

the audience.)

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

ERASMUS MONTANUS OR RASMUS BERG

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS

1731

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JEPPE BERG, a well-to-do peasant.

NILLE, his wife.

RASMUS BERG, called ERASMUS MONTANUS, their elder son a student at  
the University.

JACOB, the younger son.

JERONIMUS, a wealthy freeholder.

MAGDELONE, his wife.

LISBED, their daughter, betrothed to Rasmus.

PEER, the deacon.

JESPER, the bailiff.

A Lieutenant.

NIELS, the corporal.

ACTS I, IV, AND V

SCENE: A milage street, showing Jeppe's house.

ACTS II AND III A room in Jeppe's house.

ACT I

SCENE I

(A village street showing Jeppe's house. Jeppe, with a letter in his hand.)

JEPPE. It is a shame that the deacon is not in town, for there's so much Latin in my son's letter that I can't understand. Tears come to my eyes when I think that a poor peasant's son has got so much book-learning, especially as we aren't tenants of the university. I have heard from people who know about learning that he can dispute with any clergyman alive. Oh, if only my wife and I could have the joy of hearing him preach on the hill, before we die, we shouldn't grudge all the money we have spent on him! I can see that Peer the deacon doesn't much relish the idea of my son's coming. I believe that he is afraid of Rasmus Berg. It is a terrible thing about these scholarly people. They are so jealous of each other, and no one of them can endure the thought that another is as learned as he. The good man preaches fine sermons here in the village and can talk about envy so that the tears come to my eyes; but it seems to me that he is n't entirely free from that fault himself. I can't understand why it should be so. If any one said that a neighbor of mine understood farming better than I, should I take that to heart? Should I hate my neighbor for that? No, indeed, Jeppe Berg would never do such a thing. But if here is n't Peer the deacon!

SCENE 2

(Enter Peer the Deacon.)

JEPPE. Welcome home again, Peer.

PEER. Thank you, Jeppe Berg.

JEPPE. Oh, my dear Peer, I wish you could explain to me some Latin in my son's last letter.

PEER. That's nothing! Do you think I don't understand Latin as well as your son? I am an old Academicus, I'd have you know, Jeppe Berg.

JEPPE. I know it,--I just wondered if you understood the new Latin, for that language must change, just as the language of Sjaelland has done. In my youth the people here on the hill didn't talk the way they do now; what they now call a "lackey" used to be called a "boy;" what they now call a "mysterious" used to be called a "whore;" a "mademoiselle," a "house-maid;" a "musician," a "fiddler;" and a "secretary," a "clerk." So I suppose Latin may have changed, too, since you were in Copenhagen. Will you please explain

that? (Pointing to a line in the letter.) I can read the letters, but I don't get the meaning.

PEER. Your son writes that he is now studying his Logicam, Rhetoricam, and Metaphysicam.

JEPPE. What does Logicam mean?

PEER. That's his pulpit.

JEPPE. I'm glad of that. I wish he could become a pastor!

PEER. But a deacon first.

JEPPE. What is the second subject?

PEER. That is Rhetorica, which in Danish means the Ritual. The third subject must be written wrong, or else it must be in French, because if it were Latin, I could read it easily. I am able, Jeppe Berg, to recite the whole Aurora: ala, that's a wing; ancilla, a girl; barba, a beard; coena, a chamber-pot; cerevisia, ale; campana, a bell; cella, a cellar; lagena, a bottle; lana, a wolf; ancilla, a girl; janua, a door; cerevisia, butter;--

JEPPE. You must have the devil's own memory, Peer!

PEER. Yes, I never thought I should have to stay in a poverty-stricken deacon's-living so long. I could have been something else years ago, if I had been willing to tie myself to a girl. But I prefer to help myself rather than have people say of me that I got a living through my wife.

JEPPE. But, my dear Peer, here is more Latin that I can't understand. Look at this line.

PEER. Die Veneris Hafnia domum profecturus sum. That's rather high-flown, but I understand it perfectly, though any other man might cudgel his brains over it. That means in Danish: There is come profecto a lot of Russes to Copenhagen.

JEPPE. What are the Russians doing here again?

PEER. These aren't Muscovites, Jeppe Berg, but young students, who are called "Russes."

JEPPE. Oh, I see. I suppose there is a great celebration on the days when the boys get their salt and bread and become students.

PEER. When do you expect him home?

JEPPE. To-day or to-morrow. Wait a bit, my dear Peer; I will run and tell Nille to bring us out a drink of ale.

PEER. I'd rather have a glass of brandy--it's early in the day to drink ale. [Exit Jeppe into house.]

SCENE 3

PEER. To tell the truth, I am not very anxious to have Rasmus Berg come home. Not that I am afraid of his learning, for I was an old student when he was still at school, getting beatings--saving your presence--on his rump. They were different fellows who graduated in my time from what they are now. I graduated from Slagelse School with Peer Monsen, Rasmus Jespersen, Christen Klim, Mads Hansen,--whom we used to call Mads Pancake in school,--Poul Iversen,--whom we called Poul Barlycorn,--all boys with bone in their skulls and beards on their chins, able to argue on any subject that might come up. I'm only a deacon, but I'm content so long as I get my daily bread and understand my office. I have made the income a deal bigger, and get more than any of my predecessors did; so my successors won't curse me in my grave. People think that there are no fine points for a deacon to know, but I can tell you a deacon's position is a hard one if you want to keep it on such a footing that it will support a man. Before my time people here in the village thought one funeral-song as good as another, but I have arranged things so that I can say to a peasant, "Which hymn will you have? This one costs so much and this one so much;" and when it comes to scattering earth on the body, "Will you have fine sand or just common or garden dirt?" Then there are various other touches that my predecessor, Deacon Christoffer, had no idea of; but he was uneducated. I can't understand how the fellow ever came to be a deacon; yet deacon he was, all the same. I tell you, Latin helps a man a great deal in every sort of business. I wouldn't give up the Latin I know for a hundred rix-dollars. It has been worth more than a hundred rix-dollars to me in my business; yes, that and a hundred more.

SCENE 4

Enter Nille and Jeppe.

NILLE (offering the deacon a glass of brandy). Your health, Peer!

PEER. Thank you, mother. I never drink brandy unless I have a stomach-ache, but I have a bad stomach most of the time.

NILLE. Do you know, Peer, my son is coming home to-day or to-morrow! You'll find him a man you can talk to, for the boy's not tongue-tied, from all I hear.

PEER. Yes, I suppose he can talk a lot of Cloister-Latin.

NILLE. Cloister-Latin? That must be the best Latin, just as cloister-linen is the best linen.

PEER. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

JEPPE. What are you laughing at, Peer?

PEER. At nothing at all, Jeppe Berg. Just another drop! Your health, mother! It's true, as you say: cloister-linen is good linen, but--

NILLE. If that linen isn't made in a cloister, why is it called cloister-linen?

PEER. Yes, that's right enough, ha, ha, ha! But won't you give me a bite to eat with my brandy?

NILLE. Here's a little bread and cheese already cut, if you will eat it. (Gets a plate from the house.)

PEER. Thank you, mother. Do you know what bread is in Latin?

NILLE. No, indeed, I don't.

PEER (eating and talking at the same time). It's called panis; genitive, pani; dative, pano; vocative, panus; ablative, pano.

JEPPE. Goodness, Peer! That language is long-winded. What is coarse bread in Latin?

PEER. That's panis gravis; and fine bread is panis finis.

JEPPE. Why, that's half Danish!

PEER. True. There are many Latin words that were originally Danish. I'll tell you why: there was once an old rector at the school in Copenhagen, called Saxo Grammatica, who improved Latin in this country, and wrote a Latin grammar, and that's why he was called Saxo Grammatica. This same Saxo greatly enriched the Latin language with Danish words, for in his day Latin was so poor that a man couldn't write one sentence which people could understand.

JEPPE. But what does that word "Grammatica" mean?

PEER. The same as "Donat." When it is bound in a Turkish cover it is called "Donat," but when it's in white parchment it's called "Grammatica," and declined just like ala.

NILLE. I never shall see how people can keep so much in their head. My head swims just from hearing them talk about it.

JEPPE. That's why learned folk usually aren't quite right in their heads.

NILLE. What nonsense! Do you think our son Rasmus Berg isn't quite right?

JEPPE. It only seems a little queer, mother, that he should write a Latin letter to me.

PEER. Jeppe's right there, certainly. That was a little foolish. It is just as if I were to talk Greek to the bailiff, to show him that I understood the language.

JEPPE. Do you know Greek, Peer?

PEER. Why, twenty years ago I could repeat the whole Litany in Greek, standing on one foot. I still remember that the last word was "Amen."

JEPPE. Oh, Peer, it will be splendid, when my son comes back, to get you two together!

PEER. If he wants to dispute with me, he will find that I can hold my own; and if he wants to have a singing match with me, he will get the worst of it. I once had a singing contest with ten deacons and beat every one of them, for I outsang them in the Credo, all ten of them. Ten years ago I was offered the position of choir-master in Our Lady's School, but I didn't want it. Why should I take it, Jeppe? Why should I leave my parish, which loves and honors me, and which I love and honor in return? I live in a place where I earn my daily bread, and where I am respected by every one. The governor himself never comes here but he sends for me at once to pass the time with him and sing for him. Last year on this occasion he gave me two marks for singing "Ut, re, mi, fa, sol." He swore that he took more pleasure in that than in the best vocal music he had heard in Copenhagen. If you give me another glass of brandy, Jeppe, I will sing the same thing for you.

