

PETER IN BLUNDERLAND

A DIALECTICAL FANTASY IN TWO NEGATIONS

By Ronald L. Meek and W.B. Bland.

ACT ONE

(The first scene is played between front and centre tabs. It is a room in Parliament Buildings which is occupied by our hero, Peter. It is very bare, being furnished only with a desk, up centre, littered with papers, and a chair behind it. A hat stand, or chest of drawers, with a looking-glass surmounting it, stands to the right of the desk. The stage is empty when the curtain rises. Suddenly, a Chorus of Typistes and Secretaries enters. They form a line in front of the footlights and sing).

CHORUS - TYPISTES AND SECRETARIES

(Air - "You Are My Sunshine" - hotted up).

We're Peter's typistes, we're Peter's flunkys,  
We blow his trumpet and his nose;  
We calm his passions, collect his rations,  
Love his friends, and hate his foes.

We work for Peter, for Pious Peter,  
There's no one sweeter than Pious Pete;  
Each senorita is sweet on Peter -  
He's the friend of the Man in the Street.

We type his letters, and pay his debtors,  
We wash his hands and scratch his back;  
We brush his breeches, and write his speeches,  
And we dress him, like Hamlet, in black.

We work for Peter, for Pious Peter,  
There's no one sweeter than Pious Pete;  
Each senorita is sweet on Peter -  
He's the friend of the Man in the Street.

(After a very short ballet, if possible in the best Russian tradition, the chorus of the song is repeated once. The recitatives and songs which follow at this point are taken from Act I of "The Gondoliers" from the recitative, "See, See At Last They Come" to "We Sing Them To Sleep".)

1st Secretary: (Recit.) See, see he comes! Observe his handsome face!  
What tender charm! What dignity and grace!

(Enter Peter, on a tricycle, clad in ordinary clothes - one of his customary suits of solemn black. The Typistes and Secretaries kneel before him, and bow their heads to the ground. While they sing the following couplet, Peter rides round and round through their ranks on his tricycle.)

Chorus: Hail! Hail! Mighty, mighty Master, heaven-directed!  
heaven-directed!  
Accept our love, oh pray do not reject it!  
Mighty Master! Mighty Master!

SOLO AND CHORUS - PETER, SECRETARIES AND TYPISTES

Peter: Good morning, Secretaries,  
And my typistes so beautiful!

Chorus: (Raising their heads) Our devotion never varies,  
Ever upright, ever dutiful!

Peter: But why are you kneeling  
In this parasitic attitude?

Chorus: (Raising their heads)  
Oh Master, all-healing,  
We're displaying our gratitude!

(The Solo and Chorus are repeated once, Peter meanwhile performing interesting feats of horsemanship on his tricycle. Finally, Peter comes to the foots, and, still mounted, sings the following song. The Chorus remains kneeling.)

SOLO - PETER

I'm called Pious Peter  
And each senorita  
Vows no-one is sweeter  
Or neater than I.

When laying foundations  
Of churches and stations  
By splendid orations  
I make people cry.

By enemies branded  
As rude and high-handed,  
You'll see by the "Standard"  
I'm righteous and fair.

My voice in the Caucus  
Is rampant and raucous  
And no-one can baulk us  
When I'm in the chair.

My temper's splenetic,  
My speeches phrenetic  
And like an emetic,  
They're noble and free.

They bore me no malice  
At Buckingham Palace,  
But gave me a chalice  
Of sugarless tea.

With tender caresses  
I told the Princesses  
About my addresses  
To the boys by the Nile.

And one of the Minxes  
Said that's what she thinks is  
The cause of the Sphinx's  
Inscrutable smile!

Peter: (To Chorus) Upsy-daisy!

(The Typistes and Secretaries rise briskly to their feet, and stand awaiting orders. Peter goes over to his desk and sits down, hanging his hat and tricycle on the stand.)

Peter: Well, boys and girls, I've got a pleasant surprise for you. It's my birthday, and I'm going to give you all a holiday.

(General jubilation. The Typistes and Secretaries dance round in a circle, singing:)

Happy birthday to you,  
Happy birthday to you,  
Happy birthday, pretty Peter -  
Happy birthday to you!

Peter: Please don't wish me many happy returns. Sid Holland did that in Bellamy's, and I didn't like the way he said it. Go, children, and play in the sunshine. I want to be alone, so that I can work out my back pay.

(The Typistes and Secretaries exeunt, with whoops and cheers. Peter settles himself down in his chair and yawns.)

Peter: Gosh, I'm tired. I think I'll have a little read first.

(He takes an enormous tome from the table, the title being "How To Win Friends and Influence People." He takes a quick glance, and then replaces it, with a gesture of disgust.)

Peter: I've tried that. It's all a dirty lie.

(He takes up another huge volume, entitled "Railway Tribunal Evidence.")

Peter: What's the use of a book without pictures, and all conversations, and such a lot of dissenting opinions?

(He replaces the large volume, and takes up a small book wrapped in a piece of paper. He unwraps it, and takes a note out of it.)

Peter: (Reading). "Alice in Wonderland" - now where did this come from? (Reading the note). Why, it's from Mr. Boswell! "Dear Peter, I don't know what this is all about, but it's the English translation of a book that's all the rage in Moscow just now. Send me a cable if there are any fruity passages. Stalin and I are in the pink. Yours, Bozzy." How nice of him! (Reads) "Through the Looking-Glass". (Pause) Say, this is cute. If it wasn't Russian, I'd probably like it. (Reads) "In another moment Alice was through the glass." Hmmm - she drinks too fast. Oh, I see - it's the Looking-Glass. She goes through the Looking-Glass into a New World. (Yawns) Wish I could find the way to a better world just by going through a Looking-Glass! (Yawns, and looks at the looking-glass at the side of the desk). I wonder. Well, we tried Stabilisation and it nearly worked - I'll try anything once.

(Peter mounts the hatstand, and looks at the Looking-Glass).

Peter: I suppose this is awfully silly (yawns) but I do so want to find the way to a Better World. Get ready - get steady - go!

(He dives through the Glass, and at that moment there is a blackout a crash of breaking glass, and a hidden orchestra plays a few bars of a stormy Wagnerian piece. A few seconds elapse, and then a spotlight catches Peter, right, walking slowly across the stage, in the midst of Stygian blackness. He is now wearing short pants and an open shirt.)

Peter: Well, I've got here all right. But I'm just as much in the dark as I was when I went through the Looking-Glass. (Pause - looking about him) I wonder what it is makes me feel so small in this place?

(A second spot illuminates a sort of ticket-box, left down-stage, with a small pigeon-hole, and the words, "Turakina Tunnel. Enquiries" written on the front.)

Peter: Ah - Turakina! That's what makes me feel so small! I didn't realise the explanation was so Semple! I wonder if there's anybody at home?

(He goes cautiously up to the ticket-box, and knocks timidly. The slide flies open suddenly, and the face of the Kidderminster Cat appears).

Peter: Excuse me - er - the face is familiar - but --

Cat: I am the Kidderminster Cat.

Peter: I didn't know cats could talk.

Cat: How strange! I'm sure there are few people who've heard more cat-calls in their time than you. (Sings, to the air of "Annie Laurie")

I'm the Cat from Kidderminster -  
With my disarming grin  
I charm each withered spinster  
And gather in the tin.

(The Cat withdraws his head, and the pigeon-hole shuts with a bang.)

Peter: Well, he isn't very helpful. But I'll try again.

(He knocks on the box, and the slide flies open.)

Cat: What on earth do you want now? Can't you let a body balance his budget in peace?

Peter: Please, could you tell me which way I ought to go from here? I'm looking for the way to a better world.

Cat: Oh, that's very easy. I've written a book that'll tell you all about that. (Hands a book to Peter) Here you are. "Ao Toheroa, a <sup>snickering</sup> Democracy". No don't bother me again. (The slide slams down.)

Peter: Of all the unsatisfactory people I ever -

(Peter is interrupted by the White Rabbit, who is illuminated by a spotlight, up right. The White Rabbit is dressed as in "Alice", and carries a bucket of whitewash in one hand and a bucket of tar in the other).

White Rabbit: Oh dear! I shall be too late! Oh, won't the Duchess be savage if I've kept her waiting. Oh, my tar and whitewash!

Peter: Excuse me, please -

White Rabbit: See my Secretary. I'm a great Union leader - I don't mix with the common people.

Peter: Oh, please! I'm looking for the Way to a Better World, and I'm lost.

White Rabbit: You poor little boy! I've never been able to find it, either.

Peter: Who are you, please?

White Rabbit: Latrine is the name - Sir Walter Latrine. My mother called me that because my face was always flushing. (Pause) You're a nice little boy. (Sobs) I was a little boy like you once - looking for the way to a Better World. But now the Duchess makes me go round the world with my tar and whitewash. I've whitewashed General Plastiras and General Mannerheim and blackened Stalin - I'm an expert. (Sobs) I was a little boy with curly hair, just like you. (Pauses - then looks round cautiously and whispers) I'll help you. You see that book?

(A second spot illuminates a very tall table, about ten feet high, standing up centre. A large book, labelled "Dialectical Materialism, by Karl Marx", is leaning against the foot of the table).

White Rabbit: Devour that book, and you'll find the way all right. But don't tell the Duchess I told you - she'll have my head off in a moment! Goodbye, little boy.



(He shudders, and hurries off, right. Peter goes over to the table, picks up the book, and examines it intently).

Peter: Devour the book, and you'll find the way. All right - here goes.

(He tears a few pages out of the book, and munches them soulfully).

Peter: Why - I'm growing taller -

(The single leg of the table telescopes, and the table reduces suddenly to about five feet high. A large golden key is lying on the table. Peter takes it and looks at it.)

Peter: A key! Now all I need is a door to fit it!

