleaf. Let that be my answer, now and ever.

MACT. Then ye've grace and charity for all mankind save only this boy, child of my best and dearest friends, —him whom I loved as my own son, aye from the hour of his first breath.

PEN. I cannot be of any service to him.

MACT. What have ye against him?

PEN. Nothing.

MACT. Ye could not have aught; ye have not seen him since baby days.

PEN. I have.

MACT. No, ye're wrong.

PEN. Listen to me! You know I had a fever in Edinboro?

MACT. Aye; I have Sinclair's notes of the case.

PEN. And when the fever had burned out, Sinclair sent me to the Riviera to spend the later winter?

MACT. To be sure.

PEN. And there I met Reginald Aspenleaf.

MACT. Penelope; you never wrote me this.

PEN. For good reason I never mentioned him. We wretched young fools made sport of him. He was a little odd. His malady was even then creeping upon him, if we callous dullards could have seen the truth.

MACT. The poor lad! At the critical time when he needed companionship and reasonable sympathy.

PEN. And, Father, I even thought I was aweary of him.

MACT. Ye thowt it THEN; but now——?

PEN. Through the very cloud that was over his mind the sweetness and nobility of the boy shone out,——

MACT. And even yet——

PEN. But in sweet charity set it down for me that I was a fever-wither'd thing. Father, I did not know myself, nor my poor heart, nor his worth, and, oh, God, I did not know his peril!

MACT. Was there more atween ye?

PEN. Must I tell you?

MACT. Had ye not better?

She has been drawing nearer and her wrath has faded while she has been exculpating herself. Her head comes to his shoulder and his arm falls about her waist.

Had ye not better tell me? Or maybe your mother?

PEN. No, no! You, only you!

From the bosom of her dress she snatches a paper, gives it to her father. She turns away and leans against a table while he reads.

MACT. A brave and honest lover might write such a declaration.

She returns the paper to its hiding place.

And ye refused him?

PEN. I did not even answer the note. I made public property of it among my giggling companions.

MACT. And you did the like o'that!

PEN. And we heard rumors that he was worse, and presently he was gone.

MACT. Girrl, your sin is great! Ye've brought him near to death, and worse.

PEN. But now you see how it is I cannot serve him, tho' I would gladly die to save him. And, now that you know more about him, you can help him, Father?

MACT. That I can not.

PEN. Oh, God, is it too late?

MACT. Be quiet, child! Ye know I am no homeopath, but for this once, like must cure like. If in yon southern land of Italy (the perilous land of love, they say,) the glint of your bonnie eyes or the touch of your warm fingers bred love and mad despair in the poor, sick lad, then he must drink deeper of the same poison to come back to sanity, and strength, and manliness.

PEN. Father, do not say that!

MACT. On me profeyshional wordd 't is true. Look ye, lass, I was tricked into this comedy by me foolish tongue that outran me judgment and promised the impossible,—A DEAF-MUTE NURSE; and I was about to join Aspenleaf in prayers that ye'd play the part to save me word of honor. But if you ever toyed with this poor lad's affections, I adjure ye now to nurse him back to health, not for my sake or my honor, but for his succor and your own due

penance. Ye war to blame, Penelope, I'm thinkin', and there's but one way to set yourself right in the books above.

PEN. I cannot, I CANNOT! What would he think of me?

MACT. As of a very competent, robust, afflictit young nurse. Betimes he'll be thinkin' of the chatterin', sallow, emaciatit convalescent whom he met at Monaco, but I doot that he can blend the sick girl and the deaf-mute into one.

PEN. You think that he would not know me?

MACT. Never! Ye've grown in stature, actually, of late. I scarce knew ye at first. An' mind ye, he saw ye but after sickness.

PEN. He will know me;—he will know me!

MACT. No, child, no! Did ye no write to me that yer hair was short? Did not Sinclair cut it off?

PEN. Yes, and while we frolicked down in Italy, I wore a blond wig.

MACT. Say no more, girl; say no word but that ye will help us.

She slowly extends her hand. He grasps it eagerly.

PEN. On the word of a Macthinkar, I will.

MACT. And on the word of a Macthinkar, we will soon have him well. But an ill thought comes to me, Penelope. If he got that name of Macthinkar attached to ye, down in Italy, and if he hears it here, again, he will identify ye, and he'll know ye for my dowter.

PEN. Be easy on that head, Father; for it happened that my friends gave me the nickname of PEN, and he always addressed me as MISS PENN. It amused us, and we never undeceived him. His notes to me were so addressed.

MACT. Nah isn't that merely providential? Child, I wish we had your nurse's uniform. I'd soon set ye to work.

PEN. It is in the bag in the carriage. Don't you remember we were going to show it to the nurses at the hospital?

MACT. Ah, I'm in such a coil that I forgot it. Nah, surely here's the verra forefinger of providence! Have it up immediately! Marie! (*He rings the bell.*) Put it on before the boy sees ye. It will disguise ye completely. Marie! MARIE!
Marie slips in from behind the screen.

MARIE. Monsieur le Docteur.

MACT. Will ye have the goodnees to run out to the carriage and fetch the traveling bag, —the larger one.

Marie runs up the stage.

Come back here a bit till I make ye acquaintit. This is the new nurse for Mr. Reginald. She's deaf and dumb, you understand, and ye cannot chatter with her; but that's little matter, for you French girls can talk with your hands and feet.

Marie regards the new nurse with something more than a respectful smile.

An' as for the nurse, she can understand a little by the method of lip-reading. See me now. (*To Penelope.*) THIS IS MARIE. D' ye get the name? MARIE! MARIE!