JEPPE. Do, please. Pour another glass of brandy, Nille.

[Exit Nille.]

PEER. I don't sing for every one, but you are my good friend, Jeppe, whom I serve with pleasure. (He sings.) Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, ut; now down--ut, si, la, sol, fa, mi, re, ut. (Reenter Nille with brandy. He drinks.) Now you shall hear how high I can go. Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, ut, re--

JEPPE. Heavens! That last was fine. Our little pigs can't go any higher with a squeak.

PEER. Now I will sing rapidly: Ut, re, mi, re--No! that wasn't right. Ut, re, mi, do, re, mi, ut--No, that went wrong, too. It's cursed hard, Jeppe, to sing so fast. But there comes Monsieur Jeronimus.

#### SCENE 5

(Enter Jeronimus, Magdelone, and Lisbed.)

JERONIMUS. Good morning, kinsman! Have you any news from your son?

JEPPE. Yes; he is coming to-day or to-morrow.

LISBED. Oh, is it possible? Then my dream has come true.

JERONIMUS. What did you dream?

LISBED. I dreamed that I slept with him last night.

MAGEDELONE. There is something in dreams, I tell you. Dreams are not to be despised.

JERONIMUS. That's true enough, but if you girls didn't think so much about the menfolk in the daytime, you wouldn't have so many dreams about them at night. I suppose you used to dream just as much about me in the days when we were engaged, Magdelone?

MAGEDELONE. I did, indeed, but upon my word I haven't dreamed about

one's.

JERONIMUS. Yes, yes, you may both be right. Let us go home, children. Good-bye, Jeppe! I happened to be passing, and I thought I might as well talk to you on the way.

LISBED. Be sure to let me know as soon as he comes!

[Exeunt Jeronimus, Magdelone, and Lisbed.]

## SCENE 6

(Enter Jacob.)

JEPPE. What do you want, Jacob?

JACOB. Father! Have you heard the news? Rasmus Berg is back.

JEPPE. Heavens, is it possible! How does he look?

JACOB. Oh, he looks mighty learned. Rasmus Nielsen, who drove him, swears that he did nothing all the way but dispute with himself in Greek and Elamite; and sometimes with so much zeal that he struck Rasmus Nielsen in the back of the neck three or four times, with his clenched fist, shouting all the while, "Probe the Major! Probe the Major!" I suppose he must have had a dispute with a major before he started out. Part of the way he sat still and stared at the moon and the stars with such a rapt expression that he fell off the wagon three times and nearly broke his neck from sheer learning. Rasmus Nielsen laughed at that, and said to himself, "Rasmus Berg may be a wise man in the heavens, but he is a fool on earth."

JEPPE. Let us go and meet him. Come with us, dear Peer. It may be that he has forgotten his Danish and won't be able to talk anything but Latin. In that case you can be interpreter.

PEER (aside). Not if I know it! (Aloud.) I have other things to attend to.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

[A room in Jeppe's house. Montanus (whose stockings are falling down around his ankles).]

MONTANUS. I have been away from Copenhagen only a day, and I miss it already. If I didn't have my good books with me, I couldn't exist in the country. *Studia secundas res ornant, adversis solatium praebent.* I feel as if I had lost something, after going three days without a disputation. I don't know whether there are any learned folk in the village, but if there are, I shall set them to work, for I can't live without disputation. I can't talk much to my poor parents, for they are simple folk and know hardly anything beyond their

catechism; so I can't find much comfort in their conversation. The deacon and the schoolmaster are said to have studied, but I don't know how much that has amounted to; still, I shall see what they are good for. My parents were astonished to see me so early, for they had not expected me to travel by night from Copenhagen. (He strikes a match, lights his pipe, and puts the bowl of his pipe through a hole he has made in his hat.) That's what they call smoking studentikos--it's a pretty good invention for any one who wants to write and smoke at the same time. (Sits down and begins to read.)

SCENE 2

(Enter Jacob. He kisses his own hand and extends it to his brother.)

JACOB. Welcome home again, my Latin brother!

MONTANUS. I am glad to see you, Jacob. But as for being your brother, that was well enough in the old days, but it will hardly do any more.

JACOB. How so? Aren't you my brother?

MONTANUS. Of course I don't deny, you rogue, that I am your brother by birth, but you must realize that you are still a peasant boy, whereas I am a Bachelor of Philosophy. But listen, Jacob,--how are my sweetheart and her father?

JACOB. Very well. They were here a while ago and asked how soon brother would be at home.

MONTANUS. Brother again! It's not from mere pride that I object, Jacob, but it simply won't do.

JACOB. Then what shall I call you, brother?

MONTANUS. You must call me "Monsieur Montanus," for that is what I am called in Copenhagen.

JACOB. If I could only keep it in my head. Was it "Monsieur Dromedarius"?

MONTANUS. Can't you hear? I say "Monsieur Montanus."

JACOB. Mossur Montanus, Mossur Montanus.

MONTANUS. That's right. "Montanus" in Latin is the same as "Berg" in Danish.

JACOB. Then can't I be called "Jacob Montanus"?

MONTANUS. When you have been to school as long as I have and passed your examinations, then you can give yourself a Latin name, too; but as long as you are a peasant boy, you must be satisfied with plain Jacob Berg. By the way, have you noticed that my sweetheart has been longing for me?

JACOB. Indeed she has. She has been very impatient at your staying



away so long, brother.

MONTANUS. There you go again, yokel!

JACOB. I meant to say: Mossur's sweetheart has been impatient because brother stayed away so long.

MONTANUS. Well, I'm here now, Jacob, and all for her sake; but I shall not stay very long, for as soon as we've had the wedding I shall take her to Copenhagen with me.

JACOB. Won't Mossur take me along?

MONTANUS. What would you do there?

JACOB. I should like to look around in the world a bit.

MONTANUS. I wish you were six or seven years younger, so that I could put you into a Latin school, and then you could be a college man, too.

JABOC. No, that wouldn't do.

MONTANUS. Why not?

JABOC. If that happened, our parents would have to go begging.

MONTANUS. Hear how the fellow talks!

JACOB. Oh, I am full of ideas. If I had studied, I should have been the devil of a rogue.

MONTANUS. I have been told that you had a good head. But what else should you like to do in Copenhagen?

JACOB. I should like to see the Round Tower and the cloister where they make the linen.

MONTANUS. Ha, ha, ha! They're busy with other things besides linen-making in the cloister. But tell me, has my future father-in-law as much money as they say?

JACOB. He surely has. He is a rich old man, and owns nearly a third of the village.

MONTANUS. Have you heard whether he intends to give his daughter a dowry?

JACOB. Oh, I think he will give her a good one, especially if he once hears Mossur preach here in the village.

MONTANUS. That will never happen. I should lower myself too much by preaching here in the country. Besides, I am interested only in disputation.

JACOB. I thought it was better to be able to preach.

MONTANUS. Do you know what disputation really means?

JACOB. Of course! I dispute every day here at home with the maids,

but I don't gain anything by it.

MONTANUS. Oh, we have plenty of that kind of disputation.

JACOB. What is it, then, that Mossur disputes about?

MONTANUS. I dispute about weighty and learned matters. For example: whether angels were created before men; whether the earth is round or oval; about the moon, sun, and stars, their size and distance from the earth; and other things of a like nature.

JACOB. That's not the sort of thing I dispute about, for that's not the sort of thing that concerns me. If only I can get the servants to work, they can say the world is eight-cornered, for all I care.

MONTANUS. Oh, animal brutum!--Listen, Jacob, do you suppose any one has let my sweetheart know that I have come home?

JACOB. I don't believe so.

MONTANUS. Then you had better run over to Master Jeronimus's and inform him of the event.

JACOB. Yes, I can do that, but shall I not tell Lisbed first?

MONTANUS. Lisbed? Who is that?

JACOB. Don't you know, brother, that your betrothed's name is Lisbed?

MONTANUS. Have you forgotten all I have just taught you, you rascal?

JACOB. You may call me "rascal" as much as you like, but I'm your brother just the same.

MONTANUS. If you don't shut up, I'll profecto hit you over the head with this book.

JACOB. It wouldn't be proper to throw the Bible at people.

MONTANUS. This is no Bible.

JACOB. Marry, I know a Bible when I see one. That book is big enough to be the Bible. I can see that it's not a Gospel Book, nor a Catechism. But whatever it is, it's a bad thing to throw books at your brother.

MONTANUS. Shut up, rascal!

JACOB. I may be a rascal, but I earn with my hands the money for my parents that you spend.

MONTANUS. If you don't shut up, I'll maim you. (Throws the book at him.)

JACOB. Ow, ow, ow!

SCENE 3

(Enter Jeppe and Nille.)

JEPPE. What is all this noise?

JACOB. Oh, my brother Rasmus is beating me.

NILLE. What does this mean? He wouldn't hit you without good reason.

MONTANUS. No, mother, that is so. He comes here and bandies words with me as though he were my equal.

NILLE. What a devil's own rogue! Don't you know enough to respect such a learned man? Don't you know that he is an honor to our whole family? My dear and respected son, you mustn't pay any attention to him, he is an ignorant lout.