(The spot follows Peter as he searches in the centre tabs, finally disclosing a little door, half hidden in the folds of the curtain. Peter puts the key in the lock, turns it, and opens the door. There is a blackout, and the same stormy Wagnerian theme is heard from a hidden orchestra. When the lights go on again, a large brick wall is seen stretching right across the stage. It is a very high wall, and on the front of it is painted a rough map of the world. The wall is crumbling, and obviously in a very bad state of repair; there is a yawning hole where the Soviet Union should be on the map, and the bricks in the region of Eastern Europe are very worn. On top of the wall sits Humpty Dumpty, an extremely fat bald gentleman, with a top hat and striped morning suit. In front of the wall stands a Chorus of Soldiers, each holding a modern rifle. The Soldiers are attired like the playing-card people in "Alice", the suit being Clubs. The Orchestra strikes up the air of the next Chorus.)

#### CHORUS AND SOLO - SOLDIERS AND HUMPTY DUMPTY.

(Air - "Pour, oh Pour the Pirate Sherry" - "The Pirates".)

Chorus: Guard, oh guard our Humpty Dumpty,  
Watch, oh watch his crumbling wall!  
He's a wizard, he's a rumpty,  
We must guard against his fall.

Humpty: Guard me well, ye royal forces,  
If I fell from my domain,  
All the men and all the horses  
Couldn't put me back again!

Chorus: He's a wizard, he's a rumpty,  
Guard, oh guard our Humpty Dumpty!  
  
Guard, oh guard our Humpty Dumpty,  
Watch, oh watch his crumbling wall!  
He's a wizard, he's a rumpty,  
We must guard against his fall.

(Enter Peter, right. He watches the scene with amazement.)

Peter: Why, this must be Humpty Dumpty! And how exactly like an egg he is!

Humpty: Limited! Humpty Dumpty Limited, if you please. I am registered under the Companies Act. And, just by the way, it is very provoking to be called an egg - very!

Peter: Some eggs are very pretty, you know, Mr. Humpty Dumpty.

Humpty: Yes, child, and some are very bad. Don't stand gaping there like a sick cow. State your business and be off with you.

Peter: Don't you think you'd be safer on the ground? That wall looks as if it's going to fall to pieces at any moment.

Humpty: Of course, I don't think so. Why, if ever I did fall off - which there's little chance of - but if I did, the White King has promised me - with his very own mouth - to send -

Peter: - All his horses and all his men.

Humpty: (Angrily) How did you know that? You're a saboteur! You're a spy of the Red King!

(The Soldiers, at the mention of the words "Red King", form a circle around Peter, manacing him with their rifles.)

Peter: No - really I'm not - I read it in a book!

Humpty: (Annoyed) Oh yes - one of these Left Book Clubs Books, I suppose. All right, boys - let him off this time.

(The Soldiers fall back smartly into line along the wall.)

Humpty: Now, take a good look at me. I'm one that knows a King, I am - and to show you I'm democratic, you may shake hands with me.

(Peter solemnly shakes hands with Humpty Dumpty).

Humpty: I'm a very great man, my child. I own the whole of this wall, every bit of brick and morsel of mortar. I'm worth millions, millions!

Peter: But the question is, whether you can do much with all those millions when you're sitting up on the wall all day.

Humpty: The question is, what is to be master - that's all.

#### SOLO AND CHORUS - HUMPTY DUMPTY AND SOLDIERS

(Air - "There's a Bridle Hanging on the Wall.")

Humpty: Oh, I sit and wobble on my wall,  
From morningtide to evenfall;  
There's nothing else to do at all,  
But sit and wobble on my wall.

Humpty: There's a garden here with trees and flowers,  
Where the birdies warble in the bowers,

Chorus: But we'll never hear those birdies call  
While he sits and wobbles on his wall.

Humpty: In Greenland and in Greece  
I employ the Storm Police,  
In uniforms of brown;  
With hordes of hired thugs  
I suppress the silly mugs  
Why try to pull me down.

Humpty: I sit and wobble on my wall,  
And I'll sit and wobble till I fall -

Chorus: And we'll never hear those birdies call  
While he sits and wobbles on his wall.

Peter: Thank you, Mr. Humpty Dumpty, for the song. It was very beautiful.

Humpty: The song isn't quite true, you know. I really do a lot of things besides just sitting on my wall. Arithmetic, for instance.

Peter: Arithmetic?

Humpty: Yes - multiplying my profits, adding to my family, and squaring the Manpower Officers.

Peter: You must have worked very hard to build up this lovely big wall?

Humpty: Oh, quite, quite. The amount of money I put into cotton underpants and Jews' Harps for the Maoris in Ao Toheroa, for instance, was very considerable. Still, it was fairly easy in Ao Toheroa. They're a lot of suckers there - the Plunket system shows that.

Peter: Well, I think I'd better be going, Mr. Humpty Dumpty. I wonder if you could tell me which way I ought to go?

Humpty: Where do you want to go, my child? Or would you rather whisper?

Peter: I'm looking for the way to a Better World.

(The effect of this on Humpty Dumpty is electric. He goes purple in the face, and wobbles dangerously to and fro.)

Humpty: (Furiously) A Better World! You are a spy of the Red King then! Help! help! Shoot him, soldiers!

(The Soldiers kneel down and aim at Peter, who flees off stage, left. The Soldiers shoot after him wildly, and Humpty Dumpty weeps and wobbles in rage. The lights fade, and there is a black-out! After a short pause, Peter is seen walking on stage, right. He walks across the stage to where a large apple tree is standing, left. Peter is about to pick an apple, when a voice calls out and startles him.)

Voice: Would you like to have pieces picked off you?

Peter: Who - who's that?

(A head appears at the top of the trunk of the apple tree, and the light gets a little stronger. We see that the apple tree is really a man, with his arms held out like branches and his body encased in a brown trunk-like tube.)

Appletree: I am Holy Willie Appletree, the Mayor of Blunderland.

Peter: Well, Mr. Appletree, can you tell me where to go?

Appletree: Oh yes - I'm very good at telling people where to go. But before you go anywhere, you simply must have a Civic Reception. Are you distinguished? You don't look very distinguished. Would you like me to show you the sights of our beautiful city - the mansions of Newtown and the dinky little palaces of Tinakori Road?

Peter: Oh no, thank you all the same. I'm looking for the way to a Better World. And when I told Humpty Dumpty that, he ordered his soldiers to shoot me. (Rubbing his behind) Fortunately, they only winged me.

Appletree: Quite right, quite right. It's dangerous to look for Better Worlds, child. I never tried in all my life - and look at me now, Mayor of Blunderland.

Peter: If you please, Mr. Appletree, I really would like to be directed there. Do you know where the Better World is to be found?

Appletree: Tush, child! I'm a very busy man - I haven't got time to waste on such trivialities as a Better World. You can ask at the Caucus Race-Course, if you like - that's just round the corner past Te Aro Flat. Now, before you go, I'm sure you'd like to hear me recite the speech I'm going to use to welcome Lord Sucking-Pige when he arrives in Blunderland next week.

Peter: Well, Mr. Appletree, that's very good of you, but I -

Appletree: (Magnanimously) No trouble at all, I assure you.  
 (Orates) As Mayor of this beautiful city set in the Southern Seas, it is with the most obsequious delight and pleasure that I welcome you, Lord Sucking-Pigge, and your gracious - er - pardon me, Lord Sucking-Pigge, is she your wife? Thank you - Your gracious wife, Lady Sucking-Pigge. The citizens of Blunderland, whose representative I am, . . . .

(Peter has commenced to creep out stealthily at the beginning of this speech, stopping every time Appletree looks to the side. Finally, he manages to rush off-stage, right, and Appletree's voice fades away. There is a dim-out, and when the lights go on again, the Caucus Race-Course is disclosed to our view.

Down stage left is a stall like those at Fairs and Shows, with a canvas awning above it, and piles of cakes, sandwiches, and bottles of all descriptions standing upon it. There is a chair at the end, and three chairs behind it. Protruding diagonally down-stage from the wings right centre is a grass bank, on which are sitting a dozen or so spectators, with their backs to the audience, apparently watching a race which is going on in a field below them. The Backcloth shows a race-course, with the grandstand at the opposite side of the track. Behind the stall are sitting the Harsh Hare, the Dormouse, and the Mad Hatter, all dressed as in "Alice", except that, of course, the Mad Hatter wears a large bowler hat. The Dormouse is fast asleep. On the side of the stall is written, "Caucus Race-Course. Refreshments." Peter enters right, and walks over to the Refreshment Stall.)

Mad Hatter et alia: No room! No room!

Peter: (Sitting down in the chair at the end of the stall)  
 There's plenty of room.

Harsh Hare: Are you a Stalinite, Leeite, Hoganite, Buchmanite, or Termite?

Peter: (Puzzled) I don't think so.

Harsh Hare: Then you may sit down. Have some wine.

Peter: (Looking around) I don't see any wine.

Mad Hatter: There isn't any. But there will be - if our team beats the opposition's in the Grand Election Hack Handicap next year.

Peter: What races are being run today?

Harsh Hare: The heats, child - the heats for the big race next year. I've just been getting the runners ready - giving them their running shoes, you know.

Peter: And can anyone enter for the heats?

Harsh Hare: Oh, anyone can enter if he pays his half-dollar - except, of course, Stalinites, Leeites, Hoganites, Buchmanites, Term -

Mad Hatter: You're not a Red Pawn, are you? The Red Pawns are always trying to worm their way into our team.

Harsh Hare: The dirty verminous bloodthirsty white-anting snufflebusters!

Mad Hatter: (Suddenly) Why is Bellamy's like Heaven?

Peter: Oh, a riddle! Yippee! I think I can guess that.  
 Let's see - er - long bars -

Mad Hatter: Do you mean that you think you can find an answer to it?



Peter: Exactly so.

Harsh Hare: Then you should say what you mean.

Peter: I do - at least, I mean what I say - that's the same thing, you know.

Mad Hatter: No the same thing a bit! Why, you might as well say that "I doff my hat when the miners are pleased," (doffs hat) is the same thing as "The miners are pleased when I doff my hat." Which isn't the case at all.

Peter: (Changing the subject) Why is the Dormouse asleep?

Mad Hatter: Because he's tired. He's our Left Wing, you know - he very rarely wakes up, thank God. When he does, we sit on him, or Big Jim does. His name's really Blank Tombstone.

Harsh Hare: (Eating a sandwich - gives a howl of rage) No butter! No butter! (To the Mad Hatter) You did this, you parasite! I told you you shouldn't have given that butter to your bloody miners.