Penelope smiles and nods, but Marie laughs outright.

MARIE. It iz ver' wonderful, Monsieur le Docteur.

She runs away again, but Mact. stops her.

MACT. Marie, ye need not waste any time on the man in the carriage: he's a marrit man an' has fower children.

Marie pouts prettily, then abruptly passes into a state of grief.

MARIE. Ah, Monsieur le Docteur, I could CRRY for one so beautiful w'ich cannot hear nor spik.

But she does not cry; she claps her hand over her mouth and does not quite smother her laughter as she runs away.

Exit Marie.

Mathinkar and his daughter sink into chairs dejectedly.

MACT. Penelope, I misdoot she suspects us.

PEN. I misdoubt she was behind that screen.

MACT. (*Going to inspect it.*) Aye, we were verra careless. Make friends with her, Penelope. Buy her, if ye must. Wheedle her all ye can. Promise her something: promises have a marvelous power with lasses; a promise is better than purchase.

PEN. We can do nothing without her.

MACT. Oh, she can merely ruin all if she becomes hostile. Ah, Mrs. Aspenleaf!

Enter Mrs. A.

MACT. You've come in good time. This is the nurse for Reginald,—the deaf-mute, ye know.

MRS. A. (*Inspecting critically.*) Why, how funny, Doctor! She looks like a person of intelligence and breeding.

MACT. Oh, aye, she does. I will vouch for her, indeed, oh yes,—quite as if she were my own dowter. (*Aside.*) Now that's verra good.

MRS. A. Oh, I hope that Reggie will be pleased. Men are so funny that way, you know; they want a thing ever and ever so much until they get it, and then the thing they want they don't want.

MACT. Oh, he's verra fond of her, —I would say he WAS, NO What am I sayin'? I mean he WILL BE.

MRS. A. Why, Doctor Macthinkar! Her face is very familiar to me.

She turns from one to the other, scanning them most critically.

I think these resemblances are the funniest things, don't you? Now I can't tell, for the life of me, whether she looks like some person I know very well or whether the other person resembles—the one—

She is looking at Penelope so hard that she cannot go on with the proposition.

Do I make signs to her? or has she a slate? I'm sure that Reggie can't endure a slate, because the

pencil squeaks so. And she can't hear it squeak, either.

MACT. Oh, she's quick to comprehend any pantomime. Sometimes, if ye're in a great pinch, ye must write. An' she has a wonderful gift of reading from the lips, if ye get right in front of her and speak slowly. See now! (*He brings Penelope forward and bawls at her,*) THIS IS THE MOTHER OF THE BOY. MOTHER; MOTHER, y' know.

Penelope bows.

MRS. A. Oh, isn't that the most touching thing?

Enter Marie with the bag.

I could cry when I look at her. So intelligent, too. I'm going to kiss you, dear!

She kisses Penelope between the brows.

MACT. (*Aside.*) I'm certainly comin' oot a graand liar!

MRS. A. Marie, see that the blue room is in order for the nurse.

MARIE. (*Makes big eyes and whistles.*) Ze blue room!

MRS. A. To be sure,—the front guest-chamber.

Exit Marie.

Now, you poor thing, I want you to sit down and, —Oh, I WILL forget that she's deaf.

She leads Penelope to a chair, and smiles all sorts of hospitality at her.

There, now! Now, Doctor, tell me all about the dear daughter who has been so long abroad. Do you know, I'm just wild to see her.

Macthinkar makes a gesture toward Penelope, but checks himself in good time.

Won't you ask her to waive ceremony and call on me? I must show her to Reginald. They were such cunning things when they were babies together,—don't you remember? It won't do him any harm to see her, will it? not if she doesn't talk too much to him about old times.

MACT. Oh, she'll come; there's no doot o' that; that is to say,—she'll BE here. And as for talkin', I have

strictly charged her,—that is I WILL charge her,—ah,—not to say a word,—ah,—until some opportune opportunity! (What do you think o' that, Penelope?)

MRS. A. What is she like? Did she grow up tall? Would I know her, do you think?

MACT. She's about as tall and straight as yon nurse.

MRS. A. But has a better carriage, Doctor?

MACT. Oh, I could not say so, precisely. I think yon's a noble lookin' young woman.

MRS. A. Oh, Doctor! What would Mrs. Macthinkar say?

MACT. Mrs. Macthinkar? Aye, to be sure! Oh, she'd ne'er accuse me of a flirtation here. She'd say, if she were in possession of all the facts, that I am old enough to be the girl's father.

MRS. A. Oh, I don't know, I don't know. I think I shall have Mrs. Macthinkar in to look at the girl.

MACT. No, no! Seriously, if you do that, ye'll spoil all that we hope to do for Reginald. (*Aside.*) Now ye're in deep water, Macthinkar! Have a care how ye swim oot!

MRS. A. Oh, I was only teasing, Doctor.

MACT. I'll be able to tell ye something verra romantic about this nurse, some day, if ye don't introduce Mrs. Macthinkar into our little comedy.

MRS. A. Comedy?

MACT. Aye, we'll call it that, for every little chapter of life is either comedy or tragedy, and it is the whole object of your old friend, Macthinkar, to suppress the tragic, d'ye see? Now, in the case of this girrl, the nurse, Mrs. Macthinkar knows her early history absolutely; an' as for the romantic chapters, she's bound to know them too in good time, if ye only are discreet.

MRS. A. Oh, I won't tell them! You know how close I am about anything that ought to be kept.

MACT. I do that! Ye never repeat romances that have not been told to you, especially those that haven't happent yet.

She strikes at him playfully with her fan and he smiles grimly.