MONTANUS. I sit here speculating about important questions, and this importunissimus and audacissimus juvenis comes and hinders me. It is no child's play to have to deal with these transcendentalibus. I wouldn't have had it happen for two marks.

JEPPE. Oh, don't be angry, my dear son! This shall never happen again. I am so much afraid that my honored son has allowed himself to get over-excited. Learned folk can't stand many shocks. I know that Peer the deacon got excited once and didn't recover for three days.

MONTANUS. Peer the deacon! Is he learned?

JEPPE. I should say he was! As far back as I can remember, we have never had a deacon here in the village who could sing as well as he can.

MONTANUS. For all that, he may have no learning at all.

JEPPE. He preaches beautifully, too.

MONTANUS. For all that, too, he might have no learning at all.

NILLE. Oh, honored son! How can a man lack learning if he preaches well?

MONTANUS. Surely, mother! All the ignorant folk preach well, for inasmuch as they can't compose anything out of their own heads, they use borrowed sermons, and learn good men's compositions by heart, though sometimes they don't understand them themselves. A learned man, on the other hand, won't use such methods; he composes out of his own head. Believe me, it is a common mistake in this country to judge a student's learning altogether too much from his sermons. But let the fellow dispute as I do--there's the touchstone of learning. If any one says this table is a candlestick, I will justify the statement. If any one says that meat or bread is straw, I will justify that, too; that has been done many a time. Listen, father! Will you admit that the man who drinks well is blessed?

JEPPE. I think rather that he is accursed, for a man can drink himself out of both reason and money.

MONTANUS. I will prove that he is blessed. Quicumque bene bibit, bene dormit. But, no,--you don't understand Latin; I must say it in Danish. Whoever drinks well, sleeps well. Isn't that so?

JEPPE. That's true enough, for when I am half-drunk I sleep like a horse.

MONTANUS. He who sleeps well does not sin. Isn't that true, too?

JEPPE. True, too; so long as a man's asleep he doesn't sin.

MONTANUS. He who does not sin is blessed.

JEPPE. That is also true.

MONTANUS. Ergo: he who drinks well is blessed.--Little mother, I will turn you into a stone.

NILLE. Oh, nonsense! That is more than even learning can do.

MONTANUS. You shall hear whether it is or not. A stone cannot fly.

NILLE. No, indeed it can't, unless it is thrown.

MONTANUS. You cannot fly.

NILLE. That is true, too.

MONTANUS. Ergo: little mother is a stone. (Nille cries.) Why are you crying, little mother?

NILLE. Oh! I am so much afraid that I shall turn into a stone. My legs already begin to feel cold.

MONTANUS. Don't worry, little mother. I will immediately turn you into a human being again. A stone neither thinks nor talks.

NILLE. That is so. I don't know whether it can think or not, but it surely cannot talk.

MONTANUS. Little mother can talk.

NILLE. Yes, thank God, I talk as well as a poor peasant woman can!

MONTANUS. Good! Ergo: little mother is no stone.

NILLE. Ah! That did me good! Now I am beginning to feel like myself again. Faith, it must take strong heads to study. I don't see how your brains can stand it.--Jacob, after this you shall wait on your brother; you have nothing else to do. If your parents see that you annoy him, you shall get as many blows as your body can stand.

MONTANUS. Little mother, I should like very much to break him of the habit of calling me "brother." It is not decent for a peasant boy to call a learned man "brother." I should like to have him call me "Monsieur."

JEPPE. Do you hear that, Jacob? When you speak to your brother after this, you are to call him Mossur.

MONTANUS. I should like to have the deacon invited here to-day, so that I can see what he is good for.

JEPPE. Yes, surely, it shall be done.

MONTANUS. In the mean time I will go to visit my sweetheart.

NILLE. But I am afraid it is going to rain. Jacob can carry your cloak for you.

MONTANUS. Jacob.

JACOB. Yes, Mossur.

MONTANUS. Walk behind me and carry my cloak.

[Exit Montanus followed by Jacob bearing the cloak.]

#### SCENE 4

JEPPE. Haven't we cause to be pleased with a son like that, Nille?

NILLE. Yes, indeed, not a penny has been wasted on him.

JEPPE. We shall hear to-day what the deacon is good for. But I am afraid that he won't come if he hears that Rasmus Berg is here,--there is no need of our letting him know that. We will write the bailiff, too; he is glad enough to come, for he likes our ale.

NILLE. It is very dangerous, husband, to treat the bailiff; a man like that mustn't find out how our affairs stand.

JEPPE. He is welcome to know. Every man here in the village is aware that we are well-to-do folks. As long as we pay our taxes and land rent, the bailiff can't touch a hair of our head.

NILLE. Oh, dear husband, I wonder if it is too late to let our Jacob get an education. Just think, if he could be a learned lad like his brother, what a joy it would be for his old parents!

JEPPE. No, wife, one is enough; we must have one at home who can give us a hand and do our work.

NILLE. Oh, at such work as that a man cannot do more than live from hand to mouth. Rasmus Berg, who is a scholar, can do our family more good, with his brain, in an hour than the other in a year.

JEPPE. That makes no difference, little mother; our fields must be tilled and our crops looked after. We can't possibly get along without Jacob. Look, here he is now, coming back again!

#### SCENE 5

Enter Jacob.

JACOB. Ha! ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! My brother may be a very learned man, but he is a great simpleton for all that.

NILLE. You wicked rascal! Do you call your brother a simpleton?

JACOB. I really don't know what I ought to call such a thing, little mother. It rained until it poured, and yet he let me walk along behind him with the cloak on my arm.

JEPPE. Couldn't you have been civil enough to have said, "Mossur, it is raining. Won't you put on your cloak?"

JACOB. It seems to me, little father, it would have been very strange for me to say to the person whose parents had spent so much money upon him to teach him wisdom and cleverness, when so much rain was falling on him that he was wet to his shirt, "It is raining, sir; won't you put on your cloak?" He had no need of my warning; the rain gave him warning enough.

JEPPE. Did you walk the whole way, then, with the cloak on your arm?

JACOB. Marry, I did not; I wrapped myself up comfortably in the cloak; so my clothes are perfectly dry. I understand that sort of thing better than he, though I've not spent so much money learning wisdom. I grasped it at once, although I don't know one Latin letter from another.

JEPPE. Your brother was plunged in thought, as deeply learned folk usually are.

JACOB. Ha, ha! the devil split such learning!

JEPPE. Shut up, you rogue, or shame on your mouth! What does it matter if your brother is absent-minded about such things as that, when in so many other matters he displays his wisdom and the fruit of his studies?

JACOB. Fruit of his studies! I shall tell you what happened next on our trip. When we came to Jeronimus's gate, he went right to the side where the watch-dog stood, and he would have had his learned legs well caulked if I had not dragged him to the other side; for watch-dogs are no respecters of persons: they measure all strangers with the same stick, and bite at random whatever legs they get hold of, whether Greek or Latin. When he entered the court, Mossur Rasmus Berg absent-mindedly went into the stable and shouted, "Hey, is Jeronimus at home?" But the cows all turned their tails to him and none of them would answer a word. I am certain that if any of them could have talked, they would have said, "What a confounded lunk-head that lad must be!"

NILLE. Oh, my dear husband, can you stand hearing him use such language?

JEPPE. Jacob, you will get into trouble if you talk like that any more.

JACOB. Little father ought rather to thank me, for I set him to rights and took him out of the stable toward the house. Just think what might happen to such a lad if he should go on a long journey

alone; for I'm sure that if I had not been with him, he would have been standing in the stable yet, gazing at the cows' tails, from sheer learning.

JEPPE. A plague on your impudent mouth!

[Jacob runs off, Jeppe after him.]

NILLE. The confounded rogue!--I have sent word to the bailiff and the deacon, so that my son can have some one to dispute with when he comes back.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Same as Act II.

NILLE (alone). My son Montanus is gone a long time. I wish he would come home before the bailiff goes, for he wants very much to talk with him, and is eager to ask him about several things which--But there, I see him coming.

SCENE 2

Enter Montanus.

NILLE. Welcome home, my dear son. Our kind friend Jeronimus was no doubt very glad to see our honored son in good health after so long an absence.

MONTANUS. I have spoken neither to Jeronimus nor to his daughter, on account of that fellow with whom I got into a dispute.

NILLE. What kind of a man was he? Perhaps it was the schoolmaster.

MONTANUS. No, it was a stranger, who is going away to-day. I know him, although I have not associated with him in Copenhagen. I am annoyed almost to death by these people who imagine they have absorbed all wisdom, and still are idiots. I'll tell you, mother, how it is: This fellow has been *ordinarius opponens* once or twice; therein lies his sole achievement. But how did he perform his *Partes*? *Misere et haesitanter absque methodo*. Once when *Praeses* wished to distinguish *inter rem et modum rei*, he asked, *Quid hoc est?*--Wretch, you should have known that *antequam in arenam descendis*. *Quid hoc est? Quae bruta!* A fellow who ignores the *distinctiones cardinales*, and then wants to dispute *publice!*

NILLE. Oh, my respected son, you mustn't take such things as that to heart. I can see from what you say that he must be a fool.

MONTANUS. An *ignoramus*.

NILLE. Nothing could be plainer.

MONTANUS. An idiot.

NILLE. I can't see that he is anything else.

MONTANUS. Et quidem plane hospes in philosophia. Let the dog turn away from what he committed in the presence of so many worthy people.