Mad Hatter: (Doffing his hat hastily) It was the best butter.

Spectators: They're off! They're off! (Buzz of excited conversation from the bank, and off-stage.)

Peter: (Looking up-stage) They've started running!

Harsh Hare: Yes - they closed the Votalisator a few minutes ago.

Peter: Why, all the runners are White Pawns!

(Cheers and catcalls from the crowd. More cheering from off-stage.)

Peter: What on earth are they doing? They're standing on their heads and turning somersaults.

Harsh Hare: Of course! They'll need to be very good at that when they start running in the Grand Election Hack Handicap.

Peter: Look what they're doing now! They're pulling something that looks like a crayfish from side to side on the end of a string.

Harsh Hare: They're drawing a red herring across the trail. That's a most useful thing.

Peter: Now they're passing a great big animal from one to another. I think it's a deer.

Mad Hatter: That's called "Passing the Buck." It's most essential.

Peter: Now some people are running out from the grandstand, and the runners are jumping on top of them.

Harsh Hare: That's called Riding on the People's Backs. It's the easiest part of the race. (To the Mad Hatter) The race is nearly over. Are the refreshments ready?

Mad Hatter: They're O.K. Wake up, Dormouse. (He pours some water on it.)

Dormouse: (Waking up and shaking his head) I wasn't asleep. I heard every word you fellows were saying.

Harsh Hare: Tell us a story, Blank.

Peter: Oh, yes, please do, Mr. Tombstone.

Dormouse: Once upon a time there was a job going as Minister to Washington, (His voice rising to a scream) AND I OUGHT TO HAVE GOT IT! (He falls asleep).

(There is a final burst of cheering from the crowd.)

Harsh Hare: The race is over. It doesn't take as long as it used to.

Mad Hatter: No. They used to go onwards and upwards. Now they only go round and round. (To Peter) Would you like to help serve the refreshments?

Peter: Oh, yes, if I may. What do you serve the people with?

Mad Hatter: There's boloney -

Harsh Hare: And apple sauce -

Mad Hatter: And tripe -

Harsh Hare: And bullswool -

Mad Hatter: And raspberries - lots of lovely food.

Peter: Who won the race?

Harsh Hare: Everybody has won - but no one's going to get any prizes! At least, not until we pick the team. This race hasn't really got anything to do with the selection of the actual starters, you know.

Spectators: Here they come! Here they come! The Caucus! The Caucus!

(Cheers and cat-calls. The Caucus, consisting of a Chorus of White Pawns, surrounded by more Spectators wearing pink rosettes, enters, hot and flushed. There is an excited babble of noise as they grab refreshments from the stall, and the White Pawns line up at the front of the stage. The orchestra strikes up the air of the Caucus song. The Pawns sing "one, two, three, four," etc., and the Spectators clap their hands in time to the music.)

#### CHORUS - WHITE PAWNS AND SPECTATORS.

(Air - "The Caissons Come Rolling Along".)

Pawns: What a pace, what a pace, we have run the Party's race,

Chorus: And the Caucus comes rolling along.

Pawns: "Just sit tight, you'll be right," all the Ministers recite,

Chorus: As the Caucus comes rolling along.

Pawns: And we say, "Yes, yes, yes" to each Minister's address,  
But somehow it always turns out wrong -  
Though we shrink, though we stink, we would rather sink than think,

Chorus: As the Caucus comes rolling along.  
As the Caucus comes rolling along.

(There is a very short ballet, consisting largely of simple movements, during which the Chorus is repeated. At the end of the Chorus, the Dormouse wakes up again. The Harsh Hare and the Mad Hatter try to suppress it.)

1st Pawn: The Dormouse is waking up!

Harsh Hare: He isn't - he's fast asleep.

Dormouse: I'm awake - I want to speak!

2nd Pawn: Come on - let's hear the Dormouse!

Pawns: Yes, let him speak! Give him a fair go! Down with him! etc., etc.

Dormouse: (When silence falls - drawing himself up to his full height - very impressively) NATIONALISE THE BANK OF AO TOHEROA!

(There is immediate consternation; everybody rushes hither and thither; the Mad Hatter and the Harsh Hare cry "Out of order! Out of order!", and various pawns echo the cry "Nationalise the Bank of Ao Toheroa". Then, out of the hubbub, one of the Pawns is heard to cry - "Ask the Kidderminster Cat". "What does the Cat say?" This is gradually taken up by the rest of the Pawns, and silence eventually falls.)

Harsh Hare: (Grudgingly) All right. We'll ask the Kidderminster Cat. (Calling) Wally!

(The Kidderminster Cat appears on the top of the grassy bank, and stands motionless for a moment. Some of the Pawns throw themselves prostrate on the floor.)

Cat: O.K., O.K. - let 'em have it if they want it. It won't make the slightest difference, anyhow.

(There is loud and enthusiastic cheering, and the Chorus of Pawns breaks out again into the Caucus song. During the Chorus, the Mad Hatter and the Harsh Hare endeavour to push the Dormouse into a large teapot on the stall.)

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(Blackout. After a few seconds, a spotlight catches Peter walking on stage right. To him comes the White Rabbit. Side spot, if possible, giving the effect of light coming in upon them from the end of a tunnel.)

Peter: (Pointing) Oh, look - at the end of the tunnel there - I do declare all the land's marked out just like a large chess-board! It's a huge game of chess that's being played all over the world! I wish I could join in the game!

White Rabbit: Well, I think you'd make a pretty good White Pawn. You've had some practice, anyway - I remember reading in the papers that Sid Holland was always checking you these days. You can be the White King's Pawn.

Peter: Oh, goody, goody! When do I start?

White Rabbit: Let's see now - you're on the second square now. The third square will be the Trial - the next is occupied by the Dock Turtle and the Gryphon. Then you'll find the Tweedles on the fifth - and in the sixth you'd better be careful, because that's the Duchess's kitchen, and she'll execute you if you aren't careful. The seventh square belongs to the White Knight, and then on the eighth square you'll become a real King. And you'll be banqueted by the Red King!

Peter: Really and truly? Wally always told me I'd be crowned some day, and now I know what he meant. But will I find the way to a Better World on my journey?

White Rabbit: Oh yes, child. All the people you'll meet will have the most interesting views on New Orders. (Sniffs the air) Oh, my tar and whitewash! Do you smell the Vodka in the air? It's the RED KING!

(There is a flash of light, and the Red King appears through the tabs. He is dressed like the Red King in "Alice", but wears a walrus moustache and a crown made of a hammer and sickle intertwined, and smokes a curved pipe.)

Red King: Mother of Marx! I just arrived in time. (To White Rabbit) You miserable Trotskyite! Here you are, sending the child off to be a King without giving him the proper examination!

White Rabbit: (Trembling) If you please, your comradeship - I - I -

Red King: Of all the dumb-witted and deviating lackeys of the bourgeoisie, you're the dumbest and most deviating. (To Peter) You can't be a King, you know, until you've passed the proper examination. And the sooner we begin it, the better.

Peter: (Terrified) But - if you please - do I have to pass an examination? Couldn't I be accredited?

Red King: Uncle of Engels, listen to the infant! Of course, you can't. First question: Why do University students always make jokes about toilet paper in their Extravanzas?

Peter: Well, - I - er -

White Rabbit: He is dumb, isn't he? Why, because toilet paper always goes down well, of course. Even I knew that.

Red King: Second question: If a manufacturer employs twenty men, and the Manpower takes one away, and then another, and another, and another, and another, and another, and another - what's the result?

Peter: Er - I lost count - I give up.

Red King: Quite right. That's exactly what the manufacturer does. Third question: Do you know what Grandma said to Grandpa during Fitness Week?

Peter: No.

Red King: Quite correct. Two out of three - that's quite a good pass. O.K., you can get going now.

(A voice is heard off-stage, shouting "The Trial's beginning!")

Red King: Are you going to the Trial?

Peter: Whose trial is it?



Red King: Don't get frightened - it isn't yours, yet. It's the Trial of the Y.M.C.A. versus the Reporters of "Veritas". Of course it isn't really a trial. It's really a new ballet put on by the Caravansky outfit called "The Y.M.C.A. Scandals", with choreography by Mr. R.H. Hippo.

White Rabbit: Come on - let's hurry or we'll miss the beginning!

(The White Rabbit and Peter rush off hand in hand, followed by the Red King. There is a blackout, and the curtain rises a few seconds later on the Court Scene. Upstage centre is an ornate dais covered with fleur-de-lis, below which is a small table for the Clerk. In a sort of two-decker box set diagonally at the right of the stage sit the Jurors. At the left of the stage a number of tables are set diagonally, behind which sit four Barristers in wigs and gowns, Mr. Humphrey O'Bluster being furthest down-stage. Behind the Barristers' tables are forms for onlookers. Peter, the Red King, and the White Rabbit sit together on these forms. All the music for the following scene, with the exception of the Boarders' Song and the Reporters' Song is taken from Sullivan's "Trial By Jury".)

RECIT. - CLERK.

Silence in Court!  
Silence in Court! The man who speaks expires!  
Behold your Judge - the Great Sir Cycle Tyres!

(Enter Sir Cycle Tyres, pompously, attired in wig and gown. He sits down on a chair set in his dais. The Jurors and Barristers sing.)

CHORUS

All: Oh learned friend  
We kiss your feet  
As you ascend  
The Judgment seat.

Jurors: All hail!  
Barristers: All hail!  
Jurors: All hail!  
All: All hail! All hail!

RECIT. - SIR CYCLE TYRES.

For these kind words accept my thanks, I pray -  
A case of Libel we've to try today.  
So call the defendants now without delay -  
We'll start the case of "Veritas" ats. Y.M.C.A.

(Enter, left, a Chorus of "Veritas" Reporters. As these have been dragged bodily from "Olympian Nights", it is hoped that the public has forgotten them. They still wear the same little black skirts, suspenders, and spectacles, and carry the same note-books. Their song also has the same tune. The Reporters are led by Mr. Clever Bane.)

CHORUS - VERITAS REPORTERS

Clever Bane: Our reputation's horrible  
Among the Upper Class -  
We're ostracised  
If it's surmised  
We work for "Veritas".  
I lead this band of brethren,  
My name is Clever Bane -  
But learn the truth,  
We're not uncouth,  
And rarely use cocaine.