'Deed but ye remind me of an auld Scotch story, —I think I was aboot narratin' it to you this mornin', but was somehow divertit. 'T is of a poor man who lived at the side of the river Ayr in the immediate viceenity of Robbie Burns' birthplace. Now this poor man had twalve dowters,——

The telephone, in full view at the back of the stage, rings violently.

Mrs. A. (*Rising.*) One moment, Doctor,——

MACT. No, no! Let the nurse answer it,——

Mrs. A. (*To Penelope*) If you will be so good, dear,——

They both look at Penelope, who retains her composure finely and moves never a muscle.

They burst into laughter together.

Oh, you foolish man! To forget that she was deaf!

Enter Marie and Owen.

Answer the telephone, Marie. (*Marie runs to the 'phone. It rings furiously before she reaches it.*)

MACT. As I was sayin', he had twalve dowters, and he had no son. Now the first dowter he named Euterpe,——
Marie has answered the 'phone and comes down to the front.

MARIE. Madame, one would spik wiz you.

Mrs. A. goes to the 'phone.

MACT. The second, Mnemosyne,——

Mrs. A. What is it? Who? Oh, is it you, Mrs. Mac-thinkar?——Yes, dear; the Doctor's here. He'll speak with you in a minute.——He is very irritable this morning, but the Doctor has got us a nurse and Reggie's so pleased in anticipation. We're just sure he'll do better.——What?——Louder!——Mercy on us!——Hear me now? I CAN'T talk any louder if the house catches fire.——Yes, the

Doctor got us a nurse, and (isn't it just too funny?) she's a deaf-mute.—Yes, that's what I said.—Deaf and dumb? Why, of course!—No, she can't hear a thing.—Oh, she's tall and very intelligent looking.—I should think she was about Reggie's age.—Oh, she's really very handsome.—Just a little of the dull look, you know, that deaf-mutes have—

Macthinkar appears to be looking for his hat and cane.

Never heard the Doctor WHAT?—Oh! Never heard him mention her?—

Exit Macthinkar, very hastily and on tip-toe.

Yes, dear, he's right here. He'll speak to you.—

Enter Owen.

What say?—Oh, you said good-bye? Now isn't it funny, I was just drawing breath to say the same to you?—Well, GOOD-bye!—Yes.—GOOD-BYE!—You'll hold the 'phone a moment, won't you?—GOOD-bye!

She comes down the stage a little way.

Doctor, Mrs. Macthinkar would like to speak—Why, how perfectly funny! He's gone! Well, what will Mrs. Macthinkar say?

She returns to the 'phone.

Hello!—Don't you know when I told you the Doctor was here?—Well, he had just gone.—Yes, he has; REALLY! I think you may be able to catch him at the hospital in about ten minutes.—Yes, oh yes!—GOOD-bye!—What say? Oh! How funny. I said good-bye, too, the very same instant.—Oh, do drop in, any time! Reggie is so fond of you. He says he just simply adores the way you express your opinions. And be sure to bring that new-found daughter. If she don't care to see the rest of us, she will be interested in the deaf-and-dumb nurse.—Yes, indeed!—Oh, GOOD-bye!—Yes, and did you ever hear such a sermon?—The most ridiculous

I ever heard.—No, I'm afraid I'm detaining you.—Well, GOOD-bye, good-BYE!

She turns from the 'phone.

Owen, take the young lady's traveling bag to the blue room.

OW. Taizey voo, madame.

He picks up the bag. Marie goes into convulsions.

MRS. A. What did you say, Owen?

OW. I said, TAISEY VOO, ma'am.

MRS. A. And where did you learn that?

OW. That's Frinch, ma'am. Marie taught it to me.

MRS. A. And what does it mean?

OW. She tould me it meant the same as, WITH PLEASURE, MA'AM, or the like o' that.

MRS. A. Well, don't do it any more.

OW. She thought it 'd please you, ma'am.

MRS. A. And it does please me to see that girl make a fool of you; but no more French, Owen. Marie, take the young lady to the blue room. You'll have to becken to her.

She goes out of one door, laughing, as Owen goes out of another, shaking his fist at Marie.

Penelope has arisen and has turned away to conceal her smiles. She stands stiffly, aware that Marie is with her, yet not daring to face her.

Marie peeps first over one shoulder, then over the other, and giggles audibly; but Penelope does not move. Marie then comes in front, perks her head on one side and grins saucily in Penelope's face.

PEN. That will do, Marie. I think we understand one another.

MARIE. Mon dieu! Ma'm'selle can spik.

PEN. Yes, ma'm'selle can speak. I am no more a deaf-mute than you are a French girl. Let us be honest while we can, Marie. Are you not an American girl?

MARIE. That's what I am. I've an Irish streak in me, but I'm American.

PEN. And where did you get the Parisian accent.

MARIE. Playin' with Canuck children when Father worked in the marble quarries up in Vermont.

PEN. And you keep up false pretenses here,—

MARIE. Just cause I got started that way and I can't quit. I'm five hundred miles from home and I had no recommendations, and I wanted a job, and I heard that Mrs. Aspenleaf was just crazy for a French maid and wouldn't have any other. I applied for the place and I got it without any questions asked. What are you going to do about it?

PEN. Well, until I hear something bad about you, and so long as your French is good enough for Mrs. Aspenleaf, I am going to keep your secret,—just—as—surely—as—you—keep—mine.

MARIE. Well, you can count on me every time for keeping a secret. If there's any sides to this thing, I'm on the side of the old Doctor, and Mr. Reginald. I just believe you can get him well, and all I want is the glory of helping you. When folks are in love, anyway, I believe in helping 'em along.