NILLE. Is that what he did? By that you may know a swine.

MONTANUS. No, little mother, he did something worse than that; he openly confounded materiam cum forma.

NILLE. Plague take him!

MONTANUS. Does the fellow imagine that he can dispute?

NILLE. The devil he can!

MONTANUS. Not to mention the mistake he made in his Proemio, when he said "Lectissimi et doctissimi auditores."

NILLE. What a fool he must be!

MONTANUS. For putting "lectissimi" in front of "doctissimi," when "lectissimi" is a predicate, one can give a Deposituro.

NILLE. But didn't you get a chance to talk with Jeronimus, my son?

MONTANUS. No, just as I was about to go into the house, I saw the fellow passing by the gate, and as we knew each other, I went out to speak to him, whereupon we immediately began to talk of learned matters, and finally to dispute, so that I had to postpone my visit.

NILLE. I am very much afraid that Monsieur Jeronimus will be offended when he hears that my son has been in his yard, but went away without talking with him.

MONTANUS. Well, I can't help that. When any one attacks philosophy, he attacks my honor. I am fond of Mademoiselle Lisbed, but my Metaphysica and my Logica have priority.

NILLE. Oh, my dear son, what did I hear? Are you engaged to two other girls in Copenhagen? That will be a bad business in the matrimonial courts.

MONTANUS. You don't understand me; I didn't mean it in that way. They are not two girls, but two sciences.

NILLE. Oh, that is another matter. But here comes the bailiff. Don't be angry any more.

MONTANUS. I can't be angry with him, for he is a simple, ignorant man, with whom I cannot get into a dispute.

SCENE 3



Enter Jeppe and Jesper the Bailiff.

JEPPE. Serviteur, Monsieur. I congratulate you on your arrival.

MONTANUS. I thank you, Mr. Bailiff.

JESPER. I am glad that we have such a learned man here in the village. It must have cost you many a racking of the brain to have advanced so far. I congratulate you, too, Jeppe Berg, upon your son. Now, happiness has come to you in your old age.

JEPPE. Yes, that is true.

JESPER. But listen, my dear Monsieur Rasmus, I should like to ask you something.

MONTANUS. My name is Montanus.

JESPER (aside to Jeppe). Montanus? is that the Latin for Rasmus?

JEPPE. Yes, it must be.

JESPER. Listen, my dear Monsieur Montanus Berg. I have heard that learned folk have such extraordinary ideas. Is it true that people in Copenhagen think the earth is round? Here on the hill no one believes it; for how can that be, when the earth looks perfectly flat?

MONTANUS. That is because the earth is so large that one cannot notice its roundness.

JESPER. Yes, it is true, the earth is large; it is almost a half of the universe. But listen, Monsieur, how many stars will it take to make a moon?

MONTANUS. A moon! In comparison to the stars the moon is like Pebling Pond in comparison with all Sjaelland.

JESPER. Ha, ha, ha! Learned folk are never just right in the head. Will you believe it, I have heard people say that the earth moves and the sun stands still. You certainly don't believe that, too, Monsieur?

MONTANUS. No man of sense doubts it any longer.

JESPER. Ha, ha, ha! If the earth should move, surely we should fall and break our necks.

MONTANUS. Can't a ship move with you, without your breaking your neck?

JESPER. Yes, but you say that the earth turns round. Now. if a ship should turn over, wouldn't the people fall off then into the sea?

MONTANUS. No. I will explain it to you more plainly, if you will have the patience.

JESPER. Indeed, I won't hear anything about it. I should have to be

crazy to believe such a thing. Could the earth turn over, and we not fall heels over head to the devil and clear down into the abyss? Ha, ha, ha! But, my Monsieur Berg, how is it that the moon is sometimes so small and sometimes so big?

MONTANUS. If I tell you why, you won't believe me.

JESPER. Oh, please tell me.

MONTANUS. It is because, when the moon has grown large, pieces are clipped off it to make stars of.

JESPER. That certainly is curious. I really didn't know that before. If pieces were not clipped off, it would get too large and grow as broad as all Sjaelland. After all, nature does regulate everything very wisely. But how is it that the moon doesn't give warmth like the sun, although it is just as big?

MONTANUS. That is because the moon is not a light, but made of the same dark material as the earth, and gets its light and brilliance from the sun.

JESPER. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Let us talk of something else. That's stuff and nonsense; a man might go stark mad over it.

#### SCENE 4

(Enter Peer.)

JEPPE. Welcome, Peer. Where good folk are gathered, good folk come. Here, you see, is my son, who has just come back.

PEER. Welcome, Monsieur Rasmus Berg!

MONTANUS. In Copenhagen, I am accustomed to be called "Montanus." I beg you to call me that.

PEER. Yes, surely, it's all the same to me. How are things in Copenhagen? Did many graduate this year?

MONTANUS. About as many as usual.

PEER. Was any one rejected this year?

MONTANUS. Two or three conditionaliter.

PEER. Who is Imprimatur this year?

MONTANUS. What does that mean?

PEER. I mean, who is Imprimatur of the verse and the books which are published?

MONTANUS. Is that supposed to be Latin?

PEER. Yes, in my day it was good Latin.

MONTANUS. If it was good Latin then, it must be so still. But it has never been Latin in the sense in which you use it.

PEER. Yes, it is,--good Latin.

MONTANUS. Is it a nomen or a verbum?

PEER. It is a nomen.

JESPER. That is right, Peer, just speak up for yourself.

MONTANUS. Cuius declinationis is Imprimatur, then?

PEER. All the words that can be mentioned may be referred to eight things, which are: nomen, pronomen, verbum, principium, conjugatio, declinatio, interjectio.

JESPER. Yes, yes, just listen to Peer when he shakes his sleeves! That's right, keep at him!

MONTANUS. He's not answering what I ask him. What is the genitive of "Imprimatur"?

PEER. Nominativus, ala; genitivus, alae; dativus, ala; vocativus, ala; ablativus, ala.

JESPER. Ah, ha, Monsieur Montanus, we have some folk here on the hill, too!

PEER. I should say so. In my time the fellows that graduated were of a different sort from nowadays. They were lads who got shaved twice a week, and could scan all kinds of verse.

MONTANUS. That is certainly a wonderful thing! Boys in the second class can do that to-day. Nowadays there are graduates from the schools in Copenhagen who can write Hebrew and Chaldean verse,

PEER. Then they can't know much Latin.

MONTANUS. Latin! If you went to school now, you couldn't get above the bottom class.

JESPER. Don't say that, Montanus. The deacon is, I know, a thoroughly educated man; that I have heard both the district bailiff and the tax-collector say.

MONTANUS. Perhaps they understand Latin just as little as he

JESPER. But I can hear that he answers splendidly.

MONTANUS. Yes, but he doesn't answer what I ask him--E qua schola dimissus es, mi Domine?

PEER. Adjectivum et substantivum genere, numero et caso conveniunt.

JESPER. He's giving him his bucket full. Good for you, Peer; as sure as you live, we shall drink a half pint of handy together.

MONTANUS. If you knew, Mr. Bailiff, what his answers were, you would laugh until you split. I ask him from what school he graduated and

he answers at random something entirely different.

PEER. Tunc tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet.

JESPER. Yes, yes, that's a good lead for you. Answer that, now.

MONTANUS. I can't answer that; it is mere mincemeat. Let us talk Danish, so the others can understand; then you will be able to hear what kind of a fellow he is. (Nille cries.)

JESPER. What are you crying for, my good woman?

NILLE. Oh, I am so sorry that my son must admit himself beaten in Latin.

JESPER. Oh, it's no wonder, my good woman. Peer is, of course, much older than he; it is no wonder. Let them talk Danish, then, as we all understand it.

PEER. Yes, certainly. I am ready for whichever one of the two he wishes. We shall propose certain questions to each other; for example, who was it that screamed so loud that he could be heard over the whole world?

MONTANUS. I know no one who screams louder than asses and country deacons.

PEER. Nonsense! Can they be heard over the whole world? It was the ass in Noah's ark; for the whole world was in the ark.

JESPER. Ha, ha, ha! That is true, to be sure. Ha, ha, ha! Peer the deacon has a fine head on his shoulders.

PEER. Who was it killed a quarter of the world?

MONTANUS. Bah! I refuse to answer such stupid questions.

PEER. It was Cain, who killed his brother Abel.

MONTANUS. Prove that there were no more than four human beings at the time. of course, much older than he; it is no wonder. Let them talk Danish, then, as we all understand it.

PEER. You prove that there were more.

MONTANUS. That isn't necessary; for affirmante incumbit probatio. Do you understand that?

PEER. Of course I do. Omnia conando docilis solertia vincit. Do you understand that?

MONTANUS. I am a perfect fool to stand here and dispute with a dunce. You wish to dispute, and yet know neither Latin nor Danish; much less do you know what logic is. Let's hear once, quid est logica?

PEER. Post molestam senectutam, post molestam senectutam nos habebat humus.

MONTANUS. Are you trying to make a fool of me, you rascal? (He grabs

him by the hair. The Deacon escapes and shouts, "Dunce, dunce!")  
[Exeunt all except the Bailiff.]

SCENE 5

(Enter Jeronimus.)

JERONIMUS. Your servant, Mr. Bailiff. I am surprised to find you here. I have come to see my future son-in-law, Rasmus Berg.