Chorus: We write of rapes and arsons  
And the crimes of erring parsons,  
And we love a little murder now and then;  
We talk of shoddy sandals  
And expose a host of scandals,  
But we're really inoffensive little men.

Inoffensive little men,  
Temperance supporters;  
Innocent and charming folk -  
"Veritas" Reporters!

We diligently study  
Every murder if it's bloody,  
For we love a little murder now and then,  
And we often sit and wonder  
How despite our blood and thunder,  
We remain such inoffensive little men.

Inoffensive little men,  
Temperance supporters,  
Innocent and charming folk -  
"Veritas" Reporters!

(A Ballet of the Reporters, short and snoop, follows. At the conclusion of their Ballet, the Reporters bow, and sit cross-legged at the foot of the Judge's dais.)

#### RECIT. - SIR CYCLE TYRES

The plaintiffs now should soon appear;  
Their voices I can plainly hear -  
Those luscious maids - those ladies gay -  
The staff of the Y.M.C.A.

(Enter, left, a male ballet, of Y.M.C.A. Maids, wearing low-cut frocks and the usual quota of tennis-balls, hairy legs, etc. There is great interest among the Jurors, who whisper excitedly to one another, and the Reporters, who take copious notes in their notebooks.)

#### CHORUS - MAIDS

Full of indignation  
Come the libelled maids:  
Save our reputation  
Ere our beauty fades!  
Lovely limbs - observe them -  
Figures you'll adore -  
Who wish us to serve them,  
Could justly ask for more,  
Justly ask for more?

All: With such figures to adore,  
Who could justly ask for more?  
With such figures to adore,  
Who could justly ask for more,  
Who could justly ask for more,  
Who could justly ask for more.

(A Male Ballet of the Maids and the "Veritas" Reporters follows. It should be short and ardent. At the conclusion of the Ballet, the Reporters return disconsolately to their former places, and the Maids sit in the Jurors' box on the Jurors' knees.)

#### RECIT. - CLERK

Humphrey O'Bluster!

RECIT. - HUMPHREY O'BLUSTER, K.C.

May it please you, Sir Cycle,  
Gentlemen of the Jury!

Oh, I am the great O'Bluster,  
I'm the cream of all K.C.'s;  
I'm a legal filibuster,  
And I charge enormous fees.  
In my wig and gown resplendent,  
I appear for the defendant.

All: In his wig and gown resplendent,  
He appears for the defendant.

O'Bluster: Do not let these maids divert you  
With the swaying of their hips;  
You can calculate their virtue  
By the lipstick on their lips;  
You should rather place reliance  
On the evidence of my clients!

All: We don't want to place reliance  
On the evidence of his clients.

(Enter, left, a Chorus of Boarders from the Y.M.C.A., a miserable set of youths, extremely grubby and unkempt.)

CHORUS - Y.M.C.A. BOARDERS

(Air - "Who'll Do It This Time.")

Oh, there's lice in the washtub,  
And vermin in the soup;  
The matron has the measles,  
And the cleaners have the croup.

They haven't cleaned the bathroom  
Since last St. Patrick's day -  
We're all pals together  
At the Y.M.C.A.

Oh, there's spiders in the bedclothes,  
And garbage in the sink;  
You're not allowed to gamble,  
And you're not allowed to drink.

The maids are very bashful  
And never want to play -  
We're all pals together  
At the Y.M.C.A.

(The Boarders dance out miserably, repeating their last Chorus.)

RECIT. - FOREMAN OF THE JURY

We have come to our decision,  
All of us without division:  
We decide at once for these  
Luscious ladies on our knees.  
If our firm decision rankles  
Gaze upon their lovely ankles,  
Shell-like ears and raven tresses -  
Think of them in bathing-dresses!

Jury: In this solemn judgment-hall,  
That's the verdict of us all!

(The Jurors and the Maids advance to the centre of the stage, and the other characters in the scene crowd around them. Peter and his two friends stand watching.)

CHORUS - ENSEMBLE.

Maids: Well, thank Jehovah,  
The Trial is over,  
We're all **in** clover,  
The case is won!

Jurors: Their blows we parried,  
Their plans miscarried,  
And we'll get married  
Ere day is done!

Repos.: In other quarters  
The poor reporters  
With gins and waters  
Will drown their woe!

All: The wrongs are mended  
In manner splendid,  
The Trial is ended,  
And away we go.

All: Well, thank Jehovah, etc.

All: The wrongs are mended, etc.

All: Well, thank Jehovah, etc.

All: The wrongs are mended, etc.

(The whole Cast is dancing out when the curtain falls. It is the end of the first Act.)



(The curtain rises on a sea-shore, with rocks, sand, sea, etc. The ocean can be seen stretching out to the horizon, and a low wall at the water's edge runs across the rear of the stage. There are one or two rocks scattered about on which the various characters stand. On a grassy bank, left, is standing Holy Willie Appletree, and in his shade are resting a number of Land Girls. On a rock, up centre, Haybell Cowyard is standing, singing to the Land Girls. On an ornate throne, right, the Gryphon is lying, asleep. He is dressed as the Gryphon in "Alice".)

SOLO AND CHORUS - HAYBELL COWYARD AND LAND GIRLS.

(Air - "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree.")

Don't sit under the apple tree, there's plenty of work to do,  
The cows begin to moo, for milking time is due. Yes, yes,  
yes, yes.

So don't sit under the apple tree, my little ingenue -  
The cows are coming home.

Don't sit under the apple tree, or in the alien corn,  
The sheep are being shorn, and lambs are being born, Yes, Yes,  
yes, yes.

Don't sit under the apple tree, when the shepherd blows his  
horn,  
The cows are coming home.

The cows are pipped  
If they don't get stripped,  
So pull, my sisters, pull!  
The only male  
By the old cow-bail  
Is an ugly Jersey Bull.

So don't sit under the apple tree - the cows have sat there too,  
The cows are coming home!

Chorus: Don't sit under the apple tree, etc.

(A short tap ballet could appropriately follow at this juncture.  
Peter enters towards the end of the Ballet, and watches.)

Peter: Excuse me, Madame - could you tell me the way to a Better  
World?

Haybell: Haven't the slightest, son. But the Dock Turtle may be  
able to tell you?

Peter: Who's that? I don't even know what a Dock Turtle is.

Haybell: Well, here he is, waddling along the beach now - and  
he shall tell you his story.

Peter: But who are you, anyway?

Haybell: My name is Haybell Cowyard. I'm an M.P., you know -  
and they made me leader of the Land Girls because I wanted a cushy  
job - in case I don't win in the Grand Election Hack Handicap next  
year. And they couldn't get away with giving any more jobs to  
defeated candidates - so they gave me this one while I'm still in  
office.

Peter: And what do you and these girls do?

Haybell: Oh, we strip cows in the virgin fields. You like it,  
don't you girls?

Girls: Oh, yes - we love stripping.

Haybell: And all our vices are guaranteed, too.

(Enter the Dock Turtle, right, slowly and mournfully. He is dressed as in "Alice", except that he wears no mask, but his face is adorned with horn-rimmed spectacles and a soulful expression. He is sobbing deeply into his handkerchief.)

Haybell: (To Turtle) This young man wants to know your story.

Turtle: (In a deep, hollow tone) I'll tell it him. Sit down, both of you, and don't say a word till I've finished.

(Peter and Haybell sit down with the Land Girls under Holy Willie Appletree.)

Turtle: (After a long pause - striking his breast) Mine is a hard case! Once I was a real Turtle, the idol of the Commercial Broadcasting Service - and paid fifteen hundred a year for being idle, too. Uncle Scrimatra, they used to call me. At the sound of my golden voice oozing out of the loudspeaker, young maids would swoon, and elderly spinsters would go all Freudian. (He sobs) Now all that is gone for ever! (He sobs) I'm going away!

(The Land Girls, who have been visibly affected by the Dock Turtle's story, rush over and surround him. The orchestra very softly plays the tune of "Somebody Else is Taking My Place".)

Girls: Oh, Unkie! You're not going away! No, stay here! Ah, Uncle Scrimatra! Don't leave us! etc., etc.

Turtle: (Reciting) Ah, what it is to have a friend,  
To ease your life when it starts getting to  
its end. Isn't that a sad thought? No, girls. My mind has been  
made up for me.

Girls: Sing us a song before you go! Yes, sing us a song!  
We'll die if you don't, etc., etc.

Turtle: All right, girls, all right - now give me some air,  
please.

### SONG - DOCK TURTLE

(Air - "I Couldn't Sleep a Wink Last Night".)

I couldn't sleep a wink last night;  
At 2ZB we had a fight.  
I would have been there still, but for that row,  
I'm sure that they'll be sorry, but I'm sorry now.  
It all seems like a dreadful dream,  
That night on which we all got tight.  
They're sure to call me up this morning,  
To send me overseas and make me fight -  
Yes, they're sure to call me up this morning,  
So I couldn't sleep a wink last night!

(During the last few lines of this song, a number of the Land Girls who are sitting on the sea-wall, swoon, and fall over into the sea. They remain there.)

Turtle: Isn't that a sad story?

Peter: It is, indeed. But why do they call you the Dock Turtle, Uncle Scrimatra?

Turtle: Well, I tried to get a a job on the wharf, you see. But it didn't come off, and now I'm going away to a better world.

Peter: (Excited) To a Better World? But that's just where I want to go!

Turtle: I'm travelling to a land far across the sea, where the microphones are made of solid gold.

Peter: Surely you mean the country I come from - Ao Toheroa, the Land of the Long White Shroud?

Turtle: No, child I mean Bossfailure, the Land of the Long Pink Curtain.

Peter: Will you take me with you, Uncle Scrimatra?

Turtle: Are you an infant prodigy? Are you a virtuoso of the violin, or a maestro of the Marimbaphone?

Peter: No, I'm afraid I'm not very talented.

Turtle: Then I'm sorry I must go alone,  
Over the seas to my lovely new home;  
I would not trust your precious little life  
To the stormy seas, with their awful raging strife.

Isn't that a beautiful thought?

(The Gryphon at this stage gives a very loud snore.)

