

THE GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

A MUSICAL PLAY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| THE BARON OTTO VON SCHLACHENSTEIN | Mr. Danvers. |
| GRUMPPF, HIS STEWARD | Mr. Terrott. |
| HANS GOPP, <i>a Villager</i> | Miss E. Fowler. |
| THE GENTLEMAN IN BLACK | Mr. Flockton. |
| TINTELSTEIN, <i>Syndic of Schlachenschloss</i> | Mr. F. Robson. |
| SCHLIPPS, <i>an Innkeeper</i> | Mr. Herbert. |
| BERTHA | Miss Emmeline Cole. |
| THE BARONESS VON SCHLACHENSTEIN | Miss Maxse. |
| MARIA, <i>a Market Girl</i> | Miss Dalton. |
| GRETCHEN, <i>Market Girl</i> | Miss Roberts. |
| EMMA | Miss Wilson. |

ACT I.

MARKET PLACE OF A GERMAN VILLAGE.

ACT II.

GATES OF CASTLE SCHLACHENSCHLOSS.

Time in Representation: One Hour and a Half.

COSTUMES – Date about 1584.

ACT I.

Scene

SCENE. – *Market Place of a German Village. The Golden Flagon Inn at back of stage. The Syndic's house, R. Chorus of Market Girls, assembled in honour of BERTHA'S betrothal to HANS.*

OPENING CHORUS.

To-day young Hans
Matures his plans,
And pretty Bertha gratifies his whim.
Some men prefer
A girl like her,
But girls should not endure a man like him.
An ugly chap
Not worth a rap,
He's very far from bright; not over tall.
My future spouse
Must have a house –
A cow as well, and several pigs withal!

HANS *enters* R. U. E. *and is received by them with some ridicule. He is a heavy, simple, idiotic fellow, but good-looking and honest.*

MARIA. Well, Hans, so you are really going to be married at last?

HANS. Well, yes, it looks like it, don't it? (*Chuckles.*) But I've had a great deal of trouble to get Bertha to consent. First she would, and then she wouldn't – and then she couldn't – and then she shouldn't – and then she'd think of it – and then she thought of it, and then she seemed to like it – and then she thought of it again, and then she didn't seem to like it – then she thought she might do worse, and then she was sure that she might do better – and when she found that no opportunity of doing better presented itself, why she closed with me, and here we are! (*Chuckles.*)

GRETCHEN. Ah, it was a sad day for us, Hans, when Bertha consented. What's to become of us now, I should like to know? We shall all die old maids!

HANS. Well, I could only have prevented that in one case, if Bertha hadn't consented. That is to say, in one case at a time!

MARIA. Yes, but who knows but that that case might have been mine?

HANS. No, it wouldn't have been yours – I'm sure it wouldn't have been yours. I never liked you much. (*Chuckles.*)

GRETCHEN. Mine, then?

HANS. No. You're a very good girl, Gretchen, but you're not clever. Come, you know you're not clever. Now my wife must be very clever.

GRETCHEN (*angry*). Yes, she must have cleverness enough for two!

HANS. Yes, or she'd never catch *me*! (*Chuckles.*)

GRETCHEN. If she were clever she wouldn't want to catch you.

HANS. That carries out what I told you just now. *You* wanted to catch me.

GRETCHEN. I didn't.

HANS. Well, you *said* you did.

GRETCHEN. Ah, you mustn't believe all I say.

HANS. So I'm told.

GRETCHEN. Do you mean to say people tell you that I tell stories?

HANS. Oh, no, not exactly stories, that's not the word.

GRETCHEN. What is the word, then?

HANS. Lies! (*Chuckles.*)

GRETCHEN. Abominable! I'll pay you out for this, Hans. I'll give a party on our wedding-day, and invite all the young men. Bertha will be disconsolate.

HANS. Oh, Bertha won't mind. She isn't selfish, and she knows you want 'em more than she does.

MARIA. There's a good deal of truth in that.

GRETCHEN. *Is* there? I disagree with you.

MARIA. Yes, dear; you're like a Strasburg sausage, you disagree with everybody. As for the truth, I don't believe you know it when you hear it.

GRETCHEN. I don't often get the chance in *this* village!

MARIA. No, your tongue's always going!

Enter SCHLIPPS, from the Golden Flagon, in great terror. He shuts the door after him, and puts his back against it.

THERESA. What's the matter?

SCHLIPPS. I'm a weak man and a good man, and there's a strong man and a bad man coming after me.

EMMA. A strong man and a bad man? Whom in the world do you mean?

SCHLIPPS. A mysterious stranger! A person who has no right up here, on earth, I know. He's a supernatural person, my dears, and he dines off iron pokers and lumps of coal. He called for his dinner just now, and I sent it up to him – a beautiful roast turkey stuffed with chestnuts – well, he never touched the turkey, but he eat all the knives and forks!

EMMA. Eat the knives and forks!

SCHLIPPS. Yes, all of 'em, and then called for more! And when I said I hadn't got any more, he tried to collar me, but I escaped, and here I am. I'll go to the priest and the Syndic, and between them they'll make the place too hot to hold him. That is, if any place *can* be too hot to hold such a person. I believe the hotter it is, the better he likes it! (*Noise heard.*) Here he comes! Help me to hold the door!

[All the Girls run to the inn, and assist Schlipps in keeping the door shut.

The GENTLEMAN IN BLACK walks quietly through the wall of the inn at a considerable distance from the door that the Girls are barring. He is eating a fork. He walks quietly down the stage, and addresses Schlipps, who is quite hemmed in by Girls round the door.

GENTLE. Schlipps, I don't think your wife would like that.

[*Schlipps leans against the wall in great terror.*]

HANS (*chuckling*). He hasn't got a wife!

GENTLE. Oh yes, he has. A tall, stout wife, with yellow hair and freckles. Haven't you, Schlipps? (*Girls all recoil from Schlipps in great horror.*) Her name's Martha, isn't it, Schlipps? And she has a fine, strong arm, hasn't she, Schlipps? And she uses it, don't she, Schlipps?

SCHLIPPS. Well, my wife's neither here nor there.

GENTLE. Yes, she is, she's there. (*Points off R.*)

SCHLIPPS. Where?

GENTLE. Nuremberg.

[*Schlipps runs off in the opposite direction, L.*]

MARIA. How do you know that?

GENTLE. I know everything.

GRETCHEN. I don't believe you.

GENTLE. Why should you? Nobody believes *you*.

GRETCHEN. How do you know that? I mean, how dare you say such a thing?

THERESA. Gretchen may be a story-teller – but she has her good points for all that. She says so herself.

GRETCHEN. I never said so.

MARIA. Then it may be true. (*To GENTLEMAN.*) Now tell me something about myself.

GENTLE. Very good. That's not your own hair. (*Touching a long plait that hangs down her back.*)

MARIA (*in a great rage*). It's false!

GENTLE. Exactly.