JESPER. He will be here in a moment. It is a shame that you didn't come a half hour sooner. You would then have heard him and the deacon disputing together.

JERONIMUS. How did it come out?

JESPER. Shame on Peer the deacon! He is worse than I thought. I see well enough that he has forgot nothing either of his Latin or Hebrew.

JERONIMUS. I believe that well enough, for he probably never knew much of either.

JESPER. Don't say that, Monsieur Jeronimus! He has a devilish clever tongue. It is really a joy to hear the man talk Latin.

JERONIMUS. That is more than I should have expected. But how does my son look?

JESPER. He looks confoundedly learned. You would hardly recognize him. He has another name, too.

JERONIMUS. Another name! What does he call himself?

JESPER. He calls himself Montanus, which is said to be the same as Rasmus in Latin.

JERONIMUS. Oh, shame! that is wicked. I have known many who have changed their Christian names in that way, but they never have prospered. Some years ago I knew a person who was christened Peer, and afterwards, when he had become a man of consequence, wanted to be coined again, and called himself Peter. But that name cost him dear, for he broke his leg and died in great misery. Our Lord doesn't allow such a thing, Mr. Bailiff.

JESPER. I don't care what his name is, but I don't like it that he has such peculiar opinions in religion.

JERONIMUS. What kind of opinions has he, then?

JESPER. Oh, it's terrible! My hair stands on end when I think of it. I can't remember all that I heard, but I know that among other things he said that the earth was round. What can I call such a thing, Monsieur Jeronimus? That is nothing else than overthrowing all religion and leading folk away from the faith. A heathen certainly cannot speak worse.

JERONIMUS. He must have said that only in jest.

JESPER. It is going rather too far to joke about such things as that. See, here he comes himself.

SCENE 6

(Enter Montanus.)

MONTANUS. How do you do, my dear father-in-law. I am delighted to see you in good health.

JERONIMUS. People of my age can't enjoy remarkable health.

MONTANUS. You look mighty well, however.

JERONIMUS. Do you think so?

MONTANUS. How is Miss Lisbed?

JERONIMUS. Oh, well enough.

MONTANUS. But what is the matter? It seems to me, my dear father-in-law, that you answer me rather coldly.

JERONIMUS. I have no good reason to do otherwise.

MONTANUS. What wrong have I done?

JERONIMUS. I have been told that you have such peculiar opinions that people might really think that you had become mad or deranged, for how can a sane man be foolish enough to say that the earth is round?

MONTANUS. But, profecto, it is round. I must speak the truth.

JERONIMUS. The deuce it is the truth! Such a notion can't possibly come from anywhere but from the devil, who is the father of lies. I am sure there isn't a single man here in the village who would not condemn such an opinion. Just ask the bailiff, who is an intelligent man, if he does not agree with me.

JESPER. It is really all one to me whether it is oblong or round; but I must believe my own eyes, which show me that the earth is as flat as a pancake.

MONTANUS. It is all one to me, too, what the bailiff or the others here in the village think on the subject; for I know that the earth is round.

JERONIMUS. The deuce it is round! You must be crazy. You surely have eyes in your head as well as other men.

MONTANUS. It is known for certain, my dear father-in-law, that people live right under us with their feet turned toward ours.

JESPER. Ha, ha, ha; hi, hi, hi; ha, ha, ha!

JERONIMUS. Yes, you may well laugh, Mr. Bailiff, for he really has a screw loose in his head. Just you try to walk here on the ceiling with your head down, and see then what will happen.

MONTANUS. That is an entirely different thing, father-in-law, because--

JERONIMUS. I will never in the world be your father-in-law. I love my daughter too well to throw her away like that.

MONTANUS. I love your daughter as my own soul, but that I should give up my philosophy for her sake and drive my reason into exile,--that is more than you can demand.

JERONIMUS. Ha, ha! I see you have another lady-love in mind. You can keep your Lucy or your Sophy. I certainly shall not force my daughter on you.

MONTANUS. You mistake me. Philosophy is nothing other than a science, which has opened my eyes, in this respect as in others.

JERONIMUS. It has rather blinded both your eyes and your understanding. How can you believe such a thing is good?

MONTANUS. That is something which is beyond proof. No learned man doubts that any longer.

JESPER. I warrant you will never get Peer the deacon to agree with you.

MONTANUS. Peer the deacon! Yes, he is a great fellow. I am a fool to stand here and talk about philosophy with you. But in order to please Monsieur Jeronimus, I will nevertheless present one or two proofs. First, we learn it from travellers, who, when they go a few thousand miles from here, have day while we have night: they see other heavens, other stars.

JERONIMUS. Are you crazy? Is there more than one heaven and one earth?

JESPER. Yes, indeed, Monsieur Jeronimus, there are twelve heavens, one above the other, until the crystal heaven is reached. So far he is right.

MONTANUS. Ah! *Quantae tenebrae!*

JERONIMUS. In my youth I went sixteen times to the neighborhood of Kiel, but as sure as I am an honorable man, I never saw a different heaven from what we have here.

MONTANUS. You must travel sixteen times as far, Domine Jeronime, before you can notice such a thing, because--

JERONIMUS. Stop talking such nonsense; it is neither here nor there. Let's hear your other proof.

MONTANUS. The other proof is taken from the eclipse of the sun and moon.

JESPER. Just hear that! Now, he is stark mad.

MONTANUS. What do you really suppose an eclipse to be?

JESPER. Eclipses are certain signs which are placed upon the sun and moon when some misfortune is going to happen on the earth,--a thing I can prove from my own experience: when my wife had a miscarriage three years ago, and when my daughter Gertrude died, both times there were eclipses just before.

MONTANUS. Oh, such nonsense will drive me mad.

JERONIMUS, The bailiff is right, for an eclipse never occurs unless it is a warning of something. When the last eclipse happened, everything seemed to be well, but that didn't last long; for a fortnight afterwards we got news from Copenhagen that six candidates for degrees were rejected at one time, all persons belonging to the gentry, and two of them the sons of deacons. If a man doesn't hear of misfortune at one place after such an eclipse, he hears of it at another.

MONTANUS. That is true enough, for no day passes that some misfortune does not happen somewhere in the world. But as far as these persons you mentioned are concerned, they have no need to blame the eclipse, for if they had studied more, they would have passed.

JERONIMUS. What is an eclipse of the moon, then?

MONTANUS. It is nothing other than the earth's shadow, which deprives the moon of the sunlight, and since the shadow is round, we thereby see that the earth is round, too. It all happens in a natural way, for eclipses can be predicted, and therefore it is folly to say that such are prophetic warnings of misfortune.

JERONIMUS. Oh, Mr. Bailiff, I feel ill. Unlucky was the far on which your parents allowed you to become a scholar.

JESPER. Yes, he comes mighty near to being an atheist. I must bring him and Peer the deacon together again. There is a man who speaks with force. He will persuade you yet, in either Latin or Greek, that the earth, thank God, is as flat as my hand. But here comes Madame Jeronimus with her daughter.

#### SCENE 7

(Enter Magdelone and Lisbed.)

MAGDELONE. Oh, my dear son-in-law, it is a delight to me to see you back again in good health.

LISBED. Oh, my darling, let me hug you.

JERONIMUS. Slowly, slowly, my child, not so ardently.

LISBED. May I not hug my sweetheart when I haven't seen him for years?



JERONIMUS. Keep away from him, I tell you, or else you will get a beating.

LISBED (weeping). I know one thing, that we have been publicly betrothed.

JERONIMUS. That is true enough, but since that time something has occurred to hinder. (Lisbed weeps.) You must know, my child, that when he became engaged to you he was an honest man and a good Christian. But now he is a heretic and a fanatic, who ought to be introduced to the Litany rather than into our family.

LISBED. If that is all, father dear, we can still make everything right.

JERONIMUS. Keep away from him, I tell you.

MAGDELONE. What does this mean, Mr. Bailiff?

JESPER. It's a bad business, Madame. He introduces false doctrine into this village, saying that the earth is round, and other things of such a nature that I should blush to mention them.

JERONIMUS. Don't you think that the good old parents are to be pitied who have spent so much money on him?

MAGDELONE. Oh, is that all? If he loves our daughter, he will give up his opinion and say that the earth is flat, for her sake.

LISBED. Oh, my dear, for my sake say that it is flat!

MONTANUS. I cannot humor you in this, so long as I am in full possession of my reason. I cannot give the earth another shape from what it has by nature. For your sake I will say and do whatever is possible for me; but in this one thing I can never humor you, for if the brothers in my order should find out that I had given expression to such an opinion, I should be thought a fool, and despised. Besides, we learned folk never give up our opinions, but defend what we have once said to the uttermost drop of our inkhorns.

MAGDELONE. See here, husband, I don't think it matters so much that we should break off the match on that account.

JERONIMUS. And merely on that account I should try to have them divorced even if they had been actually married.

MAGDELONE. You had better believe I have something to say in this matter, too; for if she is your daughter, she is mine as well.

LISBED (weeping). Oh, my dear, do say that it is flat.

MONTANUS. Profecto, I really cannot.

JERONIMUS. Listen, wife: you must know that I am the head of the house, and that I am her father.

MAGDELONE. You must also know that I am the mistress of the house, and that I am her mother.

JERONIMUS. I say that a father is always more than a mother.