Peter: Please, Uncle Scrimatra, what is that?

Turtle: That, child, is a Gryphon. It is almost extinct, but you can still find one or two on the black market. You see it has a lion's legs - British to the core, of course - and wings. We call this one the Gryphoner-General. It's name is Sir Cyril Knowall.

Peter: What does it do?

Turtle: The White King sent it out to look after Humpty Dumpty's wall. Well, I must be off. The Gryphoner-General doesn't like me at all. Just because I didn't want to become one of the King's men. Goodbye, little boy. Goodbye, Haybell. Goodbye, dear girlies.

(He mounts the sea-wall. The Gryphon sits up in his chair and blinks his eyes. The Girls crowd round the Turtle.)

Turtle: Well, there's one consolation - now I've gone, those bloody Varsity students won't be able to throw off at me any more in their extravaganzas.

(He lowers himself into the water. The Land Girls weep bitterly; one or two leap into the water after him; the others walk sadly off stage, followed by Haybell Cowyard.)

Appletree: (Sadly) Just like that! And he wouldn't even let me give him an official farewell in the Concert Chamber!

(Exit Holy Willie Appletree, disconsolately.)

Gryphon: TensHUN! Who are you, boy?

Peter: My name is Peter - I'm looking for the way -

Gryphon: Silence! What are you doing here?

Peter: If you please, Sir, I'm looking for the way to a Better -

Gryphon: You aren't a spy of the Red King, are you?

Peter: No. (In a burst) I'm looking for the way to a Better World.

Gryphon: A better world? How could there be a better world? I mean, one can sleep and eat and drink and sleep and eat -

Peter: Yes, but I mean a world where there aren't any wars or depressions or eruptions of Mount Ruapehu -

Gryphon: Well, you know, my lad - all that's the struggle for existence, you know - er - the survival of the Grade Four, and all that sort of thing.

Peter: So there really isn't any way to a Better World?

Gryphon: Oh, yes - you could make it a lot better. Put the women back in the kitchen, my boy. Then there'd be lots more babies - and lots more baby shows for me to open. (Looking at his watch) I must go, my child. I have to address the Armed Forces at Ngahauranga, and there'll be an awful stink if I don't get there in time. Where's my speech? (Takes a piece of paper from his pocket, and reads) Here it is.

(He walks off stage slowly, reading his speech.)

Gryphon: (Reading) Men of the Army, lads of the Navy, and Gentlemen of the Royal Air Force. It is with the greatest of pleasure that I, the representative of -

(His voice fades away. Peter comes forward towards the footlights, Dimout. When the lights go up again, Peter is standing in front of the tabs.)

Peter: Well, all this is very discouraging indeed. I wonder whether -

(There is a heavy tread behind him, and he spins round, to see Tweedlesid and Tweedlelee march in and halt, perfectly motionless, near the left entrance. They are dressed as in "Alice", but their make-ups are, of course, distinctive.)

Peter: (Delighted) Well, if it isn't Tweedlesid and Tweedlelee! Let's see - how does the rhyme go?

Tweedlesid and Tweedlelee  
Fought with sword and sabre,  
Each thought the other one would be  
A crueller foe than Labour.

But when they saw the masses go  
And purchase pink apparel,  
It frightened both these heroes so  
They quite forgot their quarrel.

(Peter goes over and inspects the figures closely).

Tweedlelee: If you think we're waxworks, you ought to pay, you know.

Tweedlesid: We're not really dumb, even though we look it, you know.

Peter: I'm sure I'm very sorry.

Tweedlelee: Nohow!

Tweedlesid: Contrariwise!

Peter: If you please, gentlemen -

Tweedlesid: Do you like poetry?

Peter: Yes, some poetry. Can you tell me the way to a Better world?

Tweedlesid: Which one shall we repeat to him?



Tweedlelee: The one about ourselves is the longest.

Tweedlesid: (Reciting) Tweedlesid and Tweedlelee -

Peter: If it's very long, would you please tell me where I can find -

Tweedlesid: (smiling gently)

Tweedlesid and Tweedlelee  
Were filled with anguish dread;  
They wept like anything to see  
Such quantities of red.  
"If Labour could be cleared away  
It would be grand," they said.

Tweedlelee: "If seven press proprietors  
Attacked them for half a year,  
Do you suppose", asked Tweedlelee,  
"That they would disappear?"  
"We've tried that", answered Tweedlesid,  
And shed a bitter tear.

Tweedlesid: "O workers, come and join our throng",  
Did Tweedlelee beseech;  
"Just pay your sub, and join our club,  
And I shall make a speech.  
A few will do, for that is all  
That I can hope to reach."

Tweedlelee: And when he heard him, Tweedlesid  
Began to laugh and gloat;  
He jumped with joy, and with his hand  
His hairy chest he smote.  
"This is the very thing", said he,  
"To split the Labour vote."

Tweedlesid: A few young workers hurried up,  
And bourgeoisie galore,  
And thick and fast they came at last,  
And more and more and more.  
And each one was for Tweedlelee  
Prepared to shed his gore.

Tweedlelee: Tweedlesid and Tweedlelee  
Seduced the workers thus,  
And in th' Election Handicap  
Poor Peter missed the bus;  
And all the workers gathered round,  
Their wages to discuss.

Tweedlesid: "The time has come", said Tweedlesid,  
"To talk of many things;  
Of cuts, slave-camps, and income-tax,  
Of grafts, and pulling strings.  
Of hours of work, and holidays,  
And combines, trusts and rings".

Tweedlelee: "Don't cut our pay", the workers cried,  
Turning a little blue;  
After such promises, that would be  
A dismal thing to do!"  
"Excuse me, gents", said Tweedlesid,  
"But that is ballyhoo".

Tweedlesid: "I weep for you", said Tweedlesid,  
"I deeply sympathise";  
For income-tax he sorted out  
Those of the smallest size.  
"We can't tax companies", he said -  
"Nohow! Contrariwise!"

Tweedlelee: "O workers dear", said Tweedlesid,  
 "Your wages have been halved;  
 Now isn't that a funny thing!"  
 But not a worker laughed.  
 And this was scarcely odd, because,  
 The bloody lot had starved.

Peter: I liked Tweedlesid best - at least he felt a little sorry for the poor workers.

Tweedlelee: Yes, but he did more dirty work than Tweedlelee - because Tweedlelee missed the bus at the Election Handicap, too, and Tweedlesid had to cut the workers' wages all on his own.

Peter: Yes, that's true. Then I like Tweedlelee best, if he didn't do as much dirty work as Tweedlesid.

Tweedlesid: But he did as much dirty work as he could.

Peter: Well, in that poem you both appear as very unpleasant characters. I only hope the poem doesn't come true. Now, gentlemen, I wonder if you could tell me the Way to a Better World?

Tweedlelee: Well, you can go through Bolton Street cemetery -

Tweedlesid: Past the Brewery -

Tweedlelee: How dare you mention breweries to me? After that insult, I suppose you agree to have our usual battle?

Tweedlesid: Yes, it's about time we staged another one, just to try to make people think we're on opposite sides of the fence.

Peter: Do you fight very seriously?

Tweedlesid: I hit everything I see when I get excited.

Tweedlelee: And I hit everything whether I can see it or not. You ought to read Tweedlelee's Weekly.

(Suddenly a red glow begins to cast itself over the scene. Peter and the others look about them apprehensively.)

Peter: What's that?

Tweedlelee: I don't know. I'm told there's some important meeting on in the Duchess's kitchen - I wonder if it's anything to do with that?

Tweedlesid: Look - it's coming nearer - it's the Red King - it's the MONSTROUS JOE!

Tweedlesid: (Trembling) We can't stay here! Nohow!

Tweedlelee: Contrariwise!

(Tweedlesid and Tweedlelee rush out. The red glow gets brighter, and a rushing of wings is heard. There is a large thump as of a body landing on the ground. The orchestra strikes up "Invitation to the Dance", and the curtains part to reveal the Duchess's kitchen.)

(The interior of the Duchess's kitchen is seen. It is a small room with two casement windows, one on each side. Through one of them, Peter is seen watching the proceedings throughout the scene. On the left hand side of the stage a large gas stove is seen, cluttered up with a large number of pots and pans. In the centre of the stage is set a large cauldron, with a fire burning beneath it. Other kitchen utensils and furniture ad lib. At the centre of the back wall is hung a shield bearing a coat of arms, consisting of a bull-dog rampant, with the words "Duchess of Marlborough"

beneath it. An arm-chair stands left, near which the Duchess, dressed as in "Alice" but with distinctive make-up and cigar, is standing. She is soulfully sniffing a large bunch of deadly nightshade which she holds in her hand.

After the audience has drunk in the scene, the Duchess dances heavily over to the arm-chair, in time to the music, reclines in the chair and goes to sleep, the deadly nightshade dropping from her hand. At the appropriate moment in the music, La Spectre de La Roosevelt leaps in dramatically through the right casement window. He wears a costume made of stars and stripes, with a red rose in the centre of each star. He has rimless glasses, and smokes a cigarette in a holder. After an inspired solo dance a la Rubinstein, he kisses the sleeping Duchess loudly and tenderly on the cheek. She wakes.)

Duchess: Good heavens! La Spectre de la Roosevelt! What have you come to haunt me about this time? Now, once and for all, Franklin, it must be de Gaulle and Tito. And no more of your lend-lease kisses, either!

Spectre: No, Winnie, dear. What I came to see you about was this. I've discovered an old Red Indian book on witch-craft which contains a recipe for a magic soup that will stop another war from breaking out. I found it under one of the Dumbarton Oaks in the Bretton Woods. Security Soup, they call it.

(There is a flash of light, and the Red King leaps in through the window.)

Red King: Security soup, eh? You can't make that without me!

Spectre: The Red King!

Duchess: (To herself) Now, Winnie - don't be embarrassed - remember you're a lady, and a Marlborough! (Aloud) Well, if it isn't Joe! What a pleasant surprise! And the moral of that is, Too many cooks spoil the broth.

### TRIO - DUCHESS, SPECTRE AND RED KING

(Air - "Three Little Sisters")

All: The three mighty planners, beneath united banners,  
Are meeting here to talk today;

Duchess: One comes from England -  
Red King: One comes from Russia -  
Spectre: And one comes from the U.S.A.