[*It comes off in his hand; all laugh. Theresa, Gretchen, and Emma, quietly take off their plaits and put them in their pockets.*]

MARIA (*indignantly*). Give me that directly. (*Snatches it away.*) My hair always comes off in the autumn.

GRETCHEN. Perhaps you have some remark to make about *my* hair.

GENTLE. Yes, beautiful hair, and all your own. (*Pulling end of long plait quietly out of Gretchen's pocket.*) With a reserve, to be used in cases of emergency.

GRETCHEN. I won't stand it. My mind's made up!

MARIA. So's your face!

[*Gretchen and Maria retire up, quarrelling.*]

EMMA. Now tell us something that's going to happen.

GENTLE. Very good. You've heard of the wicked Baron Otto von Schlachenstein?

ALL. Yes, yes.

GENTLE. Well, *he's* going to happen! He'll be here to-day on his way to his native castle, Schlachenschloss – twenty miles from here.

HANS. And who's Baron Otto von Schlachenstein?

MARIA. The wickedest man in the whole world!

GRETCHEN. Yes, but there's something worse than that about him, he's the *ugliest* man in the whole world!

EMMA. He's the most dreadful rake in the whole world!

MARIA. Yes, they say that although he's so wonderfully hideous, no woman can possibly resist him. It's infamous that any man should possess such power.

EMMA. Disgraceful!

THERESA. Abominable!

GRETCHEN. Yes, they say he only has to look at you, and there's an end of you!

HANS (*simply*). Of *me* ?

GRETCHEN. Not of you, of course, of me – (*All laugh.*) – that is, of any woman. It's abominable! Well, he'll be here in half an hour!

ALL THE GIRLS. Oh, how nice! (*They check themselves and look demure.*)

HANS. Oh, dear! oh, dear! (*Crying.*)

MARIA. What on eath is there to cry about?

HANS. Suppose he takes a fancy to my Bertha? Do you think she would resist him?

GRETCHEN. I don't know any girl with weaker powers of resisting temptation.

Enter Bertha running, L. U. E., as if pursued.

RECITATIVE.

BERTHA. Oh, my gracious!

ALL. What's the matter?

BERTHA. How audacious!

ALL. What a clatter.

BERTHA. Such a monster!

HANS. Oh, how frightful!

BERTHA. Tried to kiss me.

ALL. How delightful!

BERTHA. Then he chased me.

ALL. How audacious!

BERTHA. And embraced me.

ALL. Yet how gracious!

MARIA. Tell us, Bertha, what befell you –

BERTHA. Gather round, and I will tell you. Listen.

(*Sees HANS.*) No!

HANS. Bertha, what in the world is the matter? Who's been hitting you?

BERTHA (*coquettishly*). I haven't been hit, I've been struck!

HANS. Struck!

BERTHA. Very much struck!

HANS. Bertha, you've been flirting.

BERTHA. No, I haven't. (*Demurely.*) I've been receiving attention from a gentleman.

HANS. From what gentleman?

BERTHA. From – well, I shan't tell you. (*Hans, in despair.*)

AIR. – BERTHA.

On second thoughts, I don't suppose
It matters much to you –
Your conduct very plainly shows
You do not think me true.
Why, I declare, you tear your hair,
Because he touched his hat!
If noble strangers think me fair,
I'm not to blame for that!

CHORUS. If noble strangers think her fair,
She's not to blame for that!

If my complexion shames the rose,
I didn't put it there!
I don't suppose I made my nose,
Although I "did my hair."
If noble strangers choose to think
I'm good for looking at –
And feel themselves compelled to wink,
Am I to blame for that?

CHORUS. If noble strangers choose to wink,
She's not to blame for that!

MARIA. Did he only wink?

BERTHA. Oh, he did more than that – he put his arm round my waist and kissed me.

HANS. But you resisted?

BERTHA. I couldn't resist!

HANS (*sulkily*). You can sometimes!

BERTHA. Yes, but he's much stronger than you.

GRETCHEN. Is he handsome?

BERTHA. He's the ugliest man I ever saw.

HANS. Then you've no excuse!

BERTHA. His hair is a fiery red, and his nose is diabolical; he has little green eyes, and his face is covered with moles like little hat-pegs.

HANS. If she goes on like this with a man whose face is covered with moles like little hat-pegs, how far will she go with a man who hasn't got any moles at all?

BERTHA. Some girls choose men as they choose old china – the uglier they are the better they like them.

HANS. I wish I was like old china.

BERTHA. So you are in one respect – you're very much cracked! But although he is so dreadfully ugly, there's something very striking about his head.

HANS. There shall be something very striking about his head before he's half an hour older! Why what's the matter with the Syndic?

Enter TINTELSTEIN, L. U. E.

TINTEL. Congratulate me, congratulate me.

HANS. We do – heartily. Why?

TINTEL. At last I have an official duty to discharge. For three years I have been Syndic of Schlachenschloss, and until this moment my office has been a sinecure. Not a nobleman has visited the village – not a quarrel has taken place between the villagers. My term of office expires in a month, and but for a glorious and wholly unexpected event which has just taken place, posterity would never have heard of me! The Baron Otto von Schlachenstein has just arrived on his way to his native castle, Schlachenschloss.

ALL. The Baron Otto von Schlachenstein!

BERTHA. That was *his* name.

HANS. Whose?

BERTHA. The man who tried to kiss me! Fly, fly, girls, or he may try to kiss you too, for pretty and ugly are alike to him.

GRETCHEN. Fly? We'd scorn the action. If innocence *is* to be insulted, flying won't do any good.

MARIA. I should like to catch him trying to kiss *me* !

TINTEL. Well, from all accounts you're very likely to have your whim gratified. But don't talk of flying –

GRETCHEN. We are not talking of flying.

TINTEL. Because so great a man must be received with ceremony. I must go and put on my robes! When I took office I spent thirty thalers on those robes, and from that day to this I've never had an opportunity of wearing them.

GRETCHEN. And won't you speak an address?

TINTEL. An address? I should rather think so! Listen, when the Empress was expected to pass through this village three years since, shortly after the birth of her two sons – twins – I prepared a speech and had it engrossed on vellum. Well, the Empress changed her mind and never came, so the address was never used. That speech shall be spoken now! With a little modification it will do admirably. Here comes the Baron, attended by his steward Grumpff. Receive him with the enthusiasm so great a man deserves – I won't be a minute! Come along, Hans, and help me with my robes.

[Exit into his house R., followed by Hans .

Enter BARON and GRUMPPF, L. U. E.

CHORUS.
 We hail you –
 Regale you –
 The flagon shall not fail you!
 Amuse you,
 And booze you –
 There's nought we can refuse you.

BARON. Grumpff.

GRUMPFF. My lord.

BARON. Did you flog that postillion who had the audacity to faint on his horse?

GRUMPFF. My lord, I flogged him till I couldn't stand.

BARON. My own Grumpff! Grumpff, I love you. You're a man after my own heart.

GRUMPFF. No, no, my lord.

BARON. But I say yes.