MAGDELONE, And I say not, for there can be no doubt that I am her mother, but whether you--I had better not say any more, for I am getting excited.

LISBED (weeping). Oh, my heart, can't you say just for my sake that it is flat?

MONTANUS. I cannot, my doll, nam contra naturam est.

JERONIMUS. What did you mean by that, my wife? Am I not her father as surely as you are her mother?--Listen, Lisbed, am I not your father?

LISBED. I think so, for my mother says so; but I know that she is my mother.

JERONIMUS. What do you think of this talk, Mr. Bailiff:

JESPER. I can't say that Mamselle is wrong in this matter, for--

JERONIMUS. That is enough. Come, let us go--you may be sure, my good Rasmus Berg, that you will never get my daughter so long as you cling to your delusions.

LISBED (weeping). Oh, my heart, do say that it is flat!

JERONIMUS. Out, out of the door!

[Exeunt Jeronimus, Magdelone, and Lisbed.]

#### ACT IV

#### SCENE I

(Before Jeppe's House.)

MONTANUS. Here I have been worried for a good hour by my parents, who with sighing and weeping try to persuade me to give up my opinions; but they don't know Erasmus Montanus. Not if I were to be made an emperor for it would I renounce what I once have said. I love Mademoiselle Elisabet, to be sure; but that I should sacrifice philosophy for her sake, and repudiate what I have publicly maintained--that is out of the question. I hope, though, that it will all come out right, and that I shall win my sweetheart without losing my reputation. Once I get a chance to talk to Jeronimus, I can convince him of his errors so conclusively that he will agree to the match. But there are the deacon and the bailiff, coming from my father- and mother-in-law's.

#### SCENE 2

(Enter Peer and Jesper.)

JESPER. My dear Monsieur Montanus, we have been working hard for you this day.

MONTANUS. What's that?

JESPER. We have intervened between your parents and your parents-in-law to bring about a reconciliation.

MONTANUS. Well, what have you accomplished? Did my father-in-law give way?

JESPER. The last words he said to us were, "There has never been any heresy in our family. You tell Rasmus Berg"--I merely quote his words; he never once said Montanus Berg--"You tell Rasmus Berg from me," said he, "that my wife and I are both honest, God-fearing people, who would rather wring our daughter's neck than marry her to any one who says that the earth is round, and brings false doctrine into the village."

PEER. To tell the truth, we have always had pure faith here on the hill, and Monsieur Jeronimus isn't far wrong in wishing to break off the match.

MONTANUS. My good friends, tell Monsieur Jeronimus from me that he is committing a sin in attempting to force me to repudiate what I once have said--a thing contrary to *leges scholasticas* and *consuetudines laudabiles*.

PEER. Oh, Dominus! Will you give up your pretty sweetheart for such trifles? Every one will speak ill of it.

MONTANUS, The common man, *vulgus*, will speak ill of it; but my commilitiones, my comrades, will praise me to the skies for my constancy.

PEER. Do you consider it a sin to say that the earth is flat or oblong?

MONTANUS. No, I do not, but I consider it shameful and dishonorable for me, a *Baccalaureus Philosophiae*, to repudiate what I have publicly maintained, and to do anything that is improper for one of my order. My duty is to see to it that *ne quid detrimenti patiat*ur *respublica philosophica*.

PEER. But if you can be convinced that what you believe is false, do you consider it a sin to give up your opinion?

MONTANUS. Prove to me that it is false, and that methodice.

PEER. That is an easy thing for me to do. Now, a great many fine people live here in the village: first, your father-in-law, who has become distinguished by the mere use of his pen; next, myself, unworthy man, who have been deacon here for fourteen full years; then this good man, the bailiff, besides the parish constable, and various other good men established here who have paid their taxes and land rent in both good times and bad.

MONTANUS. That's the deuce of a syllogismus. What does all such nonsense lead to?

PEER. I'm coming to that directly. I say, just ask any one of these good men who live here in the village and see if any of them will agree with you that the world is round. I'm sure a man ought to believe what so many say, rather than what only one says. Ergo, you are wrong.

MONTANUS. You may bring all the people on the hill and let them oppose me both in this matter and others, and I shall close the mouths of all of them. Such people have no convictions; they must believe what I and other folk say.

PEER. But if you should say the moon was made of green cheese, would they believe that, too?

MONTANUS. Why not? Tell me, what do the people here think you are?

PEER. They believe that I am a good, honest man and deacon here in this place; which is true.

MONTANUS. And I say it is a lie. I say you are a cock, and I shall prove it, as surely as two and three make five.

PEER. The devil you will! Now, how can I be a cock? How can you prove that?

MONTANUS. Can you tell me anything to prevent you from being one?

PEER. In the first place I can talk; a cock cannot talk; ergo, I am not a cock.

MONTANUS. Talking does not prove anything. A parrot or a starling can talk, too; that does not make them human beings by any means.

PEER. I can prove it from something else besides talking. A cock has no human intelligence. I have human intelligence; ergo, I am not a cock.

MONTANUS. Proba minorem.

JESPER. Aw, talk Danish.

MONTANUS. I want him to prove that he has the intelligence of a human being.

PEER. See here, I discharge the duties of my office irreproachably, don't I?

MONTANUS. What are the main duties of your office wherein you show human intelligence?

PEER. First, I never forget to ring for service at the hour appointed.

MONTANUS. Nor does a cock forget to crow and make known the hour and tell people when to get up.

PEER. Second, I can sing as well as any deacon in Sjaelland.

MONTANUS. And our cock crows as well as any cock in Sjaelland.

PEER. I can mould wax candles, which no cock can do.

MONTANUS. Over against that, a cock can make a hen lay eggs, which you can't do. Don't you see that the intelligence you show in your calling fails to prove that you are better than a cock? Let us see, in a nutshell, what points you have in common with a cock: a cock has a comb on his head, you have horns on your forehead; a cockcrows, you crow, too; a cock is proud of his voice and ruffles himself up, you do likewise; a cock gives warning when it is time to get up, you when it is time for service. Ergo, you are a cock. Have you anything else to say? (Peer cries.)

JESPER. Here, don't cry, Peer! Why do you heed such things?

PEER. A plague on me if it's not sheer falsehood. I can get a certificate from the whole village that I am not a rooster; that not one of my forbears has been anything but a Christian human being.

MONTANUS, Refute, then, this syllogismus, quem tibi propano. A cock has certain peculiarities which distinguish him from other animals: he wakes people by a noise when it's time to get up; announces the hours; plumes himself on his voice; wears protuberances on his head. You have the same peculiarities. Ergo, you are a cock. Refute me that argument. (Peer weeps again.)

JESPER. If the deacon can't shut you up, I can.

MONTANUS. Let us hear your argument, then!

JESPER. First, my conscience tells me that your opinion is false.

MONTANUS. One cannot pass judgment in all matters according to a bailiff's conscience.

JESPER. In the second place, I say that everything you have said is sheer falsehood.

MONTANUS. Prove it.

JESPER. In the third place, I am an honest man, whose word has always deserved to be believed.

MONTANUS. That sort of talk will convince no one.

JESPER. In the fourth place, I say that you have spoken like a knave and that the tongue ought to be cut out of your mouth.

MONTANUS. I still hear no proof.

JESPER. And, finally, in the fifth place, I will prove it to you abundantly either with swords or with bare fists.

MONTANUS. No, I do not care for either, thank you; but as long as you wish to dispute with the mouth only, you shall find that I can justify not only the things which I have said, but more, too. Come on, Mr, Bailiff, I will prove by sound logic that you are a bull.

JESPER. The devil you will.

MONTANUS. Just have the patience to hear my argument.

JESPER. Come, Peer, let's go.

MONTANUS. I prove it in this way. Quicunque--(Jesper shrieks and puts his band over Erasmus's mouth.) If you do not wish to hear my proof this time, you can meet me another time, whenever you please.

JESPER. I am too good to associate with such a fanatic.

[Exeunt Jesper and Peer.]

### SCENE 3

MONTANUS. I can dispute dispassionately with these people, however harshly they speak to me. I do not become hot-headed unless I dispute with people who imagine that they understand Methodum disputandi and that they are just as well versed in philosophy as I. For this reason I was ten times as zealous when I argued against the student to-day; for he had some appearance of learning. But here come my parents.

### SCENE 4

(Enter Jeppe and Nille.)

JEPPE. Oh, my dear son, don't carry on so, and don't quarrel with everybody. The bailiff and deacon, who at our request undertook to make peace between you and your father-in-law, have, I hear, been made sport of. What is the use of turning good folk into cocks and bulls?

MONTANUS. For this purpose I have studied, for this purpose I have racked my brains: that I may say what I choose, and justify it.

JEPPE. It seems to me that it would have been better never to have studied in that way.

MONTANUS. Keep your mouth shut, old man!

JEPPE. You're not going to beat your parents?

MONTANUS. If I did, I should justify that, too, before the whole world. [Exeunt Jeppe and Nille, weeping.]

### SCENE 5

(Enter Jacob.)

MONTANUS. I will not abandon my opinions, even if they all go mad at once.

JACOB. I have a letter for Mossur.

[Gives him the letter, and exit.]

