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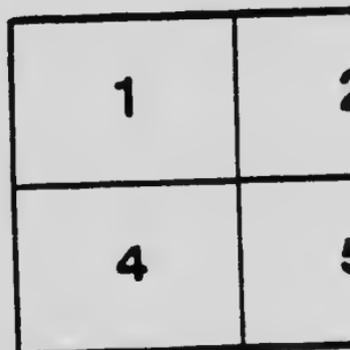
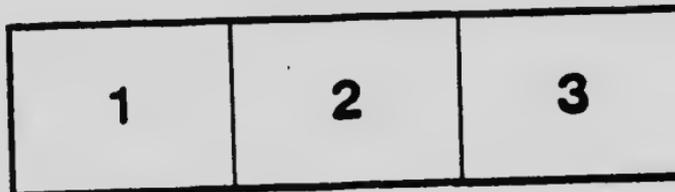
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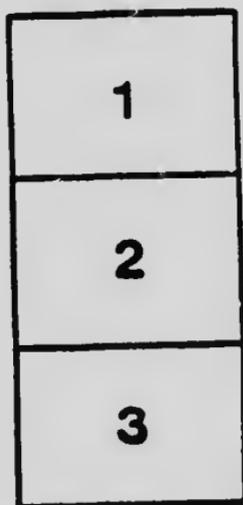
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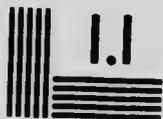
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[Enter SNOBBLETON.]

Snobbleton (looking in the direction whence he has just come)—Yes, there is that fellow Jones, again. I declare, the man is ubiquitous. Wherever I go with my cousin Prudence we stumble across him, or he follows her like her shadow. Do we take a boating? So does Jones. Do we wander on the beach? So does Jones. Go where we will, that fellow follows or moves before. Now that was a cruel practical joke which Jones once played on me at college. I have never forgiven him. But I would gladly make a pretence of doing so, if I could have my revenge.

Let me see. Can't I manage it? He is head over ears in love with Prudence, but too bashful to speak. I half believe she is not indifferent to him, though altogether unacquainted. It may prove a match, if I can not spoil it. Let me think. Ha! I have it! A brilliant idea! Jones, beware! But here he comes.

[Enter JONES.]

Jones (not seeing Snobbleton, and delightedly contemplating a flower, which he holds in his hand)—Oh, rapture! what a prize! It was in her hair—I saw it fall from her queenly head. (*Kisses it every now and then.*) How warm are its tender leaves from having touched her neck! How doubly sweet is its perfume fresh from the fragrance of her glorious locks! How beautiful! how—Bless me! here is Snobbleton. We are enemies!

Snobbleton (advancing with an air of frankness)—Good-morning, Jones—that is, if you will shake hands.

Jones—What!—you forgive! You really—

Snobbleton—Yes, yes, old fellow! All is forgotten. You played me a rough trick; but let bygones be bygones. Will you not bury the hatchet?

Jones—With all my heart, my dear fellow! (*They shake hands.*)

Snobbleton—What is the matter with you, Jones? You look quite grumpy—not by any means the same cheerful, dashing, rollicking fellow you were.

Jones—Grumpy—what is that? How do I look, Snobbleton?

Snobbleton—Oh, not much out of the way. Only a little shaky in the shanks, blue lips, red nose, cadaverous jaws, bloodshot eyes, yellow—

Jones (*aghast*)—Bless me, you don't say so! (*Aside*): Confound the man! Here have I been endeavoring to appear romantic for the last month—and now to be called shaky-sharked, cadaverous—it is unbearable!

Snobbleton—But never mind. Cheer up, old fellow! I see it all. Egad! I know what it is to be in—

Jones—Ah! You can then sympathize with me? You know what it is to be in—

Snobbleton—Of course I do! Heaven preserve me from the toils! What days of bitterness!

Jones—What nights of bliss!

Snobbleton (*shuddering*)—And then the letters—the interminable letters!

Jones (*with rapture*)—Oh, yes, the letters! The *billet-doux*!

Snobbleton—And the bills—the endless bills!

Jones (*in surprise*)—The bills!

Snobbleton—Yes; and the bailiffs, the lawyers, the judge, and the jury.

Jones—Why, man, what are you talking about? I thought you said you knew what it was to be in—

Snobbleton—In debt. To be sure I did.

Jones—Bless me! I'm not in debt—never borrowed a dollar in my life. Ah, me! (*sighs*) it's worse than that.

Snobbleton—Worse than that! Come, now, Jones, there is only one thing worse. You're surely not in love?