GRUMPFF. I say no!

BARON. Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! I shall say yes!

GRUMPFF. Hier sprich mann schloppenhausen teufelspitz, I say no! Because – because
 – your lordship hasn't a heart to be after – ho, ho, ho!

BARON. Ho, ho, ho!

COUPLETS.

BARON (*to MARIA*). How de do, miss! Who are you?
 Who are you? Who are you?
 You who smile with wicked wile,
 How de do, miss! Who are you?
 Glad to see you – who are you?

MARIA. My name's Maria, I am she
 Who shells the coy and bashful pea.
 Supplies the priest, and Syndic, too –
 Happy to do the same for you!

BARON (*to GRETCHEN*). How de do, miss! Who are you?
 Who are you? Who are you?
 You with waist so tightly laced,
 How de do, miss! Who are you?
 Glad to see you – who are you?

GRETCH. My name is Gretchen; I'm the pride
 And boast of all the country side;
 I flirt all day – that's all I do –
 Happy to do the same with you!

BARON (*to THERESA*). How de do, miss! Who are you?
 Who are you? Who are you?
 You with hair so long and fair,
 How de do, miss! Who are you?

Glad to see you – who are you?

THERESA. My name's Theresa, and I sell
Grapes, and nuts, and figs as well,
The villagers I sell them to –
Happy to do the same to you!

BARON (*to BERTHA*). How de do, miss! Who are you?
Who are you? Who are you?
You whose lips the rose eclipse –
How de do, miss! Who are you?
Glad to see you? Who are you?

BERTHA. My name is Bertha, I'm the miss
You complimented with a kiss.
You gave me one – a good one, too –
Happy to do the same to you!

Enter TINTELSTEIN from house, R., with address.

TINTEL. Welcome, my lord! Here is a small matter of an address, which I trust your lordship will condescend to hear. It is an address composed in honour of the expected visit of the Empress immediately after the birth of her little twins, but the Empress never came, and it's on my hands. But it has never been used, my lord, and is as good as new, and if your lordship will make a slight allowance for the different circumstances under which the address is presented, I think you will find that it will answer every purpose. Ahem! (*reads*) "Much respected and ever to be worshipped Madame!"

BARON. Eh? Potz-tausend aimmels Sackerment noch emmal! What's that?

TINTEL. That referred to the Empress. "We, the Syndic of Schlachenschloss, dazzled by the surpassing beauty of your angelic countenance – overwhelmed by the extraordinary lustre of those melting eyes – "

GRUMPPFF. That's the Empress's eyes.

BARON. It applies equally to our own. Proceed.

TINTEL. It applies equally to his lordship's. I proceed. "Those melting eyes, find ourselves quite unable to congratulate you, in fitting terms, on your happy recovery – "

BARON. Recovery?

TINTEL. That referred to an interesting event of a certain kind, which had recently occurred. But perhaps your lordship has been ill lately?

BARON. Not at all – never had a day's illness in all my life.

TINTEL. I'm very sorry to hear you say so, my lord, for as the particular kind of illness from which the Empress was recovering isn't specified, I was in hopes that it might have applied to you. But I'll strike that out. I proceed. "We are happy to think that the cares of maternity do not so monopolise your attention as to prevent your honouring us with a visit – "

GRUMPPFF. Bah!

BARON. That's all right. The cares of maternity do *not* monopolise our attention – it's quite right. Go on.

TINTEL. Exactly; in the Empress's case they did, and she never came. "And in the devout hope that these interesting little strangers may only be the earnest of many many more interesting little strangers to follow, we beg to subscribe ourselves, madame, your most obedient and very humble servant, Tintelstein, Syndic." I composed that myself!

BARON. Potz-tausend! but it does you credit.

TINTEL. Allowing, your lordship, for the altered circumstances, I think –

BARON. Exactly – get out. This is a pleasant village, Grumpff; I shall stop here a fortnight.

GRUMPPFF. Your lordship might do worse.

BARON. Which is the prettiest girl in the village?

GRUMPPFF. This one, my lord. (*Indicating Bertha.*)

BARON. Good, Grumpff! Are you the prettiest girl in the village?

BERTHA. I believe I am considered so, my lord.

BARON. What's your name?

BERTHA. Bertha Pompplesdorf, my lord.

HANS. At present, my lord.

BARON. Eh?

HANS. To-morrow she changes it.

BARON. Exactly – to-morrow she changes it – Syndic.

TINTEL. My lord.

BARON. Draw up a marriage contract between Bertha Pompplesdorf and Baron Otto von Schlachenstein.

HANS. Here, I say –

TINTEL. But, my lord –

BARON (*in a rage*). Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! Am I to be thwarted?

HANS. You are!

BARON. Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal!

HANS. She's betrothed to me, and we're to be married to-morrow.

BARON. How blind are these poor earthworms! They design, and lo, they think they have completed! Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal!

BERTHA (*aside*). It will serve the jealous little donkey right to tease him for half an hour. (*Aloud.*) Baron, it is true that I am betrothed to Hans, in a sort of way – but – to be a baroness –

HANS. To be a baroness! But look at his moles! You couldn't marry a man with moles like hat-pegs!

BERTHA. One can but try, dear Hans. If I find I can't marry him, I will marry you with pleasure – there! Come, Baron, and we will talk it over!

[Repeat chorus, "We hail you." All exeunt L. U. E., except
HANS and the GENTLEMAN IN BLACK.

HANS. That girl's going to throw me over! Life without Bertha, one long, long night!

GENTLE. (*coming forward*). And life *with* Bertha?

HANS. One long, long day!

GENTLE. You'd find one as monotonous as the other. But what is the matter?

HANS. Matter? Bertha has been and bolted bodily with a big, brutal, burly baron!
That's all. (*Sobbing.*)

GENTLE. Well?

HANS. That's what it is to be a baron. Rank is a fine thing! Ugly as he is, I wish I was
he!

GENTLE. Do you mean that?

HANS. Of course I mean that.

GENTLE. Good. Are you aware that I have power of transferring the soul of one man
into the body of another at will.

HANS (*terrified*). No!

GENTLE. It's a fact, though. I can accomplish that metamorphosis whenever I please.
At the end of the month your soul goes back to its proper body.

HANS. And who are you?

GENTLE. The king of the gnomes. Country orders executed with promptness and
despatch.

HANS. And if my soul is transferred to the baron's body, shall I become as wicked as
the baron?

GENTLE. That depends entirely upon yourself; you carry with you all your moral
qualities, and, subject to them, you are a free agent.

HANS. And Bertha won't know anything about it?

GENTLE. Certainly not. She will notice a curious change in the baron's voice and
manner, and that's all.

HANS. It will be a change for the better. (*Chuckles.*) I agree. Go it.

GENTLE. Go what?

HANS. Change me.

GENTLE. Oh, but I must get the Baron's consent first.

HANS. Why?

GENTLE. Why, if I take your soul out of your body, without finding room for it in the
baron's, you will be what is called "dead." You may have heard the term?