SCENE 6

MONTANUS (reading). My dearest friend! I could never have imagined that you would so easily abandon her who for so many years has loved you with such faith and constancy. I can tell you for a certainty that my father is so set against the notion that the earth is round, and considers it such an important article of faith, that he will never give me to you unless you assent to the belief that be and the other good folk here in the village hold. What difference can it make to you whether the earth is oblong, round, eight-cornered, or square? I beg of you, by all the love I have borne you, that you conform to the faith in which we here on the hill have been happy for so long. If you do not humor me in this, you may be sure that I shall die of grief, and the whole world will abhor you for causing the death of one who has loved you as her own soul.

Elisabeth, daughter of Jeronimus,  
by her own hand.

Oh, heavens! This letter moves me and throws me into great irresolution--

Utque securi  
Saucia trabs ingens, ubi plaga novissima restat,  
Quo cadat in dubio est, omnique a parte timetur,  
Sic animus--

On the one hand is Philosophy, bidding me stand firm; on the other, my sweetheart reproaching me with coldness and faithlessness. But should Erasmus Montanus for any reason renounce his conviction, hitherto his one virtue? No, indeed, by no means. Yet here is necessity, which knows no law. If I do not submit in this, I shall make both myself and my sweetheart miserable. She will die of grief, and all the world will hate me and reproach me with my faithlessness. Ought I abandon her, when she has loved me constantly for so many years? Ought I be the cause of her death? No, that must not be. Still, consider what you are doing, Erasmus Montane, Musarum et Apollonis pulle! Here you have the chance to show that you are a true philosophus. The greater the danger, the larger the laurel wreath you win inter philosophos. Think what your commilitiones will say when they hear something like this: "He is no longer the Erasmus Montanus who hitherto has defended his opinions to the last drop of his blood." If common and ignorant people reproach me with unfaithfulness to my sweetheart, philosophi, for their part, will exalt me to the skies. The very thing which disgraces me in the eyes of the one party crowns me with honor among the other. I must therefore resist the temptation. I am resisting it. I conquer it. I have already conquered it. The earth is round. Jacta est alea. Dixi. (Calls.) Jacob!

SCENE 7

(Enter Jacob.)

MONTANUS. Jacob, the letter which you delivered to me from my sweetheart has had no influence upon me. I adhere to what I have said. The earth is round, and it shall never become flat as long as my head remains on my shoulders.

JACOB. I believe, too, that the earth is round, but if any one gave me a seed-cake to say it was oblong, I should say that it was oblong, for it would make no difference to me.

MONTANUS. That might be proper for you, but not for a philosophus whose principal virtue is to justify to the uttermost what he once has said. I will dispute publicly on the subject here in the village and challenge all who have studied.

JACOB. But might I ask Mossur one thing: If you win the disputation, what will be the result?

MONTANUS. The result will be that I shall have the honor of winning and shall be recognized as a learned man.

JACOB. Mossur means a talkative man. I have noticed, from people here in the village, that wisdom and talking are not the same thing. Rasmus Hansen, who is always talking, and whom no one can stand against in the matter of words, is granted by every one to have just plain goose sense. On the other hand, the parish constable, Niels Christensen, who says little and always gives in, is admitted to have an understanding of the duties of chief bailiff.

MONTANUS. Will you listen to the rascal? Faith, he's trying to argue with me.

JACOB. Mossur mustn't take offence. I talk only according to my simple understanding, and ask only in order to learn. I should like to know whether, when Mossur wins the dispute, Peer the deacon will thereupon be turned a cock?

MONTANUS. Nonsense! He will stay the same as he before.

JACOB. Well, then Mossur would lose!

MONTANUS. I shall not allow myself to be drawn into dispute with a rogue of a peasant like you. If you understood Latin, I should readily oblige you. I am not accustomed to disputation in Danish.

JACOB. That is to say, Mossur has become so learned that he cannot make clear his meaning in his mother-tongue.

MONTANUS. Be silent, audacissime juvenis! Why should I exert myself to explain my opinions to coarse and common folk, who don't know what *universalia entia rationis formae substantiales* are? It certainly is *absurdissimum* to try to prate of colors to the blind. *Vulgus indoctum est monstrum horrendum informe, cui lumen ademptum.* Not long ago a man ten times as learned as you wished to dispute with me, but when I found that he did not know what *quidditas* was, I promptly refused him.



JACOB. What does that word quidditas mean? Wasn't that it?

MONTANUS. I know well enough what it means.

JACOB. Perhaps Mossur knows it himself, but can't explain it to others. What little I know, I know in such a way that all men can grasp it when I say it to them.

MONTANUS. Yes, you are a learned fellow, Jacob. What do you know?

JACOB. What if I could prove that I am more learned than Mossur?

MONTANUS. I should like to hear you.

JACOB. He who studies the most important things, I think, has the most thorough learning.

MONTANUS. Yes, that is true enough.

JACOB. I study farming and the cultivation of the soil. For that reason I am more learned than Mossur.

MONTANUS. Do you believe that rough peasants' work is the most important?

JACOB. I don't know about that. But I do know that if we farmers should take a pen or a piece of chalk in our hands to calculate how far it is to the moon, you learned men would soon suffer in the stomach. You scholars spend the time disputing whether the earth is round, square, or eight-cornered, and we study how to keep the earth in repair. Does Mossur see now that our studies are more useful and important than his, and, therefore, Niels Christensen is the most learned man here in the village, because he has improved his farm so that an acre of it is rated at thirty rix-dollars more than in the time of his predecessor, who sat all day with a pipe in his mouth, smudging and rumpling Doctor Arent Hvitfeld's Chronicle or a book of sermons?

MONTANUS. You will be the death of me; it is the devil incarnate who is talking. I never in all my life thought such words could come from a peasant-boy's mouth. For although all you have said is false and ungodly, still it is an unusual speech for one in your walk of life. Tell me this minute from whom you have learned such nonsense.

JACOB. I have not studied, Mossur, but people say I have a good head. The district judge never comes town but he sends for me at once. He has told my parents a hundred times that I ought to devote myself to books, and that something great might be made of me. When I have nothing to do, I go speculating. The other day I made a verse on Morten Nielsen, who drank himself to death.

MONTANUS. Let us hear the verse.

JACOB. You must know, first, that the father and the grandfather of this same Morten were both fishermen, and were drowned at sea. This was how the verse went:

Here lies the body of Morten Nielsen;  
To follow the footsteps of his forbears,

Who died in the water as fishermen,  
He drowned himself in brandy.

I had to read the verse before the district judge the other day, and he had it written down and gave me two marks for it.

MONTANUS. The poem, though formaliter very bad, is none the less materialiter excellent. The prosody, which is the most important thing, is lacking.

JACOB. What does that mean?

MONTANUS. Certain lines have not pedes, or feet, enough to walk on.

JACOB. Feet! I would have you know that in a few days it ran over the whole countryside.

MONTANUS. I see you have a crafty head. I could wish that you had studied and understood your Philosophiam instrumentalem, so you could dispute under me. Come, let us go. [Exeunt.]

ACT V

SCENE I

(Same as in Act IV. A Lieutenant, Jesper the Bailiff.)

LIEUTENANT. How can I manage to see the fellow, Mr. Bailiff? I should like to have a talk with him. Is he a likely looking fellow?

JESPER. Oh, he looks pretty well, and he has a mouth like a razor.

LIEUTENANT. That makes no difference, so long as he's strong and active.

JESPER. He can say anything he wants, and maintain it. He proved beyond a doubt that Peer the deacon was a cock.

LIEUTENANT. Is he good and broad across the shoulders?

JESPER. A big, strong lad. Every one in the house here is afraid of him, even his parents, for he can turn them into cows, oxen, and horses, then back again into people,--that is, he can prove that they are, from books.

LIEUTENANT. Does he look as if he could stand knocking about?

JESPER. And he proved that the earth was round, too.

LIEUTENANT. That doesn't matter to me. Does he look as if he were brave, and had a stout heart?

JESPER. He would stake his life for a letter of the alphabet, not to mention anything else. He has set every one here by the ears, but that makes no difference to him--he won't budge from his opinions and his learning.

LIEUTENANT. Mr. Bailiff, from all I hear, he will make a perfect

soldier.

JESPER. How can you make a soldier of him, Lieutenant? He is a student.

LIEUTENANT. That has nothing to do with it. If he can turn people into sheep, oxen, and cocks, I'll have a try at turning a student into a soldier, for once.

JESPER. I should be happy if you could. I should laugh my belly in two.

LIEUTENANT. Just keep quiet about it, Jesper! When a bailiff and a lieutenant put their heads together, such things are not impossible. But I see some one coming this war. Is that he, by any chance?

JESPER. Yes, it is. I shall run off, so that he won't suspect me.  
[Exit.]

## SCENE 2

(Enter Montanus.)

LIEUTENANT. Welcome to the village.

MONTANUS. I humbly thank you.

LIEUTENANT. I have taken the liberty of addressing you, because there aren't many educated people hereabouts for a man to talk to.

MONTANUS. I am delighted that you have been a scholar. When did you graduate, if I may inquire?

LIEUTENANT. Oh, ten years ago.

MONTANUS. Then you are an old academicus. What was your specialty when you were a student?

LIEUTENANT. I read mostly the old Latin authors, and studied natural law and moral problems, as in fact I do still.

MONTANUS. That is mere trumpery, not academicum. Did you lay no stress on Philosophiam instrumentalem?

LIEUTENANT. Not especially.

MONTANUS. Then you have never done any disputation?