PEN. Did I say anything about the tender passion?

MARIE. No, not to me.

PEN. To my father?

MARIE. Yes 'm.

Penelope transfixes the girl by pointing her finger at her.

PEN. How do you know I have a father?

MARIE. Why, didn't you talk to him just now?

PEN. Oh, did I? And you were behind the screen?

MARIE. What screen?

PEN. There is but one.

MARIE. Oh, well, if you mean THAT screen,—Say, you got me that time.

PEN. Ah, Marie, Marie! You're a naughty little spy! But help us all you can, and you shall be forgiven, I am sure. Now show me to my room, dear.

Marie runs to L. U. and makes signs, inviting Penelope to follow and robe herself.

Exeunt, laughing.

Enter, R. U., Owen pushing Reginald's chair.

Owen wheels him to the window.

REG. Oh, what's the matter with you, Oney? You know I never want my face to the light. Turn me round, or get me goggles!

Owen turns the chair.

Look here! Do you want to land me in a mad-house? DON'T rub your hands on the chair, that way. Your hands are as husky as a woodchopper's; they actually rustle. Oh, do get a glycerin lotion, or,—

Ow. Or cold cream, sir?

REG. Yes, or tar, or—anything. And Oney, that wheel has a thick place on it. Flesh and blood can't stand that.

Ow. I'll sandpaper it, sir.

REG. Oh! OH! Oo! Oo! Horrible! Sandpaper! I'll be shuddering all day! Never mention such a thing again! Find my handkerchief! You make me sweat, talking of such terrible things! Fan me, please! Not so hard! Just hard enough! Did you see the new nurse? What kind of a thing is she?

Ow. She's deaf, sir.

REG. Well, don't I know that? Is she homely?

Ow. Awful, sir, I think, tho' I hardly ever take notice.

REG. How old is she?

Ow. She must be risin' forty or the like o' that; mebbe more or a little less; I raaly couldn't tell without lookin'.

REG. Oh, AREN'T you a sweet, innocent thing?

Enter Judge A. and Mrs. A.

MRS. A. (*Rushing upon him.*) How's my darling boy?

REG. (*Dodging caresses.*) I'm a whole lot weaker than

ever. I can't raise my head the thousandth part of an inch. Please don't, Mother!

Enter Penelope in nurse's costume. She brings a chafing-dish, etc., on a tray, places it on a table and busies herself there. Judge A. takes a place near her and enters into pantomime occasionally.

MRS. A. You poor, dear, suffering thing! Mamma thought it would like to have its head stroked. Ah, here's our nurse! Isn't it awful, Reggie, to think that she can't hear a word I say, and can't enter into conversation? Wouldn't you rather be dead? And isn't she just the sweetest thing?

Penelope is very busy arranging her paraphernalia. Reginald raises his head and tries to see her. Failing in that, he elevates himself on his elbow and turns about.

Ow. Will you look at that!

Mrs. A. makes haste to support him.

REG. (*In a state of great excitement.*) Mother! Mother! I know her! She is not deaf! I know her! Miss Penn! Miss Penn! Will she not look this way? Father! (*A pause.*) Miss Penn! Merciful God! She is deaf!

Ow. She is that!

A. (*Sotto voice.*) Bravo! You went thro' that, you can go thro' anything. But he says he knows you?

REG. What prince of all the fools that ever breathed, thought first of putting a deaf-mute in a sick-room?

A. Thought you knew her, did you, Reginald?

REG. Yes, but I—did—not.

MRS. A. Of course, not! Shall its mother lay him down?

REG. (*Starting up.*) Ah, did you see that? No woman but Miss Penn ever had that poise to the head. It is Miss Penn or her double.

MRS. A. Does she make you nervous, darling boy? If she does, she—

REG. Does she make me—Yes, but she's good to look at. There's healing for me in merely—

Penelope comes down the stage toward Reginald's chair.

A. (*Sotto voice.*) Steady, now, my girl!

Penelope comes smiling to Reginald, takes his hand, opens her watch and counts his pulse.

MRS. A. Well, that's one comfort; you can talk while she counts his pulse. Dear old Macthinkar used to frown so, and lose his count, you know,—

Penelope returns to the table and makes a note of the pulse on her clinical record.

A. Now, that I call scientific and rational. Verbal reports don't go here: what we prove, we prove by the record.

Penelope comes down again and puts a thermometer in Reginald's mouth. She holds the watch open. Reginald makes dreadful inarticulate sounds.

A. Keep your mouth shut!

Penelope pinches his lips into a pucker.

OW. Well, she just bangs Banagher!

MRS. A. Who's Banagher?

OW. Indeed, ma'am, I don't rightly know, but Mother used to tell me that Banagher bangs the divil himself.

Penelope withdraws the thermometer. She goes again to the table to make notes.

REG. Hold your tongue, Owen!

MRS. A. Yes. It's a good time to "TAISEY VOO."

A. You should not speak so before the young lady.

OW. I thought she was deaf, sir.

REG. Well, don't think! Be yourself! No good comes of thinking, anyway,—in your case.

Penelope has returned to his chair. She puts a finger on Reginald's chin, depresses his chin and, thrusting out her tongue, compels him to the same exhibit. The tongue inspected, she nods wisely, snaps his teeth together, and makes a note on the tablet.

OW. (*Aside.*) Will ye look at that?

REG. By Jove, that's cool! You'd think I was a horse on sale!

MRS. A. Why, that's positively ill-bred!