All: The Germans and Japanners abhor the mighty planners,  
They know that this is judgment day;  
Duchess: So they say in Malta -  
Red King: So they say in Yalta -  
Spectre: And so they say in U.S.A.

All: Though the Polish landlords whine,  
We intend to shove them back  
To the good old Curzon Line -  
The three mighty planners will teach the blight-  
ers manners,  
And rob the vultures of their prey -  
So say the planners - the mighty Teheranners -  
Duchess: From England -  
Red King: Russia -  
Spectre: And U.S.A.

(There is a short ballet, dancing round cauldron, etc.)

Spectre: And now to make the magic Security Soup. I bet they don't brew anything like this in Invercargill.

(The Red King produces from his bosom two witch's caps and two black cloaks, which he and the Duchess don. The Spectre puts on a white cook's cap and apron, and begins to stir the soup with a rifle. The Red King and the Duchess dance around the cauldron a la "MacBeth", chanting wildly.)

Red King: Where hast thou been, sister?

Duchess: Killing swine.

Both: When shall we three meet again,  
In Moscow, London or in Spain?  
When the hurly-burly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.  
Blood and tears and toil and sweat -  
Bubble, cauldron, fiercer yet!

(The Spectre takes from the sideboard a large scroll, with the words "Atlantic Cooking Charter" written on it. The Duchess and the Red King look over the Spectre's shoulder as they dance past, reading the ingredients and dropping suitable articles into the cauldron.)

Red King: A little trust, a lot of "Truth",

Duchess: Musso's left-hand molar tooth,

Red King: A little dope and balderdash,

Duchess: A strand of Hitler's black moustache,

Red King: Goering's medals, Himmler's glove,

Duchess: A little force, a lot of Love -

(Suddenly they stop, puzzled, looking at the recipe).

Duchess: A piece of democracy? We haven't got any in the kitchen.

Spectre: Have a look in the servants' quarters.

Duchess: I remember Sir Walter Latrine said he found a lot in Finland - but then he's such an awful liar you can't believe a word he says.

Red King: We have plenty of democracy in Russia.

Duchess: (Shuddering) Please, please, Joe, none of that kind of talk here! This is a respectable house. The servants might hear.

Spectre: Respectable, huh? Was it respectable when you drove poor poor Count Scorchier out into the cold cold snow at three o'clock in the morning?

Duchess: He insulted my virtue.

Spectre: He did not!

Duchess: He did so!

Spectre: Didn't!

Duchess: Did!

(And so on, ad lib. The Spectre grabs various pots and fire-irons and throws them at the Duchess, who catches them and hurls them back again. The Red King sits watching, impassively sucking his curved pipe. One pan hits Peter, and another flies into the wings, and a baby begins crying.)



Duchess: There now - look what you've done! You've wakened the brat with your arguing.

Spectre: I say - couldn't we christen the baby "Democracy", and get over the difficulty that way?

Duchess: Franklin, you're a genius - for an American. Of course, we can! And the moral of that is - Necessity is the mother of intervention!

(The Duchess runs off to bring in the baby. The Red King produces a bottle labelled "Vodka". The baby howls very loudly.)

Spectre: Hurry up - christen it quickly, before the soup gets too cold.

Duchess: (Breaking the bottle over the baby's head) I name this baby Democracy, and may the Lord bless all who sail in her.

(The baby howls even more loudly.)

Red King: I say, can't you keep that baby quiet? Sing it a lullaby or something.

(The Duchess nurses the baby, shaking it wildly as she sings the following little ditty.)

Duchess: (Singing)

Speak roughly to your little boy,  
And send out General Scabies;  
That's the way you make them coy,  
If they are naughty babies!

Trice: And how! And how! And how!

Spectre: (Looking at book) There's another ingredient here that you're not likely to keep in the kitchen. Honour.

Duchess: Honour? On her what?

Spectre: No, Honour. You know, knights, and escutcheons, and all that sort of thing.

Duchess: Oh, I've got an escutcheon. (Points to shield on wall) It belonged to the dear old Duke. He got it at the Battle of Blenheim - you know, fighting to get on the Wellington 'plane. And the moral of that is, First come, first served - except for Members of Parliament.

Spectre: Well, fetch it down, then.

Duchess: (Standing on chair to get shield) By the way, how are the folk in the oven getting on?

(The Spectre takes a large hat-pin, opens the other door, prods inside and inspects the pin.)

Spectre: Hm. hm. Muss is done to a cinder. Hit is frizzling nicely, and dear old Tojo's gradually getting browned off.

Duchess: The old escutcheon's still pretty bright, even though it did get a bit tarnished in Greece. And the moral of that is, Elas, Elas!

Spectre: Now for the soup. First the Honour - (The Duchess throws in the shield . . . then the Democracy . . . The Duchess throws in the baby.)

Both: (Chanting and dancing)

Blood and toil and tears and sweat,  
Bubble, cauldron, fiercer yet!

Red King: STOP!

(The Duchess and the Spectre back away in alarm).

Red King: There's a dirty little insect in the soup, spoiling it.

(He puts his fingers into the cauldron, and pulls out, with an expression of acute disgust, a little figure wearing a khaki uniform and a moustache).

All: GENERAL FRANCO!

(Blackout. When the lights go up again, Peter is seen in front of the tabs near the foots. Enter, left, a large fat gentleman, dressed as the White Knight in "Alice", and mounted on a peculiar horse whose back is about six feet from the ground. This is the White Knight, alias Barkus Trimmer, the dramatic critic of the "Opinion". He speaks oratorically. Peter stares at the strange figure spell-bound.)

White Knight: I see that you're admiring my horse.

Peter: It - it's a very high horse, isn't it?

Knight: It's my own invention. It enables me to ride the high horse wherever I go.

Peter: I'm looking for the way to a Better World. Can you tell me where it is to be found?

Knight: (Very excited) Ah, here, my child, here! (He falls off his horse.)

Peter: (Running to help him up.) Oh, dear, are you hurt?

Knight: Not at all, child, not at all. (He manages to get back on to the High Horse.) Did you notice I was looking rather thoughtful when you helped me up?

Peter: You were a little grave.

Knight: I was thinking up my review for tomorrow morning's "Opinion". It will be all my own invention.

Peter: Indeed? But, Sir - you said the Better World was here. Is it really, Sir? I'm awfully interested.

Knight: Indeed, it is. But if we're going to talk about art, do you object if I speak in blank verse? It isn't my own invention - others, alas, have done it - but it suits my mood more.

Peter: Oh, yes - I don't mind.

Knight: O rash intruder in these sacred groves!  
O vile invader of these holy haunts!  
Know you that I am Barkus Trimmer - I  
Who in the founts of art have drenched myself!  
(Modestly) You'll read my stuff in the "Opinion".

Peter: Well, Mr. Trimmer, I'm glad to meet you. And you say the Better World's here?

Knight: Here, here, my friend, here in these holy haunts  
Of Art, the Better World is manifest.  
So stray no further, pilgrim - rest thou here!  
Attend first nights with me, and hear the sound  
Of crackling shirt fronts - smell the scent of  
moth-balls.

Peter: Personally, I don't go much on this Art stuff. And first nights I'm sure must be awfully embarrassing. But I'll try anything once.

Knight: Stay here, then, friend. In half a minute's time, The men and maids of Ranterbury College, Will play us "Hamlet", dressed fantastically In ultra-modern dress. Wilt stay and see?

Peter: But certainly: I shall be glad to do so.  
My God! I'm talking in blank verse myself!

(The Knight falls off his horse, picks himself up, and addresses the audience oratorically.)

Knight: Ladies and gentlemen! The students of Ranterbury College will now present that murky melodrama "Hamlet", in ultra-modern dress. The play is produced by that distinguished woman of letters, Clio Harsh, author of such masterpieces as "Murder in the Morgue" and "Death in the W.C." There will be Occidental Music by Douglas Stillborn. The settings are - oh, I beg your pardon - this is a modern play, so there wont be any settings. The background is provided by M.G.M.'s Celestial Choir. So now - ring up the curtain on this most colossal of all shows, in gorgeous technicolour, with a cast of thousands. Oh - wait a minute. I forgot something. (Hastily) Book by William Shakespeare. Now, ring up the curtain.

(The curtain is rung up on an empty stage. The orchestra begins to tune up)

Knight: But hark! There wafts into my listening ear  
The dulcet strains of Douglas Stillborn's music.  
(Drummer swings it)  
With what finesse, with what intense restraint  
That drummer plays! (Trumpeter swings it.)  
O fine interpretation!  
What masterly acuteness, depth, and feeling!

Orchestra: We are but tuning up, Sir.

Knight: Ha - is't so? (Weeps)

(Three men in overcoats, hats, and carrying large travelling bags and alarm clocks, walk slowly across the stage. The alarm clocks are ringing lustily).

Peter: Mr. Trimmer, just what does that represent?

Knight: O donkey! Dolt! O dullest of the dull!  
Those are alarums, and excurs - i - ons!

(Hamlet, dressed in plus fours and smoking a cigar, enters meditatively. Marcellus and Horatio, dressed as American soldiers, are with him.)

Horatio: Say, buddie, d'you still reckon we didn't glimpse them spectres?

Hamlet: (Oxford accent) Well, you know, you had been drinking over-proof whiskey.

Marcellus: We're not taking you for a ride, pal. You just wait till you see 'em. (A clock strikes thirteen)

Hamlet: It is the very witching time of night,  
When revellers yawn, and cabarets shove out  
Their drunk upon the street. But what is this? (Sniffs)  
But pray, what is that smell like Rotorua?  
There's something rotten in the State of Denmark!

Horatio: That's the ghosts, buddy. They smell of fire and brimstone.

Marcellus: (Trembling) Here they come, Hamlet. Excuse me -  
(Orating) I have to go and interview a man  
Concerning a domestic an - i - mal! (Exits)

(Enter, to a swing version of "Onward Christian Soldiers", a Chorus of Bogie-Wogies.)

CHORUS OF BOGIE-WOGIES.