HANS. I think I have.

GENTLE. Good – then you know what I mean. Ah, here he comes.

Enter BARON, L. U. E.

BARON. Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! She don't care a bit for me! She loves that booby after all! She only did it to tease him!

GENTLE. How do you do, baron?

BARON. Who are you, sir, when you're at home?

GENTLE. Never mind who I am when I'm at *home* – you'll find out all about that some day. It is enough for you that I wish to be known as the Gentleman in Black. Come, you have fallen desperately in love with Bertha Pompplesdorf; she flirted with you in order to excite her lover's jealousy, and having done that she allowed you to see that she didn't care a straw about you. You are at this moment wishing you were that lover – true?

BARON (*amazed*). Quite true!

GENTLE. I have the power of transferring your soul into his body for one calendar month – at the end of the month your soul reverts to its original tabernacle. What do you say? Shall I do it?

BARON. For one month only.

GENTLE. Only for one month. This is the thirteenth August, 1584, on the thirteenth September your souls will revert to their proper bodies.

BARON. Agreed. Go it.

GENTLE. Very good. Behold – I go it!

RECITATIVE.

Otto's body, grim and droll,
Shrine young Hans's simple soul;
Otto's soul, of moral shoddy,
Occupy young Hans's body!

[*He makes passes, and flashes fire. HANS immediately assumes the ferocious demeanour of the BARON– the BARON assumes the loutish demeanour of HANS. N. B. – For the sake of convenience, HANS'S body with the BARON'S soul will be distinguished as the "FALSE HANS," the BARON'S body with HANS'S soul as the "REAL HANS."*]

GENTLE. There, it's done! How do you like it?

FALSE HANS. Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! This is a tight fit!

REAL HANS (*chuckles as HANS did – looking in mirror*). What an ugly brute I am!

FALSE HANS (*indignantly*). Potz-tausend! What do you mean by that? You're a devilish good-looking fellow, sir. Look at me! here's a sight! And I've got to go about like this for a month – and in these clothes, too! Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! (*Pulls at cloth of his coat.*)

REAL HANS. I say, baron, don't do that – that's my best doublet, and it won't stand trifling with. By the bye, where do you keep your pocket handkerchief? Oh, I've got it (*uses it – a letter drops out of his pocket*). Hallo! what's this? (*reads*) "Dearest Otto – "

FALSE HANS. Give me that letter, sir, immediately.

REAL HANS. Oh, no – excuse me.

FALSE HANS. It's from a lady, sir. Potz-tausend!

REAL HANS. Can't help that. (*Chuckles.*) You should have emptied your pockets before you changed.

FALSE HANS (*feeling in pocket, and producing bread and sausage*). What's this?

REAL HANS. That's my dinner – at least, *your* dinner. You have meat for dinner today to commemorate your betrothal. You're in luck, Baron! (*Chuckles.*)

FALSE HANS. Bread and sausage for a month! (*Enter BERTHA.*) Potz-tausend, but she's a lovely girl and I'll bear with the inconveniences of my position for her sake!

REAL HANS. Bertha! (*Runs to embrace her.*)

BERTHA. Go away, you monster, I hate the sight of you. (*To FALSE HANS .*) Hans, I'm very sorry I treated you so badly, but it was because you were so ridiculous as to be jealous of that extravagant scarecrow! As if any girl could love a monster with moles like hat-pegs.

FALSE HANS. H'm! his body isn't so bad, Bertha, but his moral qualities are contemptible.

REAL HANS. Bah! I'm the ugliest beast on the face of the earth!

FALSE HANS. You're not, sir!

REAL HANS. I am, sir!

FALSE HANS. Look at your nose, sir. There's a nose! There's character in that nose, sir! There's blood in that nose, sir! There's an eye, sir! There's a sonnet in every look – there's a leg! Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal!

REAL HANS (*feeling his legs*). Hallo! it's padded. (*Chuckles.*) Here's a lark! Oh, I say, he pads his legs!

FALSE HANS. It's all stuff!

BERTHA. Well, well, don't quarrel. It's quite enough for you, dear Hans (*to FALSE HANS*) that *I* think him repulsive. I've come to beg your pardon for flirting with such a monster and to tell you that I am ready to marry you immediately, and be a good and faithful wife to the end of my days – there. (*Kisses him.*) There's an earnest of what is to come!

REAL HANS. She never did that to me.

FALSE HANS. Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal!

BERTHA. Eh? What an extraordinary remark! He's caught it from the Baron! Poor fellow, he thinks to please me by imitating the expressions of people of rank!

REAL HANS. Bertha, listen to me: there's a great change, that you know nothing about and that I can't explain –

BERTHA. A great change? Yes, I see there is a great change, but your hypocritical mildness will have no effect upon *me* .

Enter TINTELSTEIN, MARIA, GRETCHEN, EMMA, THERESA, L. U. E.

TINTEL. My lord, the baroness has arrived!

REAL HANS. Very good, it's no affair of mine.

TINTEL. The Baroness Otto von Schlachenstein, your wife.

REAL HANS. My wife? he, he, he! I like that!

TINTEL. She says you have deserted her, and she has come with her five children to claim protection.

REAL HANS. Five children! This is beyond a joke. I don't object to the wife – but five children –

FALSE HANS. Potz-tausend! but this is a narrow escape!

ALL (*to* REAL HANS). Oh, you monster!

BERTHA. And he tried to kiss me, and he's a married man!

MARIA. With five children!

REAL HANS. But, listen, I am not the Baron Otto von Schlachenstein, and I never had a child in my life.

ALL. Oh, oh!

REAL HANS. I'm not, indeed! *That's* the Baron.

THERESA. *That?* Why that's Hans –

TINTEL. However, here she comes.

Enter the BARONESS with the five little children, L. U. E.

BARONESS (*embracing* REAL HANS). Baron! Cruel, cruel, Baron!

TINTEL. (*aside*). Here is an opportunity that may not occur again. Ahem! (*Pulls out his address and begins to read.*) “Much respected and ever to be honoured Madame, we, the Syndic of Schlachenschloss, dazzled by the surpassing beauty of your angelic countenance –”

BARONESS (*pushing* TINTLESTEIN *out of the way*). Come home!

ELDEST CHILD. *Father, dear father, come home!*

[*They cling round him.*]

REAL HANS. Here, I say (*to* FALSE HANS). These are *your* children, you know –

BARONESS. Baron!

REAL HANS. That's your husband, ma'am – take him and be happy!

BARONESS. That my husband? Oh, Otto, I never set eyes on the young man before!

FALSE HANS. No, never! Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal, she never set eyes on the young man before!

BARONESS. And yet that exclamation! The Baron's favourite own!

FALSE HANS. Exclamations are common property, ma'am. You didn't marry an oath, you married a man – a very good-looking one too. Take him and be happy.

REAL HANS. It's all a mistake. Go away, you bold woman, and don't kiss me like that.

BARONESS. Otto, come home!