LIEUTENANT. No.

MONTANUS. Well, is that studying? Philosophia instrumentalis is the only solid studium; the rest are all very fine, but they are not learned. One who is well drilled in Logica and Metaphysica can get himself out of any difficulty and dispute on all subjects, even if he is unfamiliar with them. I know of nothing which I should take upon myself to defend and not get out of it very well. There was never any disputation at the university in which I did not take

part. A philosophus instrumentalis can pass for a polyhistor.

LIEUTENANT. Who is the best disputer nowadays?

MONTANUS. A student called Peer Iverson. When he has refuted his opponent so that he hasn't a word to say for himself, he says, "Now, if you will take my proposition, I will defend yours." In all that sort of thing his Philosophia instrumentalis is the greatest help. It is a shame that the lad did not become a lawyer; he could have made a mighty good living. Next to him, I am the strongest, for the last time I disputed, he whispered in my ear, "Jam sumus ergo pares." Yet I will always yield him the palm.

LIEUTENANT. But I have heard it said that Monsieur can prove that it is the duty of a child to beat his parents. That seems to be absurd.

MONTANUS. If I said it, I am the man to defend it.

LIEUTENANT. I dare wager a ducat that you are not clever enough for that.

MONTANUS. I will risk a ducat on it.

LIEUTENANT. Good. It is agreed. Now, let's hear you.

MONTANUS. He whom one loves most, he beats most. One ought to love nobody more than his parents, ergo there is nobody whom one ought to beat more. Now, in another syllogism: what one has received he ought, according to his ability, to return. In my youth I received blows from my parents. Ergo I ought to give them blows in return.

LIEUTENANT. Enough, enough, I have lost. Faith, you shall have your ducat.

MONTANUS. Oh, you were not in earnest; I will profecto take no money.

LIEUTENANT. Upon my word, you shall take it. I swear you shall.

MONTANUS. Then I will take it to keep you from breaking an oath.

LIEUTENANT. But may I not also try to turn you into something? Par exemple, I will turn you into a soldier.

MONTANUS. Oh, that is very easy, for all students are soldiers of the intellect.

LIEUTENANT. No, I shall prove that you are a soldier in body. Whoever has taken press-money is an enlisted soldier. You have done so, ergo--

MONTANUS. Nego minorem.

LIEUTENANT. Et ego probo minorem by the two rix-dollars you took into your hand.

MONTANUS. Distinguendum est inter nummos.

LIEUTENANT. No distinction! You are a soldier.

MONTANUS. Distinguendum est inter the two: simpliciter and relative accipere.

LIEUTENANT. No nonsense! The contract is closed, and you have taken the money.

MONTANUS. Distinguendum est inter contractum verum et apparentem.

LIEUTENANT. Can you deny that you have received a ducat from me?

MONTANUS. Distinguendum est inter rem et modum rei.

LIEUTENANT. Come, follow me straight, comrade! You must get your uniform.

MONTANUS. There are your two rix-dollars back. You have no witnesses to my taking the money.

### SCENE 3

(Enter Jesper and Niels the Corporal.)

JESPER. I can bear witness that I saw the lieutenant put money into his hand.

NIELS. I too.

MONTANUS. But why did I take the money? Distinguendum est inter--

LIEUTENANT. Oh, we won't listen to any talk. Niels, you stay here, while I fetch the uniform. [Exit the Lieutenant.]

MONTANUS. Oh, help!

NIELS. If you don't shut up, you dog, I'll stick a bayonet through your body. Hasn't he enlisted, Mr. Bailiff?

JESPER. Yes, of course he has.

(Enter the Lieutenant.)

LIEUTENANT. Come, now, pull off that black coat and put on this red one. (Montanus cries while they put on his uniform.) Oh, come, it looks bad for a soldier to cry. You are far better off than you were before.--Drill him well, now, Niels. He is a learned fellow, but he is raw yet in his exercises. (Niels the Corporal leads Montanus about, drilling him and beating him.) [Exeunt the Lieutenant and Jesper.]

### SCENE 4

(Enter the Lieutenant.)

LIEUTENANT. Well, Niels, can he go through the drill?

NIELS. He'll learn in time, but he is a lazy dog. He has to be beaten every minute.

MONTANUS (crying). Oh, gracious sir, have mercy on me. My health is weak and I cannot endure such treatment.

LIEUTENANT. It seems a little hard at first, but when your back has once been well beaten and toughened, it won't hurt so much.

MONTANUS (crying). Oh, would that I had never studied! Then I never should have got into this trouble.

LIEUTENANT. Oh, this is only a beginning. When you have sat a half score of times on the wooden horse, or stood on the stake, then you will think this sort of thing is a mere bagatelle. (Montanus weeps again.)

#### SCENE 5

(Enter Jeronimus, Magdelone, Jeppe, and Nille.)

JERONIMUS. Are you sure of it?

JEPPE. Indeed I am; the bailiff told me a moment ago. Ah, now my anger is turned to pity.

JERONIMUS. If we could only get him back to the true faith, I should be glad to buy him off.

LISBED (rushing in). Oh, poor wretch that I am!

JERONIMUS. Don't raise a hubbub, daughter, you won't gain anything by that.

LISBED. Oh, father dear, if you were as much in love as I am, you wouldn't ask me to keep quiet.

JERONIMUS. Fie, fie, it is not proper for a girl to show her feelings like that. But there he is, I do believe. Look here, Rasmus Berg! What is going on?

MONTANUS. Oh, my dear Monsieur Jeronimus, I've become a soldier.

JERONIMUS. Yes, now you have something else to do, besides turning men into beasts and deacons into cocks.

MONTANUS. Oh, alas! I lament my former folly, but all too late.

JERONIMUS. Listen, my friend. If you will give up your former foolishness, and not fill the land with disagreements and disputations, I shall not fail to do everything in my power to get you off.

MONTANUS. Oh, I don't deserve anything better, after threatening my old parents with blows. But if you will have pity on me and work for my release, I swear to you, that hereafter I shall live a different

life, devote myself to some business, and never bother any one with disputations any more.

JERONIMUS. Stay here for a moment; I will go and talk to the Lieutenant. (Enter the Lieutenant.) Oh, my dear Lieutenant, you have always been a friend of our house. The person who has enlisted as a soldier is engaged to my only daughter, who is much in love with him. Set him free again. I shall be glad to present you with a hundred rix-dollars, if you do. I admit that at first I was delighted myself that he had been punished in such a way, for his singular behavior had exasperated me, and all the good folk here in the village, against him. But when I saw him in this plight, and at the same time heard him lament his former folly and promise amendment, my heart was ready to burst with sympathy.

LIEUTENANT. Listen, my dear Monsieur Jeronimus. What I have done has been only for his own good. I know that he is engaged to your daughter, and therefore merely for the good of your house I have reduced him to this condition and treated him with such great harshness, so that he might be brought to confess his sins. But for your sake I will give the money to the poor, inasmuch as I hear that he has experienced a change of heart. Let him come here.--Listen, my friend, your parents have spent much on you in the hope that you would become an honor and a comfort to them in their old age. But you go off a sensible fellow and come back entirely deranged, arouse the whole village, advance strange opinions, and defend them with stubbornness. If that is to be the fruit of studies, then one ought to wish that there never had been any books. It seems to me that the principal thing a man ought to learn in school is just the opposite of what you are infected with, and that a learned man ought particularly to be distinguished from others in that he is more temperate, modest, and considerate in his speech than the uneducated. For true philosophy teaches us that we ought to restrain and quiet disagreements, and to give up our opinions as soon as we are persuaded, even by the humblest person, that they are mistaken. The first rule of philosophy is, Know thyself; and the further one advances, the lower opinion one should have of himself, the more one should realize what there remains to be learned. But you make philosophy into a kind of fencing, and consider a man a philosopher if he can warp the truth by subtle distinctions and talk himself out of any opinion; in so doing you incur hatred and bring contempt upon learning, for people imagine that your extraordinary manners are the natural fruits of education. The best advice I can give you is to strive to forget, and to rid your head of what you have burned so much midnight oil in learning; and that you take up some calling in which you can make your way to success; or, if you are bound to pursue your studies, that you go about them in some other fashion.

MONTANUS. Oh, my good sir, I will follow your advice, and do my best to be a different man from now on.

LIEUTENANT. Good; then I will let you go as soon as you have given your word both to your own parents and to your future parents-in-law, and have begged their pardon.

MONTANUS. I humbly beg all of you, as I weep salt tears, to forgive me; and I promise to lead an entirely different life henceforward. I condemn my former ways, and I have been cured of them not so much by the fix I had got into as by this good man's wise and profound words. Next to my parents I shall always hold him in the highest

esteem.

JERONIMUS. Then you don't believe any longer, my dear son-in-law, that the world is round? For that is the point that I take most to heart.

MONTANUS. My dear father-in-law, I won't argue about it any further. But I will only say this, that nowadays all learned folk are of the opinion that the earth is round.

JERONIMUS. Oh, Mr. Lieutenant, let him be made a soldier again until the earth becomes flat.

MONTANUS. My dear father-in-law, the earth is as flat as a pancake. Now are you satisfied?

JERONIMUS. Yes, now we are good friends again,--now you shall have my daughter. Come to my house, now, all together, and drink to the reconciliation. Mr. Lieutenant, won't you do us the honor of joining us?

[Exeunt.]

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