

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
Marx vom Stein Lawrence Irving
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The McNaughtens

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THE MCNAUGHTENS

A play based on the Menechemes of Regnard

Translated and adapted by F. J. Morlock

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CHARACTERS

McNaughten

Captain McNaughten

Mr. Hastings, Flavella's father

Flavella, his daughter

Urania, Hastings' older sister

Jenny, Urania's maid

Spruce, the Captain's valet

Mr. Torrington, a solicitor

Squire

Mr. Bronlow, a merchant

ACT I.

Scene I. A street in London. Captain McNaughten comes in, looking for his valet.

Captain I am quite beside myself. A curse on Spruce! I think he was born for the sole purpose of enraging me. I am not going to put up with him any longer. The scoundrel always tries my patience to the limits. He knows very well that I am waiting for him on tenterhooks— But now I see him coming. Where have you been, rogue? Tell me.

(Spruce enters, carrying a heavy trunk which he first puts down and then sits on, without responding to the Captain.)

Captain
Speak, reply!

Spruce For the moment, sir, I have nothing to say. Let me get my breath a moment, please—I'm totally winded.

Captain Do you always intend to put me in a fury and then play with me? I don't know what prevents me from giving you a beating. What, you rogue, just to go off to the custom house to get my trunk, takes you all day?

Spruce Oh, sir, customs inspectors are terrible men. All the savages in the world are less barbarous. They can only talk in monosyllables. "yes, no, what, sir? I have no time. But, sir— Would you kindly open up—" They need maybe a hundred words in their vocabulary. They give me a headache. Finally, when you need them for something, they're more proud and stuck up than an archbishop.

Captain What! Do you mean to pretend you stayed at the customs house until just now?

Spruce Oh, no. Seeing the customs inspector was about to take more than an hour—besides, he had a disagreeable phiz—I preferred to wait at a tavern.

Captain Your yen for brew always gets the best of you. Does wine command you always?

Spruce Everyone has his weakness, sir.— As you are well aware. It's the bad example more than the brew that puts me down the wrong road. I'd really like to live a clean life—

Captain

Why do you always keep bad company, then?

Spruce I've made several efforts to avoid it—all in vain. I like you a lot and I don't want to leave you.

Captain

What's that, scoundrel?

Spruce Sir, an ancient custom of speaking my mind gives me the right. My case is like your own. I've seen you drunk more than once in a tavern, and many's the time I had to help you home to bed. I've never scolded you much about these little escapades—we ought not to mention other people's infirmities— Forget them, since they forget ours.

Captain I'll forgive you for liking your bottle—if I thought that was your only vice—but your penchant for one sin carries you on to a thousand others. You have a strange passion for gambling.

Spruce Oh, if I gamble a little it's only to spend the time while you are spending the night in certain black gambling dens. I hear you swearing right up to the door. I swear, too, when luck is against me. And who can tell us apart? You swear in your room, and I swear on the stairs. I imitate you in every respect. You drink, gamble, and love with extreme passion, and I drink, gamble—and love a little, too. And if I am a flirt, it's because you are one, too. Consume in the art, I might add. You go every day with a vagabond ardor, raffling off all the ladies—from blond to brunette. Today, Flavella dominates you—you say you love her—but I don't know why.

Captain You don't know why! Is it possible you refuse to render homage to her charms, to her divine eyes? I saw her at her aunt's, where I was quite enchanted. She wounded me to the heart.

Spruce Yet you have an attentive soul for her crazy Aunt—Urania. Now I approve of Urania. Perfect choice. Without her money we'd be in an awful fix. Meanwhile, I profit, too. You cajole the Aunt, and I corrupt Jenny, her maid— Thus, you see—

Captain Yes, I see—in a word you think you know everything. You are nothing but a near sighted fool! To prevent yourself from uttering some new stupidity, shut up, and take my trunk to the hotel.

Spruce (picking up the trunk) I obey. But if I should want to speak on this vain subject again, believe me, I can hold forth at some length.

Captain
Oh, be quiet!

Spruce
When I have a mind to, I can speak better than anybody—

Captain
Wait! Whose trunk is this?

Spruce
Huh! By George, it's yours.

Captain
It doesn't in the least look like mine.

Spruce For a while, I had the same suspicion as you. But it's got your name and address on it—and that relieved my mind of any doubt. (puts the trunk down) Here, read the words very plainly written. To McNaughten, London.

Captain True, but wait a bit,—what do you say to this? It's not my handwriting. Therefore, it is not my trunk.

Spruce

You're right. But it resembles your handwriting a great deal.

Captain

You acted impulsively in taking this trunk.