REAL HANS. I don't know who you are, but you're a very brazen person. I'm a single man, and consequently I haven't a family, and I must beg that you will remove these young persons directly.

TINTEL. Stop a bit, here's a chance of recording a judgment at last! Have you any proof that this gentleman is your husband?

BARONESS. Proof? I sent him a copy of my marriage certificate a week ago – to prove that I could get another if I liked.

REAL HANS. Eh?

[*Feels in his pocket – takes out letter.*]

BARONESS. And there it is! See – my own handwriting – and here is more of it.

[*Undoes his shirt collar, and reads marking on his shirt, "Otto, six."*]

ALL. "Otto, six!"

TINTEL. It is indeed in her handwriting. Here is a strong *primâ facie* case. Let both parties appear before me to-morrow morning, and this matter shall be investigated!

BARONESS. I'll go to the archduke, and compel you to receive me, or forfeit your estates. You know how strict he is in his own conduct.

REAL HANS. Ma'am, the stricter he is in his own conduct, the less is he likely to approve your quartering yourself on a single gentleman. You're quite at liberty to go to the archduke – or any other potentate you please.

CONCERTED PIECE.

BARONESS. Monster, do you want to leave me?
You who swore you'd never grieve me?
Of your love at once bereave me –
Oh, alack and well-a-day!

BARON. Ma'am, I don't know what your game is,
Quite unknown to me your name is –
This dead set at me a shame is!
Naughty woman, go away!

BERTHA. Oh, you monster unrelenting,
Listen to her loud lamenting –
Better be at once consenting –
Take her, Baron – take her, pray!

GRUMPPF (*aside to BARONESS*).
Money of me try to borrow
Till a verdict ends your sorrow
(Which will happen, ma'am, to-morrow)
In the cottage you may stay!

GENTLE. This certificate I'm reading
Trumpets forth your evil breeding,
For your conduct thus unheeding
You will surely have to pay!

BARONESS. Monster, do you mean to leave me?
You who swore you'd never grieve me?
Will you take me?

BARON. No, I won't, ma'am.

BARONESS. Don't forsake me?

BARON. No, I don't, ma'am!
 BARONESS. Don't forsake me?
 BARON. No, I don't.

CHORUS. Monster, monster, monster, monster!

HANS. Baron, you're behaving sadly!
 She adores you, fondly, madly –
 You will disappoint her sadly:
 Seek her in her sad array!

BERTHA *and* GRUMPF. Now she says she means to love you,
 But it doesn't seem to grieve you
 Of her love she will bereave you
 Oh alack and well-a-day!

BARON. She's no kind of wife of mine.
 'Tis for her (*indicating Bertha*) I sigh and pine.

BERTHA. You've been drinking too much wine
 Such a thing to dare to say!

CHORUS. Baron, you're behaving badly!
 She adores you, fondly, madly –
 You will disappoint her sadly:
 Seek her in her sad array!

BARON. I've been drinking? why how dare you!
 BERTHA. Don't be thinking I could bear you!
 GRUMPF. For a linking, pray, prepare you!
 HANS. Chains are clinking to ensnare you!
 GENTLE. Stop your winking, she must share you!

ALL. Baron, you're behaving badly, etc.

[*At end of finale, BARONESS rushes off frantically L. U. E. leaving REAL HANS surrounded by children.*]

ACT II.

Scene

SCENE. – *Castle Gates of Schlachenschloss. (The market Boys and Girls of Act I. discovered.) They are engaged in preparing a triumphal arch for the arrival of the BARON.*

CHORUS.
 In service, now, against our wills,
 Compelled, alas, to stop!
 We polish panes and window sills,
 And twirl the airy mop!
 With every kind of mortal dread,
 We bear the Baron's yoke,
 Contrast it with the life we led
 As happy market folk!

Enter GRUMPFF, L. U. E., at the end of chorus, cracking a long whip, and carrying a roll of calico.

GRUMPFF. Now, then this won't do! This ain't business, you know. Come, the Baron will be here in a minnte, and the preparations for his welcome are not half finished. Here is the scroll which is to surmount the arch. It's my own composition. (*Unrolls scroll, "Welcome Little Stranger."*) Come, up with it.

[Cracks whip – they hang up scroll.]

MARIA. If you please, we can't work if you crack your whip like that.

GRUMPFF. Why not? (*Cracking whip.*)

MARIA. It makes us jump.

GRUMPFF. Ha! Don't you complain as long as you only get the crack of it.

THERESA. Why, you wouldn't hit a woman.

GRUMPFF. Wouldn't I? Why not?

GRETCHEN. What, hit a woman who couldn't hit you back again?

GRUMPFF. Why you don't suppose I'd be such a fool as to hit anybody who *could* ?

GRETCHEN. Yes, I do.

GRUMPFF. Then you don't know me. No, no, the Baron keeps me to flog the women and children. All the strong men are flogged by machinery. But don't you abuse my whip: I'm very fond of my whip – I always have it about me.

GRETCHEN. You deserve to have it about you! And if you're so fond of it, don't give it to us. *We* don't like it.

GRUMPFF (*furious*). What's that?

GRETCHEN. Nothing, I didn't speak.

GRUMPFF. You said that I deserved to have it about me.

GRETCHEN. I don't call that speaking, I call that thinking out loud.

GRUMPFF. Think to yourself then, or my whip will take to thinking out loud. And when it once begins it doesn't leave off in a hurry.

SONG. – GRUMPFF.

No giddy flirt is this good whip:
If once it holds you in its grip,
Of fickleness you can't complain
It comes again, again, again! (*Cracking whip.*)

You can't forget it – if you do,
Be sure it will remember *you* –
Its warm attentions will not wane,
'Twill come again, again, again! (*Cracking whip.*)

A heedless whip – it little recks
Of beauty, figure, age or sex;
If once it holds you in its rein
It comes again, again, again! (*Cracking whip.*)

A democrat – prepared to strike!
 The old, the sick, the weak alike!
 Where once it's been, it's always fain
 To come again, again, again! (*Cracking whip.*)

[*Noise heard without, all come down hurriedly.*]

MARIA. My dears, here's the Baron? How do I look?

GRETCHEN. Beautiful, dear – for you! Oh, I'm in such a state of mind!

MARIA. If he touches me, I shall pinch him.

GRUMPF. Now, then, welcome his lordship – Hurrah!

THE OTHERS (*very faintly*). Hurrah!

Enter REAL HANS, L. U. E., preceded by four servants bowing and walking backwards. He carries two of the children in his arms, the others are hanging about him. (He still retains all the outward appearance of the BARON, with the manner of HANS.)

GRUMPF. Now then, take care, he's going to begin!

[*All very frightened.*]

REAL HANS (*looking at the arch*). Oh, how sweetly pretty! (*Holding up child.*) Look at it, Tommy, ain't it sweetly pretty! (GRUMPF makes a preposterous bow which frightens REAL HANS *very much*.) Now look here, don't you hit me, I'm the Baron, and you must be respectful. If you're rude I shall be seriously annoyed.