(Air - "Onward Christian Soldiers", swung)

Bogie-wogie spectres,  
From the yawning tomb:  
Swing it, trumpet, swing it -  
Drummer, let her boom!

At dead of night we spectres  
Are disembodied souls;  
In the daytime for our sins  
We jive upon the coals.

Bogie-wogie spectres,  
From the yawning tomb:  
Swing it, trumpet - swing it -  
Drummer, let her boom!

(A short jive ballet follows)

First Ghost: I am thy father's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain time to walk the night,  
And, for the day, confin'd to waste in fires  
With all these other bogie-wogies.

Hamlet: You're looking a bit peaky, Dad.

First Ghost: Hamlet, avenge my death!  
Claudius the King, while we were in the bar,  
Did pour some prussic acid in my beer,  
So that I died in awful agony.

Ghosts: (Singing) The old sod!

Hamlet: O earth! O heaven! O help! O everything!  
O villain, villain, villain, villain, villain!  
I shall avenge thee, father!

First Ghost: O.K. Swear!

Hamlet: Oh damn! Oh blast! Oh thrice three thousand bloodies!  
Forgive me, father, that I swear not more -  
The Censor cut out several juicy words.

First Ghost: All right, boys. Let's hop along and haunt  
Ophelia.

(The Ghosts exeunt, singing the last verse of their chorus.)

Hamlet: Well, who'd have thought it. Let's come and have a quick  
one, Horatio old pal. I need it.

Horatio: It's after closing time, old chap.

Hamlet: (Anguished) The time is out of joint! O cursed spite!  
I hope the Royal Commission puts it right!

(Blackout. Blues music. Spot on Knight and Peter.)

Knight: An int'resting experiment, forsooth!  
A great first Act! Didst thou not think so, infant?



Peter: Well, I liked the Bogie-Wogies. But I'd rather wait and see what comes next before I make up my mind. You see, my only experience of the drama is University extravaganzas, and I don't like those one little bit.

(Cut spot. Lights on inner stage. Ophelia, a very fat woman in evening dress, is doing exercises.)

Ophelia: O, that this too too solid flesh would melt!  
I should not have to do these exercises,  
And eat with care and circumspect - 1 - on.  
One, two, one, two, one, two.

(She continues with her exercises. Enter Hamlet.)

Hamlet: Hiya, Phelie.

Ophelia: Hotcha, toots.

Hamlet: How's the weight? Getting it down?

Ophelia: Only half an ounce today, I'm afraid, Hammy.

Hamlet: Well, I'm not going to marry you until you look a little less like a barrage balloon. I object to paying for two seats at the pictures for you.

Ophelia: Forget it, brother. I'm going to eat dripping every day. They say constant dripping wears away a stone.

Hamlet: Oh God, these puns! Get thee to a Punnery, go!

Ophelia: Say, are you going crackers? Turn on the radio - it's time for Dad and Dave.

Hamlet: (Soliloquising, while turning knob on radio set.)

2ZB or not 2ZB, that is the question.  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The Scrims and Daisies, and outrageous serials,  
Or to take arms against this heap of rubble,  
And, by switching off, end them.

(Polite applause from the White Knight.)

Radio: (Gong) The time is 8.18, and your station 2YD. Our next request comes from Lily of Lambton Quay, who asks for that celebrated Quartet, Rose and Crantz and Guild and Stern, singing that vital number "Rose and Crantz have ants in their pants". A very well-selected programme, Lambton Quay Lily.

(Gong. Blackout. Spot on Peter and Knight.)

Knight: Despite some strange misgivings, I am moved.  
How grim and ghastly, how completely Greek,  
Are these unclothed emotions! How my heart  
Doth flutter at the sound of Shakespeare's music!  
Let's see - the programme - what is next i' th' play?  
Ha ha - the Players scene - this should be good.

(Lights go up. Claudius (in dinner suit), Gertrude (in pyjamas), Hamlet (as before) and Ophelia (as before) are sitting at a card-table playing bridge.)

Claudius: You and Phelie are too good for us, Hammy.

Hamlet: (Gathering cards) Ay, there's the rub!

Gertrude: It's all your fault, Claude. Haven't you read your Culbertson? You know the good old rule:- Double, double - toil and trouble.

Claudius: You'd better be quiet, Gertie, or I'll tell the Gestapo you got those pyjamas on the black market.

Hamlet: Say, folks, can't we think of anything to do a bit more lively than playing cards? How about charades?

Gertrude: Suits me - so long as I don't have to do anything. These war-time Berleis are a bit restrictive, you know.

Claudius: Go on, Hammy - do your stuff.

Hamlet: O.K. I'll act the first word.

(He goes down on his hands and knees, and crawls round the room, baaing.)

Claudius: I've got it - it's me - a Great Dane!

Hamlet: It's a sheep, not a dog. The word is "ewe". Now for the second word.

(He pulls a kilt out of his pocket, puts it on, and does a little Scotch dance.)

Claudius: Oh, that's an easy one. "Macbeth".

Hamlet: The word is "kilt". Now for the last word.

(Hamlet stretches his hand up into the air, as if trying to reach something then leaps up into the air higher and higher.)

Gertrude: I know - Borovansky.

Hamlet: The word is "farther". That's all.

Claudius: I don't get it. "Ewe, kilt, farther". I can't understand all this complicated stuff - give me Brick Bradford every time.

Hamlet: (Striking a pose) You killed father! Come on, react, you bloody bawdy villain!

Claudius: I say, Hammy, what is all this hysterical nonsense?

Hamlet: Well, didn't you polish Dad off? The ghost said you did.

Claudius: The ghost must have been pulling your leg. Your father and I were in the bar, and he demanded that the barman shout. The barman wouldn't, so there was a brawl, and your father got hit over the head with a bottle of Waitemata.

Hamlet: Why, what an ass am I! But why did the ghost lie to me?

(Enter First Ghost, roaring with laughter)

First Ghost: My dear chap - there wouldn't have been any play if I hadn't, would there? You might have known it wasn't true, though - if it had been, how do you think any author could have got this show through the Hay's Office?

(Gong. Blackout. Spot on Peter and Knight.)

Knight: Strange - I remember not this turn of plot. I'll read the play before I write my blurb.

Peter: (Looking at programme over Knight's shoulder.) The programme says the next scene is the "Mad Scene". This should be pretty good, I think.

(Cut spot. Ophelia, clad in a bathing costume, enters and bows.)

SONG -OPHELIA.

(Air - Original Music, or, if nothing is forthcoming,  
a modified version of "An Apple for the Teacher".)

I'm nutty over Hamlet,  
I don't know right from wrong;  
If Hamlet coveted my charms  
I'd sell them for a song.  
I love your sweet soliloquies,  
I love the things you do -  
O Hamlet, Hamlet, Hamlet -  
I'm nutty over you!

I'm nutty over Hamlet,  
I don't know left from right.  
I woo him in the light of day,  
And dream of him at night,  
I think that I'm embraceable,  
I wish that you did too -  
O Hamlet, Hamlet, Hamlet -  
I'm nutty over you!

(Blackout. Gong. Spot on Peter and Knight.)

Knight: How dull is Hamlet that he sees not there  
The cream and flower of virgin womanhood!  
(Aside) I think I'll go back-stage when the show is over.

Peter: The next scene is the graveyard scene. It's apparently  
the last scene in the play. I hope it makes things a bit clearer,  
because I'm afraid I haven't understood very much of it yet.

(Cut spot. Lights up. The scene is the Karori Crematorium, with  
a large funnel stretching upwards towards the flies. Harpo, Chico,  
and Groucho Marx, dressed as in their films, are stoking a fire  
beneath the platform. An old man with huge whiskers stands left,  
watching.)

Marx Bros.: (Singing) Here we are again,  
Very sad and glum -  
Here we are at Karori  
In the Crematorium!

Groucho: Stoke up, boys. Ophelia was a hefty wench, and she'll  
need a lot of cooking.

Chico: I'm not used to this. I'm a sexton by trade.

Groucho: Trust you to choose a trade that's got something to do  
with sex.

Chico: How did this Ophelia dame meet her doom?

Groucho: Her whom?

Chico: Her doom.

Groucho: She wanted to reduce so she went in swimming at  
Oriental Bay and forgot she couldn't swim.

Chico: (Peeping at the whiskered man.) I say, don't look  
now, but I think we're being watched.

Groucho: I don't know who he is. He's either the Archangel  
Gabriel, or the first part of a Before and After advertisement.

(Enter Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude, dressed as before.)

Hamlet: Is she done yet, boys?

Groucho: About another five minutes, I reckon.

Hamlet: So long? O heavens! - put in an hour ago, and not done yet!

Chico: The coal's ersatz. The miners have struck.

Claudius: (To Gertrude) I say, Gertie, where are we going to put the ashes? I reckon on the Grand Piano.

Gertrude: Good God no, Claude. Do you want to spoil the look of that room entirely? No, I must be firm. They are to be framed and put in the hall next to the Van Gogh.

Hamlet: Am I not to get any of her? Not even a single tiny charred vertebrae?

Claudius: After all, Hammy, be reasonable. She was my daughter.

Groucho: (Lasciviously, to Gertrude) We won't let him into our little secret, will we Gertie?

Hamlet: I demand my rights! Just a fraction of fibia will do!

Claudius: They're going on the piano, Gertie.

Gertrude: (Screaming) By the Van Gogh!

Claudius: (Screaming) On the Grand Piano!

Hamlet: (Screaming) Just a little toe-bone!

Claudius: Ah, bully!

Hamlet: Hog!

Gertrude: Villain!

Hamlet: Dog of Houndsditch, die!

(Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude draw revolvers and shoot one another simultaneously. Their bodies collapse on the platform.)

Groucho: (Surveying the bodies) Oh well, boys, there's one consolation - we'll get double time for overtime.

(The old whiskered gentleman comes forward hesitatingly.)

Old Man: Excuse me one moment. Are you the three Marx Brothers?

Marx Bros.: We are.

Old Man: Then let me introduce myself. I am your long-lost brother, Karl.

Chico: Karl! Oh, Da's Capital! (They dance around him.)

Karl Marx: I am pleased to be present at this, the symbolic death of an epoch.

(He pushes the three bodies through the curtain into the furnace.)