Spruce But, sir, do you take me for a fool? In returning from Flanders, where you had an abrupt discharge from your regiment, did I not put the trunk, at your instruction, on a stage coach bound for London, so that we might travel more quickly. And didn't I obey you? I've done everything right in this whole business. No reproaches, please.

Captain We'll soon see whether this was your fault or not. Open it up and let's try to get to the bottom of this mystery.

Spruce (taking out a ring of keys) Sir, in a second, I am going to satisfy you. (trying a key) My goodness! The key doesn't fit.

Captain

Break it open.

Spruce If you want me to, I won't object. Let's begin proceedings. (after some efforts, Spruce manages to open the trunk) (Spruce looks in and stares)

Captain

What's wrong with you? Look at me.

Spruce (bewildered)

I don't see any of your clothes in here!

Captain

What the—wretch?

Spruce Sir, there's no need to be testy. The swap we've made may be better for us. I don't believe you had clothes like these in your trunk. (displaying some expensive clothing)

Captain And my letters, scoundrel, my letters from Flavella? The letters in which she expressed her love for me? Who will give them back to me— tell me!

Spruce (removing a packet of letters from the trunk)
Wait— perhaps you will find consolation in these.

Captain Do you know that jokesters and comedians usually waste their time with me?

(The Captain reads the letters while Spruce inventories the clothes.)

Spruce My intent was not to put you in a temper—but without losing time we must make our inventory. This costume for chicanery surely belonged to some Scotsman, and this is an Irish peasant. (displaying clothes) Now, this one is rather modish—usable for a hunt, I think.

Captain
Oh, Heavens!

Spruce (startled by the Captain's outburst)
Where will all this thing end?

Captain
This adventure isn't easily believed.

Spruce
Sir, what's wrong with you— are you getting dizzy?

Captain
It's a miracle. You won't believe it when I tell you.

Spruce
Sir, I will, I promise you— if you don't lie.

Captain As you know, I was born a McNaughten, near Edinburgh. I am of a blood which ceded valor to no one. You know that having lost father, mother, and relatives, and penniless, I was left to

spend my days in the highlands. To escape, I joined the army when I was only fifteen. Only I had a brother, who lived with me in the home of my uncle—a rich old miser who wouldn't give me a penny. So I ran away, and they haven't heard of me for many years. And I've heard from many sources that both my brother and my uncle thought me dead.

Spruce I know all that. And I know your mother died in giving birth to you and that same brother. You and your brother are as indistinguishable as two glasses of milk. In short, you are twins. So what?

Captain We look so much alike that the finest painters would be easily deceived. Even our own father considered putting a sign on us to tell us apart.

Spruce I've heard the story of your life several times. What has that story got to do with our present troubles?

Captain

You will be astonished. This trunk belongs to my brother!

Spruce

How about that?

Captain

And I learn from this letter that our uncle is dead—

Spruce

Amazing—

Captain —and has left all his money to this twin of mine.

Spruce

That is surprising news—no doubt about it. What good does that do?

Captain

Listen attentively. This is worth a good deal of reflection.

Spruce
I'm listening.

Captain (reading the letter) "I await you, sir, to pay you the sixty thousand pounds which your uncle has left you by his will, and to marry you to Miss Flavella Hastings, of whom I have spoken to you several times in my letters. The lady likes you very much, and her father is very determined on this marriage. Don't waste time in getting to London. Your very humble servant, Charles Torrington."

Spruce
Now, I begin to see —

Captain Torrington is the name of the honest solicitor who worked for my father. The date, the envelope, and the name, all confirm my conclusion. My brother is coming to London in response to this letter, and, just like me, put his trunk on the coach. And, of course, the name and address caused your error. I conclude, therefore, not very cleverly, that my brother is, perhaps, already in London.

Spruce That's probably right. I am stupefied by the surprising effects of chance. Necessity caused me to make a mistake, and our fortune will spring from my stupidity. In a single day, we find a decrepit old uncle buried — who leaves behind him a fortune, which in life, he prevented you from attaining. We also find a brother who will receive the fortune, and relieve you of your lady love. Coincidences like these are capable of overwhelming the cleverest person!

Captain We've got to put our heads together about this. I have a good feeling about it.

Spruce
We could really use that sixty thousand pounds.

Captain
To have them, we will have to use all our skill. They belong to me as much as to my brother. We must prevent my brother from meeting old

Torrington. Go—run—find out—don't lose a minute.

Spruce You know my zeal and eagerness. If he's in London, I have faithful friends who will know of it in less than an hour.

Captain I am going to Urania. Unfortunately, she knows I am back. I must still pretend to burn with love for her. She has no idea I'm aflame for Flavella. You know what Urania is like—the old girl loves to break men's hearts. The airs that old woman puts on are really insufferable. In fact, she's crazy and loves to be flattered.