GRUMPF. Rude? My lord, I was making a bow.

REAL HANS. Oh, I beg your pardon – but, may I ask who you are?

GRUMPF. Ho, ho! That's good! Who am I? His lordship's joke! Ho, ho, ho! (*Aside to Servants.*) He don't often joke – so laugh, or you'll catch it!

SERVANTS. Ho, ho, ho!

REAL HANS. Look here, I don't want to appear inquisitive, but I'm a stranger here, and I should like to know your name.

GRUMPF. I've been ten years in your lordship's service, but if your lordship wishes me to mention my name, I'm delighted to humour your lordship's joke. It's Grumpff.

REAL HANS. Grumpff, of course. Ha, ha! (*Aside.*) I suppose I ought to have known that.

GRUMPF. Ha, ha! He's been drinking.

REAL HANS. It's my amusing way, my friends. (*Sees THERESA.*) Hallo, Theresa! Don't you know me?

THERESA. No, my lord – that is, I've seen you –

REAL HANS. Seen me, that's a good 'un. (*Chuckles.*) Why I've driven you up to market every day these twelve years.

THERESA. Driven me? Oh, dear no! Hans drives *me* always.

GRUMPF (*aside*). He's been drinking a good deal. (*Aloud.*) My lord, I've organised the servants of the castle. I had to engage villagers for the purpose, but I've spent a

fortnight in drilling them into their work. They've done pretty well, but I've several complaints to make. This girl, Maria, burnt the toast last night.

REAL HANS (*going up to MARIA, and taking her hand*). Ah, Maria, I'm so glad to see you, my dear! I hope they've made you pretty comfortable.

GRUMPFF. I've ordered her seven day's black-hole, and all her hair cut off!

REAL HANS. What! Maria?

GRUMPFF. Yes. She actually burnt the toast!

REAL HANS. Oh, dear me, you shouldn't have done that, Grumpff. You mustn't cut off Maria's hair, you know. Maria and I are very old friends, and I couldn't hear of such a thing.

GRUMPFF. Oh, he's mad! quite mad!

REAL HANS. Any more complaints?

GRUMPFF. Lots! Theresa has dry bread and water for a fortnight.

REAL HANS. Theresa fed on dry bread! Theresa, who had such an appetite, too? Ho, ho! Why what has she done?

GRUMPFF. Spilt the milk! A pint!

REAL HANS. Oh, dear, dear, you mustn't punish Theresa for spilling a pint of milk!

Grumpff.

Not punish her?

REAL HANS. Not on any consideration. Why how hungry she must be! Now look here, Grumpff, I'm sorry to trouble you, but you'll oblige me very much if you'll be so good as to fetch Theresa two or three nice slices of galantine and a bottle of – What would you like a bottle of, Theresa?

THERESA. Hock.

REAL HANS. And a bottle of hock. Will you be so good?

GRUMPFF. Eh? Oh, of course, if your lordship wishes it!

REAL HANS. You don't mind?

GRUMPFF. Oh dear no! not at all.

REAL HANS. Well, trot along, Grumpff. Mind – the best hock!

MARIA. Why, he's as mild as curds and whey! And Grumpff told us you were a devil!

REAL HANS. The devil he did! Grumpff, did you tell these ladies I was a devil?

GRUMPFF (*aside*). Ladies! (*Aloud.*) Yes, my lord, I did. And so you are!

REAL HANS. Oh, Grumpff, you shouldn't have told 'em that. That was very unkind of you, Grumpff. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Grumpff – I wouldn't indeed! Now, my dears, if you will be so good as to go into the hall, Grumpff will see that you have everything of the best, won't you, Grumpff? And if he doesn't, let me know, my dears, and he shall be discharged.

GRUMPFF. It's my belief I'm fast asleep and dreaming. (*Aloud.*) My lord, I don't know whether I'm asleep or awake – will your lordship be good enough to pinch me?

REAL HANS. With pleasure, Grumpff. Where would you like to have it?

GRUMPF. In the calf of the leg, my lord, if you don't mind –

REAL HANS. Certainly, Grumpff – here? (*Pinches his leg.*)

GRUMPF (*screaming*). I'm awake!

[*Exeunt Grumpff and Servants laughing, L.*]

REAL HANS (*surrounded by children*). This is Bertha's wedding day! This morning she marries that fearful baron who's at this moment occupying my body! And he's a married man! And I can't prevent it! (*Baby cries.*)

1ST CHILD. Papa, baby's hungry.

REAL HANS. I hear him, my dear, but I don't know what to give him; I ain't used to children, my dear – it's very awkward. Do you think he would like a chop, and a glass of beer? Would it like a chop, then – a pickley wickley wee? I never *did* know anything about children. Take it away to Grumpff, my dear, and tell him to do all that's necessary. (*ELDEST CHILD takes baby, and all Children go off.*) Poor little things! It's a dreadful responsibility. Oh, Bertha, Bertha, what am I undergoing on your account!

Enter BERTHA, R. U. E.

BERTHA. My Lord!

REAL HANS. Bertha! you here? I came away here to get away from you. Your lover probably awaits you. You'd better go to him.

BERTHA. Yes, my lord, but as you've engaged all my friends as your servants, I've come to ask if you will be so kind as to give them a holiday this evening to enable them to be present at my wedding!

REAL HANS. Are you not afraid to present yourself before such a bloodthirsty vindictive villain as I am represented to be?

BERTHA. Oh, but everybody says you've changed so wonderfully in the past fortnight, that you're now just as mild and good-hearted as my poor Hans used to be!

REAL HANS. *Used* to be?

BERTHA. Yes. (*Crying.*) He's so strange now! He swears so dreadfully, and he gets tipsy every night – so tipsy! so – so – tipsy!

REAL HANS. The dissipated beast!

BERTHA. And when I won't sit on his knee – which I won't – I *won't* – I WON'T do – he pinches me!

REAL HANS. The brute. I'll pay him out for this!

BERTHA. Oh, its all my fault; I was so unkind to him that it turned his brain. But I'm determined to make amends for my wickedness, and if loving-kindness can bring him round, he'll soon be all right again.

SONG. – BERTHA.

Ah, once he loved me blindly,

All other girls above!

I treated him unkindly

And sported with his love:

I smiled on others sweetly
 And would not tell him why:
 I broke his heart completely
 A wretched girl am I!
 Ah, me, a wretched girl am I!
 His head is turned with sorrow:
 He hates his dearest friends –
 I'll marry him to-morrow,
 And then I'll make amends!
 The grief with which he's laden
 I'll lighten all my life:
 A gentle little maiden,
 A loving little wife!
 Ah me, I'll try to make amends!
 Ah me, I'll try to make amends!

[Exit BERTHA, L.]

REAL HANS. Poor little girl! – And to think that all that devotion, under difficulties, she lavishes on that senseless brute, is, in reality, my property! It's enough to make a fellow swear that he'll stick to his own body for the rest of his life!

FALSE HANS (*without*). Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! Where's your master?