Penelope turns back the afghan, exposes Reginald's feet, removes one slipper and then the other, feels his toes, nods in an I-told-you-so manner, goes up to the table and brings down a hot-water bag which she duly applies.

REG. (*Astounded.*) By Jove! How'd she know my toes were cold

MRS. A. Now that surely is going to extremes.

A. I believe, Reginald, that the unfortunate female had hopes that she could hear those stockings of yours. Don't you think they are pretty loud?

MRS. A. That will do, Judge! It's a poor time for joking. Besides, I bought those stockings for the dear boy, myself. I thought they would brighten up his sick-room a little.

A. Oh, well, then, I have nothing to say. You attained success.

Penelope has already gone back to her table and entered up the state of his toes, on the record. She now presents it to Reginald and points to the last entry.

REG. Well, if that isn't cool! I am to be asleep, she says, at ten thirty-five.

MRS. A. (*Penelope, her arm about Mrs. A's waist, leads her to an exit and dismisses her with a smile.*) Well, mercy on us! If she hasn't confidence! Do you think you can sleep, Reggie, dear? I believe you can. Feel better, already, don't you, love?

The last speeches are delivered as she passes from view, Penelope has already made her attack on Judge Aspenleaf. She starts him on his journey.

A. Reginald, I used to pity you, but now I envy you. She is just so deaf that I will take the opportunity of saying that she's a jewel.

Owen has the empty oxygen cylinder in his arms and is dismissed with an imperative gesture. Penelope lights the lamp under a chafing-dish.

REG. Oh, one moment, Miss——. Bah! I was about to ask her name. Forgot she was deaf. What the dickens is she doing, now? (*He twists about to see her.*) Hello! Sterilizer? No, it's a CHAFING-DISH! Say, Reggie, dear, this is mighty cosy! (*He twists still farther, to see her.*) I vow this is my good day: I could hardly lift my head yesterday; now I can raise myself on my elbow. (*He does raise himself on his elbow and gazes at Pene-*

lope.) Say, nursie, you do look like Miss Penn, —God bless her, wherever she may be! But you're larger and stronger, and, if it isn't treason to a first love to say it, you're a whole lot handsomer than she ever was—or ever will be!

Penelope is stirring a concoction vigorously.

Ah, Miss Penn, Miss Penn, you had your sport with the idle invalid, but I'll even up matters yet! I'll get well and strong and I'll find you somewhere, well and strong, and I'll capture you yet! You were cruel and capricious, but something tells me that you loved me just a little bit, and that the little flame grew, and that you are thinking of me this very minute.

Penelope stirs not quite so vigorously, and she has turned her back toward the patient and the audience.

Reggie, dear, a deaf-mute nurse is a great invention. It gives me good leave to breathe aloud a dear name that has not crossed my lips for months and months.

He takes a long look at Penelope, who is stirring very slowly. He heaves a sigh from the depths.

By all the gods at once, she's like her! Ah, nursie, if you could talk, with Miss Penn's voice, I think that I would get well and make love to you!

Penelope pours out a white fluid into a pretty bowl. She comes down to his left, sets down the bowl, puts a napkin under his chin, slips her left arm under his pillow, brings him to a half-sitting posture and feeds him with a spoon. Between the doses he exclaims with great enthusiasm.

Clam-broth!—glorified!—Seasoned right!—Hot enough!—Not too hot!—Wow, but I feel better!—Reggie, this is great!—Miss Penn! —If you could see me now!—Give me that loving-cup! This stuff's too good for a spoon, —only ME!

He drains the cup and in a playful exaggeration of ecstasy he holds it to his lips inverted. Penelope taps it with her spoon to indicate that the draught has been taken, and there's a suspicion of an impending romp when she

pulls it away from him. She places his pillow in such fashion as to leave him half sitting. Then she makes an entry on her tablet. She exhibits the entry and he reads.

REG. "Clam-broth, six ounces, taken with relish at ten thirty. Sleep at ten thirty-five." Well, if that isn't the coolest proposition! I don't sleep in day-time and I never will. She's too fresh! But she's—just—NICE.

Penelope gives his pillows a slight adjustment. She strokes the hair about his brows with a rhythmic motion, using first one hand and then the other.

Say, girl, don't do that! You never were hired for that sort of gymnastics.

She gradually changes the stroking to his eyebrows and sweeps the tips of her fingers around the cheeks and under the chin. He squirms vigorously, at first, and then less vigorously.

Oh, you merciless wretch! If you only dreamed how ticklish I am about my neck!

His hand, raised in protest, rests lightly on hers.

Oh, pshaw, now! When do you let up on this? (*A pause.*) I'd fifty times rather (*He yawns.*) you'd read me to sleep. (*A long pause.*) READ! —Just so.—Forgot she was a—a—deaf-mute.—Well,—of—all—ri-dic-u-lous,—un-speak-a-ble bores,—this—bangs—'em—all! (*He yawns deeply and flings one arm above his head after the manner of one who is making himself very comfortable.*) Nursie's—a—good—old—dummie;—just—as—lovely—as—

Penelope bends low to catch the name, but it does not come. She gently disengages her hand from his, leaves him sleeping and crosses the stage. She sits near the great table, takes a note from her bosom and reads it.

PEN. How often have I read these lines? And yet I know each pleading word as a nun knows her prayers.

OWEN. Anything wanted, miss? Oh, I beg pardon, miss: I forgot you were deaf. S'pose I must write it.
He sits down and agonizes over a message which he

writes on a tablet. While writing he reads each word with a drawl, and a long pause between words.

“MRS. ASPENLEAF WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE A TRUNK COMING, OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?”

Penelope takes the tablet, tears off his note, throws it on the table, scribbles one herself.