Karl Marx: The expropriators are expropriated. It is the cremation of the cremation.

(Gong. Blackout. Spot on Peter and Knight.)

Peter: Well, I'm afraid I didn't understand much of that - did you, Mr. Trimmer?

Knight: (Mounting his horse, with Peter's help.)



O block! O stone! O worse than senseless thing!  
 Can you not see I'm writing my review?  
 Come, on your way, lout - interrupt me not.  
 (Reads) "Hamlet was played by A.J. Bandyson,  
 A little man, with most uncertain legs."  
 Hm - hm - not bad. That's rather good, I think,  
 Now what? "These students' pranks" - that's patronising,  
 And in my usual style . . .

(Mounted on the High Horse, the Knight wanders off, still writing his review. Peter looks around in dismay.)

Peter: Well, this is my last square - and I haven't found the way to a Better World yet.

(Suddenly he feels something heavy on his head. He looks up, and removes a golden crown.)

Peter: I'm a King! I'm a King!

(There is a flash, and the Red King appears, accompanied by the Red Knight.)

Red King: I see you've done it, Peter.

Peter: Yes - all by myself! I'm a King at last! I always had a sneaking hope I might squeeze into the Honours List somewhere - but this is far beyond my expectations.

Red King: Let me introduce you to a comrade of mine - Marshal Veto, the Red Knight of Frugalslavia. Marshal Veto - King Peter.

Red Knight: (Bursting with rage) King Peter? King Peter? At last! (Draws a long sword) I've been waiting for this moment for a long, long time.

Peter: (Clutching Red King's skirts) Help! Help! He's going to kill me!

Red King: Hang on, Veto - this is another King Peter. This one's quite harmless. (To Peter) Well, are you ready for the Banquet?

Peter: Oh yes, please - the White Rabbit told me you'd give me a banquet when I became a King.

(Enter a Chorus of Red Pawns, left, carrying bottles of Vodka, lunch baskets, etc.)

#### CHORUS OF RED PAWNS

(Air - "The Man on The Flying Trapeze.")

Then fill up the glasses with vodka and gin,  
 King Peter is here, let the banquet begin!  
 With Molotov cocktails and whiskey and tea  
 We'll welcome King Peter with thirty-times-three!

The samovar's ready, the vodka is brewed,  
 There's oceans of liquor and buckets of food;  
 So let us repair to the banqueting-shrine,  
 And welcome King Peter with ninety-times-nine!

Red King: All right, lads. We shall march in state to the Kremlin.

(They are about to march off, when a number of White Pawns rush on, right, together with the "Veritas" Reporters, Haybell Cowyard and DORMouse.)

Dormouse: If you please, your comradeship -

Red King: Veto, remove this bauble.

Haybell: We've revolted against the Caucus leaders, your comradeship. We've put the Mad Hatter and the Harsh Hare in the Legislative Council - that was the grimmest form of slow death we could think of.

Dormouse: And the Kidderminster Cat's wavering -

Clever Bane: And we've just about got the White Queen on our side -

Dormouse: And we want to break down Humpty Dumpty's wall!

White Pawns: Yes! Humpty Dumpty's wall! Break it down! etc., etc.

Red King: Now wait a minute, boys and girls. Breaking down Humpty Dumpty's wall isn't as easy as all that. He's got all the King's horses and all the King's men, you know. And we're only a few. Any ideas, Marshal Veto?

Red Knight: We need some pretty good strategy. Let's see. (To Peter) He trusts you, doesn't he?

Peter: Well, hardly. In fact, he was quite rude when I saw him last.

Red Knight: Yes, but you're a King now. That makes you politically safe in his eyes. O.K. (To Haybell) Did you say you'd almost got the White Queen on your side?

Haybell: Just about.

Clever Bane: We're working on her. You see, we managed to unearth a lot of interesting royal scandals -

1st Reporter: Disgraceful orgies at the palace!

2nd Reporter: The most unhealthy goings-on!

Clever Bane: And we threatened the White Queen that we'd publish them in "Veritas" if she didn't come over to our side. With flash-light photographs!

Red Knight: If that's so then - By Lenin, I think I have a plan. Gather round, comrades.

(The Pawns and others gather around the Red Knight conspiratorially)

Red Knight: Now the idea is this, you see. King Peter goes up to the wall, and tells Humpty Dumpty that the White Queen -

(Gradual dim-out. Red Knight's voice fades away. Lights up on wall scene, with Humpty Dumpty sitting on top of the wall, and the Soldiers guarding him as before.)

#### CHORUS OF SOLDIERS

Guard, oh guard our Humpty Dumpty,  
Watch, oh watch his crumbling wall!  
He's a wizard, he's a rumpty,  
We must guard against his fall.

(Enter Peter, left, a little nervously. Humpty Dumpty sees him and wobbles dangerously.)

Humpty: There's that damned spy again! Capture him!

(The Soldiers surround Peter.)

Humpty: So you didn't kill him before, eh? You're a dumb lot. I suppose if I told you to lower your back sights, you'd all sit down. All right - fix him up - oh, wait a minute - he's a King

now! Let him alone.

(The Soldiers take up their places by the wall again.)

Humpty: You've come up in the world a little since I saw you last. A King, eh? Well, your Majesty, I must apologise for what's just happened.

Peter: Oh, that's all right, Mr. Humpty Dumpty. I've got some good news for you, The White Queen wants to see you.

Humpty: The White Queen! Oh, dear, oh dear! This is so sudden!

Peter: I'll go and fetch her.

(Peter exits, right. Enter two Pages, with trumpets. They blow a fanfare in swing time. The orchestra strikes up, very suddenly and loudly, "Daisy Bell". Enter the White Queen, mounted on the High Horse, which now has "Horse de Combat" painted on its side. The White Queen is dressed as in "Alice".)

White Queen: Good morning, everybody! A lovely morning! And how are all the shut-ins and the shut-outs, and all the poor sick people this morning? Oh, getting better, I hope - and you will if you take Califig - Califig, the aperient with the gentle action. And Good morning, you poor, poor Soldiers - standing here in the sunlight all day - you must need a bath in Lifebuoy - yes, I'm sure you do - (handing them cakes of soap) here you are - now run off and have a bath in its lovely gentle lather.

(The Soldiers take the cakes of soap, and walk off, left.)

White Queen: And now, Mr. Humpty Dumpty, how are you this morning? Having any aches and pains lately? Any circles under the eyes? I'm sure you have!

Humpty: Well, as a matter of fact -

White Queen: You should take Pestprufe - Pestprufe - it's a boon and a blessing! Kills all pests and vermin. I put some in Barbara's chest the other day - it gets into all the nooks and crannies and kills everything! And are you suffering from indigestion? Ah, yes - I see you are - those sallow cheeks - ah, very very serious!

Humpty: (Terrified) Oh, is it really as serious as that?

White Queen: Oh yes - you'd better get measured for your coffin right away. And don't forget to get the right size - go to Boris Junior - he's never an inch out. What you need is Vix - V - I - X - Vix - sniff it up - rub it on - it's marvellous! I've got some here.

Humpty: Oh, give me some, quick! I feel faint already!

White Queen: And Three-in-One Oil! It's a boon and a blessing! Anything that wont go - anything that wont work - use Three-in-One Oil! It's marvellous! Put it in your bath! Rub it on the baby's body!

Humpty: Here - give me some - I feel I'm perishing -

(He stretches his hand down towards the White Queen, wobbling wildly.)

White Queen: Here you are - here you are - just a little further -

(Humpty Dumpty stretches down, and falls off the wall, into the arms of the White Pawns and the Red Pawns, who rush in left and right, followed by the Red King, the Red Knight, Peter, Haybell, Cowyard, the "Veritas" Reporters and the Dormouse.)

Red King: Nice work, Daisy! Now for the wall, boys.

(Humpty Dumpty is struggling wildly, and groaning; some of the Pawns are holding on to him, and others are pulling the wall into pieces. The White Queen produces a spray, and sprays Humpty Dumpty, who dies.)

White Queen: Flit - F.L.I.T. - it's marvellous - kills all pests and parasites.

(By now the wall is shifted off stage, and the garden back-cloth is raised, to disclose Wonderland. Birds are singing, the back-drop shows a beautiful garden, the sun is shining brightly, and the Pawns and others advance into Wonderland, up stage. Back centre is a little ticket-box, with "The Bank of Ao Toheroa (Nationalised)" written on it. Inside, the Kidderminster Cat IS seen doling out banknotes. To the left of the ticket-box, a stall is seen bearing the sign "Commissariat of Free Love", with a notice at one end saying "Marriages Arranged Free", and one at the other end saying "Divorces Arranged Free". A similar stall to the right of the ticket-box says: "Free Beer and Security Soup for All - at All Hours". A Bookmaker stands on a soap box at each side of the stage, shouting out his wares. There are cries of amazement. Some of the Pawns man the stalls; some collect bank-notes from the Cat and buy free beer and security soup; others give bets to the bookmakers, who cry "Two to one on Catalogue", etc., etc. All the characters who are not in the final scene enter, and raise a general noise. Pawns get married and divorced. The Red King and Peter watch the scene. The "Veritas" Reporters take up their stand near the Free Love Commissariat, and take copious notes. The hubbub dies down a little.)

Peter: From Blunderland to Wonderland - a Better World at last!

Red King: Yes, it's marvellous, isn't it? Legal betting all hours of the day - free drinks all hours - free bank-notes - free marriages and divorces - birds singing - everybody happy.

White Queen: Now don't rush around so, people, or you'll break your legs. And if you do, I've got the very thing - Seccotine - Seccotine - sticks everything.

Haybell Cowyard: Free love! A maiden's dream!

Peter: (Suddenly horrified) Oh, I say! Oh, this is awful!

Red King: Why, what's the matter, Peter? Isn't this place nice?

Peter: Oh, yes - it's lovely. But I've just remembered - I'm only dreaming this - I'll probably wake up at any minute -

Red King: Don't worry, Peter. I don't think you'll ever wake up. But if you do - if you do - I hope you won't forget this wonderful dream. It might help you to win the Grand Election Hack Handicap next year!

Peter: I'll remember! Yes, I'll remember!

FINAL CHORUS.