Enter GRUMPPFF, L. U. E. followed by FALSE HANS, whom he is endeavouring to stop.

GRUMPPFF. Come, come, young man, this won't do.

FALSE HANS. Young man! Do you know whom you're addressing, Grumpff?

GRUMPPFF. Grumpff! He calls me Grumpff! Here come out of this!

[*Collars him – REAL HANS pulls him off, and sends him spinning round the stage. FALSE HANS has had his hair cut, and looks much smarter and less stupid than he did – REAL HANS bursts into tears at seeing him, and falls sobbing at table.*]

FALSE HANS. Ahem! Now for a bold stroke. Potz-tausend, but I'm tired of this peasant's life, and I can't stand another fortnight of it! His confounded master wollops me when I don't work, and when I do he gives me bread and sausage. So here goes for a good one. (*Aloud.*) Hans!

REAL HANS. Eh? why you've been and cut my hair!

FALSE HANS. I have.

REAL HANS. And you've washed my face, too!

FALSE HANS. I have. It's my wedding-day.

REAL HANS. That's a very great liberty. And you're afraid of catching cold?

FALSE HANS. No; I am afraid of nothing. (*Weeps.*)

REAL HANS. Well, for a man who's afraid of nothing, you seem to cry a good deal.

FALSE HANS. Attribute it to remorse.

REAL HANS. I will.

FALSE HANS. I am a great scoundrel!

REAL HANS. You are!

FALSE HANS. I have committed a fearful crime.

REAL HANS. You have – a many!

FALSE HANS. One in particular. Hans, I have done you an irreparable injury.

REAL HANS. I'm quite aware of that; you're going to marry my sweetheart. (*Weeps.* And you're a married man! and I can't prevent it!

FALSE HANS. Yes, but this is a greater injury still – an injury that dates many many years back! Listen, and I will tell you all! There is no occasion to disguise our identities when we are alone with each other. I am Otto – you are Hans.

REAL HANS. In one sense I am.

FALSE HANS. But – (*and this is very secret*) – you are *not* Hans!

REAL HANS. In one sense I am not.

FALSE HANS. Bah! I mean that you never *were* Hans – I mean that you were changed at birth!

REAL HANS. Eh? By whom?

FALSE HANS. By me!

REAL HANS. By you? You shouldn't have done that.

FALSE HANS. I should not. That is the secret crime that is weighing me down – that is the misdeed that blights my present happiness. (*Weeps.*)

REAL HANS. Will you take anything?

FALSE HANS. Nothing. I have already a weight here which is heavier than I can bear, and I would not add to it. I will tell you all! Listen!

REAL HANS. I am all ears.

FALSE HANS. You are! Twenty-five years ago the infant son of Baron Rudolph von Schlachenstein was put out to nurse, when two days old, in the family of Hans Gopp, a simple peasant.

REAL HANS. My father!

FALSE HANS. The simple peasant had a son of the same age –

REAL HANS. Myself!

FALSE HANS. The two children were fed by one common mother. And a commoner mother never stepped!

REAL HANS. She *was* common.

FALSE HANS. Potz-tausend! don't interrupt me. Fraulein Gopp took the deepest interest in the young aristocrat, and brutally neglected her own child. She provided the baron's son with a beautiful cradle, and fed him all day long. Her own son occupied a clothes-basket, and lived on chop-bones and cold pie-crust. Envy rankled in the heart of that poor little boy. The young baron occupied *his* place at his mother's breast – the young baron slept in his cradle – the young baron had *his* soothing syrup at night, and was dodged up with *his* powder puff in the morning. The peasant babe slept in a clothes-basket, and had

to take his chance of the pump for a morning's wash. The peasant's babe, as he saw lavished on the young baron all the attentions that should have been his own, gnashed his toothless gums with envy, and swore to be avenged. One night – the babes were three weeks old, and were wonderfully alike – the peasant's babe crept from his clothes – basket, quietly removed the sleeping baron from his sumptuous cradle, placed the baron's son in the clothes-basket, and creeping into the baron's cradle, covered himself up and went to sleep. The cheat was never discovered! The peasant's son was brought up as the young baron – the young baron as the peasant's son. I was the peasant's son, Hans Gopp; you – *you* were the babe of the Baron von Schlachenstein!

REAL HANS. This is very complicated. Then I, before I occupied your body, was really the Baron whom you represented yourself to be?

FALSE HANS. You were! And I, who all my life passed for the Baron Otto von Schlachenstein, was, it point of fact, Hans Gopp, the peasant! Oh, remorse, remorse! But it is not too late to atone for the injury I have done you!

REAL HANS. But I think you must be mistaken, for you are twenty years older than I am.

FALSE HANS. I am *now* – but when I was three weeks old, of course I was the same age as you were when you were three weeks old.

REAL HANS (*puzzled*). Of course, I see.

FALSE HANS. You see I am naturally quicker than you are – besides, I'm ashamed to say I've lived a very fast life.

REAL HANS. True; I forgot that. Then I really am a baron?

FALSE HANS. You really are!

REAL HANS. And you really are a peasant?

FALSE HANS. I really am!

REAL HANS. All right then – then that's settled.

FALSE HANS. But –

REAL HANS. You can go.

FALSE HANS. Potz-tausend! Don't be in a hurry. We mustn't neglect formalities. Here is a statement of the fact that you are Baron von Schlachenstein, and I am Hans Gopp. We will both execute it – here, sign.

REAL HANS. There you are. (*Signs.*) Hans Gopp.

FALSE HANS. And there you are. (*Signs.*) Otto von Schlachenstein.

REAL HANS. Good morning.

FALSE HANS. Eh?

REAL HANS. You can go –

FALSE HANS. Oh, no; I've not done with you yet. By our agreement with the Gentlemen in Black, Hans Gopp has to occupy the Baron's castle till the month is up, and the Baron has to occupy Hans's hut, until the month is up. But you are the Baron under this deed. So if you please you will be good enough to get out of this castle without further delay.

REAL HANS. But now, by your own showing I am the Baron's soul in the Baron's body –

FALSE HANS. No, you are the rightful Baron's soul in Hans Gopp's body. I am Hans Gopp's soul in the Baron's body. Potz-tausend, you are very dull!

REAL HANS. Well, let me see – this is so confusing –

FALSE HANS. Look here, I'll make it plain – here is Hans Gopp's body – here is Hans Gopp's soul – here is the Baron's body – here is the Baron's soul. Well, Hans' body goes into the Baron's soul – the Baron's soul into Hans' body. (*Very rapidly*). But Hans' body turns out to be the Baron's body, and the Baron's soul turns out to be Hans' soul; so, as the Baron's soul has to go into Hans' body and Hans' soul into the Baron's body, and as the Baron turns out to be Hans and Hans turns out to be the Baron, remembering that the Baron and Hans on the one side must be kept distinct from the Baron's soul and Hans' soul on the other, it follows that you are Hans' soul in the Baron's body – I am the Baron's soul in Hans' body; the Baron is Hans – Hans is the Baron – you are me – I am you – yours is mine – mine is yours – and out of this you go as soon as you conveniently can. I hope that's clear.