Spruce

You're just the man for that, if I may say so, sir.

Captain What a ray of hope breaks through for my love. While I'm still uncertain what to do about my brother, I'd best manage her. Go back to the customs house, to the stage coach.

Spruce

If I'm not mistaken, here comes Urania and Jenny now.

Captain

Go, quickly, where I send you.

(Exit Spruce)

(Enter Urania and Jenny, her maid)

Urania What a joy. We will see Captain McNaughten again today. I cannot stay put. Such excitement—agitates me. How do you think I look, Jenny?

Jenny

Charming. Your beauty surprises, ravishes, carries one away, enchants

— . It seems Cupid himself has adjusted your face today.

Urania This girl always has the best taste. (seeing the Captain) Ah, sir, you here! What a lucky chance—this is better than I had hoped for—what hurries your return? What god brings you back to me?

Captain
Cupid.

Urania
Cupid? The poor child!

Captain Your loveable presence now fully compensates me for the pain of your prior absence. You, who without art, without aid, appear younger every day.

Urania Foh! Banterer! Love sometimes recalls a person who is absent to mind. Your charming portrait which, which makes all my happiness, consoled me a little during your frightful absence. Did mine have the same effect on you?

Captain Your face preoccupied me like a ghost, and followed me everywhere. Night could not hide you from my eyes. And even this night, I recall my dream. In my first sleep, I dreamt I was in a garden at sunrise. There, Aurora shone with her rosy fingers. There on the border of a superb canal, where a hundred frothy waves fell in cascades—seemingly pushed by water nymphs. There, I tell you—reposing on a bed of roses—

Urania (agitated)
What did you see?

Captain I saw you, on a chair, floating over the waves. You resembled Venus. A hundred Cupids pushed a shell, the winds jested about you—

Jenny Oh, Heaven. What a lovely dream. (aside) He does this better than I do.

Urania
Finish, finish, I beg you.

Captain
My soul was seized by astonishment.

Jenny (low)

That's not surprising.

Urania (dreamily)

And I was Venus, floating on this canal?

Captain Yes, Madame, your very self. My mind was taken with the noble spectacle. I went right up to you with no opposition—

Urania

Did I have a noble air, a divine bearing? Speak sincerely.

Captain

The most noble in the world. You seemed a goddess in the flesh.

Urania

And what was I wearing? The goddess clothes?

Captain

Madame, the goddess does not—

Urania

Ah, ah—

Captain

Unluckily, the goddess suddenly vanished from my sight.

Urania

And were we separated?

Captain Then, I found myself in a grotto—which art had embellished more than nature. There, in full repose, crowned by flowers, I perceived you reclining on a couch of flowers. I persuaded you of my ardent feelings.

Urania

And—

Captain
You were touched—

Urania
Ah, I was touched—

Captain By a new goddess. And taking from Venus her natural softness, languorously, you —

Urania
What did I do?

Captain I don't know. By an unspeakable misfortune, my valet woke me up. (aside) Whew! I couldn't go any further.

Jenny (aside)
I should take lessons from him, decidedly.

Urania I am in despair because of this. Servants are always about when we don't want them. Horrid valet.

Captain Actually, Spruce comes in handy sometimes. But my dream was incomplete. How I wanted to finish it.

Urania Oh, and I want to finish it, too. To satisfy YOU, so that YOUR happiness will not be a chimera, to quench YOUR flames— after our marriage, of course. But I'm afraid that in the times in which we live, there's a distaste for marriage. Among the men, I mean. But possession alone takes the salt and taste from love.

Captain Ah, Madame, my love for you is so extreme, I am sure it must last until death. And if, by a misfortune which I cannot prevent, your death should— Ah, great gods, what a frightful despair I would be in. The very thought of it possesses my soul with remorse.

Urania Let's put that lugubrious idea far away from us. To better celebrate the pleasures of our reunion, I want to dine with you tonight. This morning, I invited a friend— you'll enjoy good company.

Captain Madame, this honor is very advantageous to me. A small business matter tears me away at present, but I will soon return. I'll hurry.

Urania

Go, my darling. I will await you with impatience.

Captain (bowing, kissing her hand)

Here – in a moment I will return.

(Exit the Captain)

Urania

The love he has for me is not to be imagined.

Jenny (archly)

No, m'am.

Urania

In revenge, I will love him like crazy. How do you like him?

Jenny He's good looking. His valet, Spruce, isn't bad to look at, either. We are a little bit in love – but, who's coming – It's Mr. Hastings.

(Enter Hastings)

Hastings

Hello, sis.

Urania

Good day, brother, dear.

Hastings This is lucky, I was going to your house to speak to you on some business.

Urania

This place is as good as any. You won't annoy me.

Hastings

I want to marry Flavella off.