If she only could talk as fast as she writes.

He takes the tablet, reads her answer, feels it off, throws it on the table, also.

“NO TRUNK TO-DAY.” I suppose that means a Saratoga to-morrow.

Penelope points to her patient. Owen inspects him at a distance.

Well, that does beat my time! Nurse or no nurse, you can work a miracle.

She takes up the tablet again and writes. Owen reads after she presents it to him.

“WHEEL HIM GENTLY INTO THE ALCOVE BEDROOM. DO NOT AWAKEN HIM.” Oh, I’ll have the tread of a cat. Wouldn’t I be the fool o’ the world if I had him awake? He’s a good fellow, but he’s crab-beder than a box o’ tigers.

Penelope goes over to her patient. Owen picks up all the papers from the table and crams them into his pockets. Then with the extremest care he wheels Reginald out.

Enter Marie from the other side, imitating his tip-toe awkwardness. He does not see her. She pauses a bit until he is safely off the stage. Then she runs down to Penelope at the front.

PEN. Oh, girl, let me say something to you or I cannot long exist!

MARIE. I’ll trade places, Miss Macthinkar. I’m dead sick o’ my French. We children at home used to imitate the broken English of the Canadian French about us, but there was no fun in it after a half hour. Now I’ve had two weeks of it! Talk o’ dyin’! I’d been in my grave if it wasn’t for the fun I have makin’ fun of Oney.

PEN. You find it such great sport? Take care, my girl!

MARIE. Oh, I say it’s better than pickles just to make a monkey of a man.

PEN. Are you a Darwinian, Marie?

MARIE. No'm. I'm a Catholic; so is Oney.

PEN. Bah, I wasn't talking of creeds, my dear; I was thinking of Darwin's theory.

MARIE. Oh, I know,—I know! He thought y' c'd make a man out of a monkey.

PEN. Well, yes; poor Darwin is blamed with that.

MARIE. Then I'm with him, for I can make a monkey out of a man,—just too easy.

Penelope is laughing at the girl. Suddenly her face grows serious, then very anxious, as she tumbles over the articles on the table.

MARIE. You are looking for something?

PEN. Marie, surely you saw some papers here when you came in?

MARIE. No.

By this time Penelope is swiftly turning the leaves of the books on the table. She looks under the table cover and under the table itself. Marie joins in the search in a languid, amused fashion at first, and then very eagerly.

PEN. Owen and I exchanged written messages here, and tossed them on the table.

MARIE. Well, I don't see why you should be so disturbed, Miss Macthinkar, about notes from——

Her zeal suddenly fails.

PEN. Oh, but there was a note, ah, Marie, another note written me months ago,——

MARIE. By Oney?

PEN. No, no! Oh, can't you find it Marie? And can't you understand?

MARIE. Who wrote it then?

PEN. Oh, help me, Marie: I MUST find it! Master Reginald wrote it.

Marie is frantically searching again.

MARIE. You wouldn't want the Judge to find it?

PEN. Oh, no; not for worlds!

MARIE. Nor Mrs. Aspenleaf?

PEN. No, no; not her!

MARIE. Nor Mrs. Macthinkar?

PEN. I had rather die ten thousand deaths!

MARIE. Nor the Doctor?

PEN. He HAS read it.

MARIE. I didn't think Mr. Reginald was able to write notes?

PEN. Oh, Marie! Don't talk! Just search and search and find it! He wrote it in Italy months ago.

MARIE. (*Thunderstruck.*) Oh, mercy me! Does he know you?

PEN. Oh, hush, Marie! Just FIND it! He knew me when I could talk. FIND the note, please! He doesn't know me now.

MARIE. Oh! (*She sinks into a chair, absolutely overwhelmed.*)

PEN. I'll tell you all about it if you'll only help me.

She is extending her search to remoter articles of furniture.

MARIE. (*Recovers herself and proceeds to the unravelling of a great mystery.*) Who has been in this room since you laid the note on the table?

PEN. No one but Oney, and I do not remember that he went near the table?

MARIE. The loafer! Stop huntin'. It's no use. He's the one to search. I'll get your note, Miss Mac-thinkar, if he hasn't eaten it. He's that silly of late that I can do anything with him. Oh, you villain! Just wait till I get my hands on you!

She lacerates the whole atmosphere with her talons.

Exit Marie.

PEN. What a fool was I to keep it, or, keeping it, not to keep it safe against my heart! That Owen should read it,—Oh, HORRIBLE! That he should hand it about to people in this house,—INTOLERABLE! Ah, me! I was so happy to be of use to Reginald! And now so wretched!

She falls into a chair, extends her arms across the table and buries her head in them.

Enter Owen and Marie: Owen comes backward. He is laughing and defending himself as well as he can from the assaults which Marie is making with a broom.

OW. Oh, say, now! Aisey, aisey! Ouch! That time y' got past my guard! Murder! Police!

MARIE. You will give me th' leetle billet?

OW. You will give me th' leetle kiss?

She reverses the broom and charges him with the handle. He catches the end dexterously and draws her to him. The impetuosity of her charge assists him to pass an arm about her waist. The broom is now out of the action. She tugs at his fingers with one hand: the other is at his throat. Occasionally his head flies back as if he were about to part company with it.

MARIE. You s'all geef me ze billet,—ze note! It iss ma'm'selle's!

OW. How do you know I have it about me, spitfire? Give me the kiss.

MARIE. How do you I haf ze kiss about me?

OW. Cause I'm lookin' at it now.

MARIE. My kisses arr for my husban'. Many times have I tell you.