REAL HANS (*puzzled*). Perfectly.

FALSE HANS. It's as clear as day.

REAL HANS. It's as clear as some days – in November.

FALSE HANS. Very good; then for another month – that is to say, till the thirteenth of September – you are the Baron's soul in Hans' body.

Enter GENTLEMAN IN BLACK, L. U. E.

REAL HANS. My dear sir, your head's clearer than mine – if you can tell me, certainly and once for all, who I am and whose body I am occupying you'll remove a great weight of doubt from my mind. As long as I'm occupying this beast of a body –

FALSE HANS (*angrily*). It's a very nice body.

REAL HANS. It ain't!

FALSE HANS. It is! (*Threatening him with dagger.*)

REAL HANS (*frightened*). Well, now I look at it again it *is* a nice body – well as long as I'm occupying this very agreeable body, it doesn't much matter to me whether I'm Hans or the Baron, so that it's clearly understood which of the two I really am. (*to GENTLEMAN.*) Here, perhaps you can tell me.

GENTLE. Oh, it has nothing to do with me – settle it among yourselves – only whatever you decide upon you must stick to.

FALSE HANS. This man is a pretender.

REAL HANS. There's no doubt that I am a pretender, but whom I'm pretending to be, is entirely beyond my comprehension. I've been chopped and changed about so often in the course of the last week that I've lost the thread of the story, and I'll be damned if I know who I am!

GENTLE. By this paper you admit that you are the Baron's soul occupying Hans Gopp's body – he admits that he is Hans Gopp's soul in the Baron's body.

FALSE HANS. Exactly.

REAL HANS. Very good; then that's understood – that's settled. I'm a peasant till the thirteenth September, then I shall be a Baron.

FALSE HANS (*to GENTLEMAN*). Before the fortnight is up, I shall destroy the paper, and prove by the fact that I am twenty years older than he is, its utterly impossible we could have been changed at birth – I shall return to my rank, and he will be punished as an impostor. Good joke, isn't it?

GENTLE. Excellent.

Enter BERTHA and GRUMPPF, running, L. U. E.

QUINETTE.

BERTHA. Baron, here is news alarming!
 GRUMPPF. Comes your wife, so fair and charming!
 BERTHA. Mandate from the empress bearing!
 GRUMPPF. Peremptorily declaring –
 BERTHA. Since in marriage you have sought her –
 You must take her and support her!

BARON. I'm perpetually harried!
 If the baroness has married,
 Otto, Lord of Schlachenstein.
 That is no affair of mine!

HANS. But you seem to be forgetting –
 Or the secret out you're letting,
 You're the Lord of Schlachenstein!
 What is this the lady plans?
 Claim the baron, yes, and Hans!
 This indeed appears to be
 Quite a case of bigamy!

Enter the BARONESS, L. U. E.

BARONESS. Otto! I have triumphed, and I am yours!

REAL HANS. Yes, but stop a minute, I'm not what I was! I'm the baron now!

BARONESS. Exactly – I always said you were! Take me to your arms – it is the will of our illustrious Emperor.

REAL HANS. I can't! go away! You don't understand. Now what am I to do here?

GENTLE. You've admitted that you are the Baron Otto von Schlachenstein – this is the Baroness – here is the Emperor's decree – you can't help yourself! She's yours.

REAL HANS. Very good. I occupy the left wing of the chateau; prepare the right wing for the baroness – and let all communication between the two wings be carefully walled up!

BARONESS. Baron!

Enter TINTELSTEIN and all the Villagers, L. U. E.

TINTEL. My lord, it is my duty to read to you an edict given under the hand of the emperor – an edict of the most vital importance. Ahem! (*Reads.*) “Most illustrious and ever to be honoured madam!” No, that's not it – oh, here it is. “Proclamation! Whereas certain

irregularities have crept into the calendar in the course of the last 1584 years, and whereas these irregularities (although in themselves unimportant), constitute in the aggregate a considerable space of time, be it enacted, and it is hereby enacted, that from this date forward, thirteen days be omitted from the calendar, whereby this third day of September under the Old Style becomes the thirteenth day of September under the New Style! Given under our hand this thirteenth day of September, 1584. God save the Emperor!”

[The Gentleman in Black burns flash paper, and makes passes.]

GENTLE. Otto's body, grim and droll,
Shrine your own unholy soul!
Otto's soul, of moral shoddy,
Get out of young Hans' body!

[Hans and Otto resume their original manner.]

BARON. Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! This won't do! The month isn't up yet!

HANS. He, he, he! I say, Otto, ain't you glad to get back again?

BARON. Potz-tausend! he calls me Otto! I am the Baron Otto von Schlachenstein. Remember that when you presume to address me!

HANS. Oh, no – by your own showing, and under this deed, *I* am the Baron. You know you changed me when we were three weeks old! You gnashed your toothless gums with envy, and swore to be avenged; and then, overwhelmed with remorse, you confessed all, and restored me to my estate and dignity. *(Chuckles.)*

BARON. But we were to change for a month, and only a fortnight has elapsed.

GENTLE. Not for a month – it was from the thirteenth August to the thirteenth of September, 1584.

BARON. Well, that is a month, isn't it?

GENTLE. Not in this case. Thirteen days have been omitted from the calendar, and your month is only a fortnight. I'm sorry for you, baron, but Hans takes your title and estate – you take his farm.

BARON. Potz-tausend himmel Sackerment noch emmal! I've been done! Why I haven't anything in the world!

BARONESS. Nothing, Baron? Do you call me nothing? Do you call this interesting family, nothing?

BARON. Get out – I don't want you!

TINTEL. Oh, but this won't do, you know! Here is the decree given under the sign manual of the Emperor; there's no getting over that! She's your wife, and you must support her.

BARON. Potz-tausend! but this is hard! Baroness, come to my arms! *(To the others.)* The communication need not be walled up.

BERTHA *(to Hans)*. Why, Hans, how you've changed again! Why, you're just the same as you used to be.

HANS. Bertha, I'm a baron, now, and you shall be a baroness. I was changed at birth by that big, bad man, but he won't change me at birth any more, if I know it!

BERTHA. But what does it all mean?

HANS. Why it means that I'm mad with happiness at the narrow escape you've had of being married to that unmitigated villain.

BERTHA. Married to *him*, Hans? Why such an idea never entered my head!

HANS. Oh, Bertha, how can you stand there, and tell such – (*recollecting*) – No, no – of course not – it was to me you were going to be married, wasn't it?

BERTHA. Of course!

HANS. And to me you shall be married. Friends, I invite you all – except *you* – (*to Real Hans*) – to my wedding, and you may give us three cheers, if you like, in honour of the approaching nuptials.

FINALE.

We will set the bells a-ringing,
Flowers, too, we will be bringing,
Marriage songs so gaily singing,
Keep it as a holiday!