OW. Right you are, darlin'! That's ME! Gi' me the kiss!

MARIE. No! Let me go, you beeg, beeg grizzlee bear! One vill hear you! Sha-a-me! See! Ze naise!
Owen had not noticed Penelope. He looks back at her and relaxes his clasp of the girl.

With a twitch and a twist, a push at his throat and a tug at his fingers, Marie frees herself and runs down to the left front and puts a table between herself and Owen.

Owen races about the table pursuing Marie. Both are laughing, but he presently falls over a chair which she flings in his way. He rises with difficulty, and limps to a chair at center. There he groans and caresses his shin assiduously.

MARIE. I am so sorry of your laig, Meestaire Owen.

OW. (*Savagely*) Yes, y' are!

MARIE. (*Her hand is on his shoulder.*) We haf been so loving friends, and now is it that you are so angry?

OW. (*With a dreadful frown which gradually unfolds into an expansive grin.*) Yes;—I—am,—not.

Penelope rises wearily. With a gesture of despair she walks off slowly, R. U., as if she neither saw nor heard the scuffle.

MARIE. Poor ma'm'selle! She cannot hear nozzing!

Ow. Naw, but she c'n hear something.

MARIE. Ma'm'selle, ze nairse?

Ow. Yes, ma'm'selle, the nurse. She c'n hear a whole lot.

MARIE. Impossible! She haf not heerd our combat. She lays so still while we are fighting.

Ow. (*With the affectation of supernatural wisdom.*) Oh, she's heerd nothing, eh? And she lays so still, did she? Lard of mercy, but the spring showers has made y' green! But say, Marie,——

He has apparently given over all pursuit. Marie grows cordial and conciliatory.

What makes you say SHE LAYS, and the like o' that? I wonder y' don't try to talk English, same as I do.

MARIE. I should say LIE?

Ow. Cert.

MARIE. Oh, Meestaire Owen, you haf so beeyuteeful language an' so deeficult. Can you to me explain, perhaps?

Ow. Oho! Can I to you explain, perhaps? W'y that's what I'm here for. Let me elucidate. Suppose now, you told Mrs. Aspenleaf wan o' y'r best fibs, and backed it up wid a whopper. Now, there you lie. Get the idea? All right! But now, on the contrary,——

She draws near to him on the left.

MARIE. Yes, eet iss very interesting.

Ow. Supposin' I say, on the contrary, that I'm goin' to sing a song,——

MARIE. Oh, no, Meestaire Owen! Be marecifooll!

In pretty protest she places her hand on his shoulder.

Ow. Hold on! I'm not goin' to make a disturbance, and rouse up the whole house. I'm only supposin; you little goslin.'

She slips her hand into the side pocket of his jacket and abstracts a paper. While he continues his discourse, she glances at it, crumples it impatiently, and flings it away.

Now, f'r the sake of argumint, s'pose I warble one of me beautiful ditties,—wan o' the songs o' green Ireland, f'r example, or wan composed in France,—your own degenerate country. Suppose I make the burrds of heaven look envious. D' ye see? That's no LIE: that's me LAY. See how 't is? You TELL a LIE; I SING a LAY. That's easy!

His upward glances have very much favored her pocket-picking.

MARIE. Oh, eet iss a charming language! I see, I see! You sing a lay, like ze ole hen which haf laid ze fraish egg,—iss it not so?

OW. Wait a moment, till I collect what little 's left of me mind. Say! you're RIGHT! The hen is off; you're on. I sing; the hen sings. I have a lay; she has a lay. I have the freshest voice; she has the freshest lay.

But, say! Let's change the subject before I go crazy. It's funny about a hen, isn't it? She lays till she sets. Ever think o' that in France, Marie?

MARIE. S'all we not say, SHE SITS? So like I sit?

She places a chair tete-a-tete on his right, and sits.

OW. No, we don't say SHE SITS; she just SETS,—on her complete lay-out.

Marie gets into his right pocket.

MARIE. An' have we some English words for Monsieur le Chanticleer?

OW. D' ye mean the rooster? Not a word f'r the danged loafer. Y' see he can't neither lay nor set; he just bluffs 'round stan'in' till he goes to roost. Hence the name ROOSTER. Oh, that's easy tellin'!

Marie has read another note and has flung it away. She insinuates her hand again into his pocket. Her mouth comes perilously near to his ear and her manner is languishingly deceptive.

MARIE. An' you will tell me now of ze beeyutifool leedle chicks,—

OW. Aw, say, Marie, you're goin' too far into family matters. Keep out o' that, always. We mustn't break into their set.

MARIE. But, Meestaire Owen, I mus' ask you one more question. (*She goes again into his pocket.*) If we have some time two or t'ree eggs of the duck under the ze setter hen,—

Ow. Hold on', for the love of Heaven, while I have me intellect unimpaired! I'm no hen farmer, I tell you; I'm a professor of the English language, an' tired o' me job. Keep out the duck's eggs! Say, ye mustn't say, SETTER HEN. That jars me turrible! A setter's a kind of a dog.

MARIE. Meestaire Owen!

Ow. Fact! A setter is a birrd-dog,—wan wid long hair.

MARIE. For the hatching of the eggs of the birds? Oh, how poetic!

Ow. Great Jiminy, no! For hunting birrds. Say Marie, let's talk sense a bit. I told you that Father was gettin' old, and he swears I must come down an' take the farm. Y' remember?

MARIE. You mus' leave us, then?

Ow. An' Mother swears she'll murder me if I come home without a wife.

MARIE. Yes? How iss your laig, now?

Ow. Oh, I don't care about a scraped shin. You'd better be thinkin' of my lacerated heart. Come along, and be the farmer's wife!

MARIE. Hark! Madame calls.

She backs away toward the center.

Mrs. Aspenleaf is heard calling her.

She runs to center entrance.

Yes, Madame! Instantly!

Ow. Then throw me the kiss for your husband.

She hesitates, then slowly touches her fingers to her lips and blows him a kiss. Then from right and left hands she impetuously throws him two or three more and runs away with,

MARIE. Coming, Madame; instantly!

Ow. (*Laughing heartily.*) Hurroo, hurroo! She's just me own, an' I'm her onliest Oney. By garry, let

her keep her kiss for her husband! She's right! Mother'd say so. And if he gets it, I get it. Dear, dear! Will you look at the papers she stole? Wonder if I'm too cute for a married man. She got every wan but the right wan. She'd got that if I hadn't it in my pocketbook.

Enter Penelope. She looks about as if to find Marie. In pantomime she directs Owen to wheel in Reginald. Exit Penelope. Owen imitates her pantomime.

Ow. She wants me to wheel him in. Well, when I do I'll be talkin', and when I get to talkin' to Master Reginald, she won't be makin' signs. Oh, no! I'll tell him plain that she's a fraud.

Enter Aspenleaf.

A. Owen, did you stop at the tailor's.

Ow. I did, sir.

A. Bring home the suit?

Ow. No, sir. He said he was pressed for time but the suit wasn't.

A. Get it to-morrow.

Ow. Could I speak to you about the nurse, sir.

A. Certainly. What's her case?

Ow. She's a case of false pretenses, sir, in my opinion.

A. Come, come, boy! You should not say that!

Ow. She's not deaf, sir, nor dumb, sir.

A. Oh, come now, Owen! Do you think that Macthinkar would be so deceived?

Ow. I do not, sir. He's too cute for that. He talks to her, sir.

A. Ah, you have heard him, Owen? Well, I am told that they are acquainted with each other; they're blood-relations, in fact, and she can understand him a little by lip-reading. Lip-reading is a wonderful thing, Owen.

Ow. 'T is so, sir. But she talks to him.

A. Ah, is that so? She talks to him? Well, I suppose it is natural for females to talk back; even you used to talk back, did you not, when your mother was giving you a lecture?

Ow. I did not, sir—not anyways when she had a slipper on her foot.

A. Well, I think that a deaf-mute, highly trained, could talk to a relative as much as the nurse has done.

Enter Mrs. A.

What do you think, my dear? This fellow is trying to convince me that the nurse is not a deaf-mute.

MRS. A. Why, how perfectly silly you can be, Owen, when you try.

Ow. Yes, ma'am. Thank you kindly, ma'am. Shall I bring in Master Reginald?

MRS. A. Yes, if he is awake.

Exit Owen.

A. Wife, after what Owen has said, I wish you would quiz Doctor Macthinkar thoroughly and see what he can say about the girl's deafness.

MRS. A. Oh, do you suppose that I could be deceived in the matter? Why it isn't to be thought of for a moment. Why, my love, how in the world could she ever help joining in conversation if she had speech and hearing. It's impossible: I know that by myself.

Enter Penelope.

A. No, no! I just wanted to see him on the defensive. Tax him with deceit and a breach of friendship, and from the bottom of my heart I pray that I may be there to hear him.

Enter Macthinkar and Marie.

MARIE. Non, Monsier le Docteur, I am sure it iss not here.

A. Ah, Macthinkar, you've come in good time. We were talking of you.

MACT. I've had the ill luck to mislay me phonendoscopic stethoscope, and I am doublin' on me tracks to find it. They tell me the lad has been sleeping soundly. 'Deed but I'm glad o' that.

Enter Reginald at center in dressing gown, leaning on Owen's shoulder.

Now I would not wish to be too sanguine, but it is my firm belief that he will soon be able to take a little walking exercise.

REG. (*Coming down to the front with Owen.*) Well said, old prophet!

There is a general outcry and exclamation by all save Penelope. She turns away and covers her face with her hands. Mrs. Aspenleaf is inclined to fall on the neck of her dear boy as she takes her place at his side, but is gently cared for by her husband and is restrained.

MACT. Lad, this is too much,——too abrupt a change——an effort too great for your strength. Be advised!

REG. One moment, Doctor! I must have a word with the nurse.

Penelope faces him.

If I am not all wrong, you are Miss Penn.

PEN. Miss Penn, or Penelope Macthinkar, as you will.

MRS. A. Judge, did I not tell you her face was familiar? Oh, mercy me! She can talk! And Doctor Macthinkar,——

REG. Mother, dear, pray grant me the floor for a moment; then deal with the good Doctor according to his crimes, which are many. Miss Penn, Owen has given me a note which I wrote to you long months ago. Some one has taken so good care of it that I venture to think it worth answering.

He leaves Owen's side, advances in a feeble fashion, and places the note in her hand, and retains the hand.

Owen slips away to pose with Marie.

PEN. No; you shall dictate the answer, and I promise that my father shall ratify it.

MACT. No, no! We've played our bit of comedy without her so far, and it is but fair that the ratification be left to your good mother, Penelope. She's a wumman of most excellent sense and of sufficient sentiment, or near it; and she loves you lovers well since baby days; and, if she's rightly approached, I mak na doot of what Mrs. Macthinkar'll say. Reginald, and me poor deaf dowter, dinna ye hear the wedding march?

Evidently the organ-grinder has made a long round and is returning for his dinner. At Macthinkar's first words the music is heard faintly, and as the curtain falls it is going fortissimo.



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