Jones—Yes, I am. (*With sudden feeling*): Oh, Snobby, help me, help me! Let me confide in you.

Snobbleton (*with mock emotion*)—Confide in me! Certainly, my dear fellow! See! I do not shrink—I stand firm. (*Folds his arms in a determined posture.*) Blaze away!

Jones—Snobby, I—I love her.

Snobbleton—Whom?

Jones—Your cousin, Prudence.

Snobbleton—Ha! Prudence Angelia Winterbottom?

Jones—Now, don't be angry, Snobby! I don't mean any harm, you know. I—I—you know how it is.

Snobbleton—Harm! my dear fellow. Not a bit of it.

Angry ! Not at all. You have my consent, old fellow. Take her. She is yours. Heaven bless you both.

Jones—You are very kind, Snobby, but I haven't got her consent yet.

Snobbleton—Well, that is something, to be sure. But leave it all to me. She may be a little coy, you know ; but, considering your generous overlooking of her unfortunate defect—

Jones—Defect ! You surprise me.

Snobbleton—What ! and you did not know of it ?

Jones—Not at all. I am astonished ! Nothing serious, I hope.

Snobbleton—Oh, no, only a little—(*He taps his ear with his finger knowingly.*) I see you understand it.

Jones—Merciful heaven ! can it be ? But, really is it serious ?

Snobbleton—I should think it was.

Jones—What ! But is she ever dangerous ?

Snobbleton—Dangerous ! Why should she be ?

Jones (*considerably relieved*)—Oh, I perceive ! A mere airiness of brain—a gentle aberration—scorning the dull world—a mild—

Snobbleton—Zounds, man, she's not crazy !

Jones—My dear Snobby, you relieve me. What then ?

Snobbleton—Slightly deaf. That's all.

Jones—Deaf !

Snobbleton—As a lamp-post. That is, you must elevate your voice to a considerable pitch in speaking to her.

Jones—Is it possible ! However, I think I can manage. As, for instance, if it was my intention to make her a floral offering, and I should say (*elevating his voice considerably*), "Miss, will you make me happy by accepting these flowers ?" I suppose she could hear me, eh ? How would that do ?

Snobbleton—Pshaw ! Do you call that elevated ?

Jones—Well, how would this do ? (*Speaks very loudly*): "Miss, will you make me happy—"

Snobbleton—Louder, shriller, man !

Jones—"Miss, will you—"

Snobbleton—Louder, louder, or she will only see your lips move.

Jones (*almost screaming*)— "Miss, will you oblige me by accepting these flowers ?"

Snobbleton—There, that may do. Still you want practice. I perceive the lady herself is approaching. Suppose

you retire for a short time, and I will prepare her for the introduction.

Jones—Very good. Meantime, I will go down to the beach and endeavor to acquire the proper pitch. Let me see : “Miss, will you oblige me—”

[*Exit JONES, still speaking.*]

[*Enter PRUDENCE, from other side.*]

Prudence—Good morning, cousin. Who was that, speaking so loudly ?

Snobbleton—Only Jones. Poor fellow, he is so deaf that I suppose he fancies his own voice to be a mere whisper.

Prudence—Why, I was not aware of this. Is he very deaf ?

Snobbleton—Deaf as a stone fence. To be sure he does not use an ear-trumpet any more, but one must speak excessively high. Unfortunate, too, for I believe he is in love.

Prudence (with some emotion)—In love ! with whom ?

Snobbleton—Can't you guess ?

Prudence—Oh, no ; I haven't the slightest idea.

Snobbleton—With yourself ! He has been begging me to obtain him an introduction.

Prudence—Well, I have always thought him a nice-looking young man. I suppose he would hear me if I should say (*speaks loudly*), “Good-morning, Mr. Jones ?”

Snobbleton (compassionately)—Do you think he would hear that ?

Prudence—Well, then, how would (*speaks very loudly*) “Good-morning, Mr. Jones !” How would that do ?

Snobbleton—Tush ! he would think you were speaking under your breath.

Prudence (almost screaming)—“Good morning !”

Snobbleton—A mere whisper, my dear cousin. But here he comes. Now, do try and make yourself audible.

[*Enter JONES.*]

Snobbleton (speaking in a high voice)—Mr. Jones—cousin. Miss Winterbottom—Jones. You will please excuse me for a short time. (*He retires, but remains in view.*)

Jones (speaking shrill and loud, and offering some flowers)—Miss, will you accept these flowers ? I plucked them from their slumber on the hill.

Prudence (in an equally high voice)—Really, sir, I—I—

Jones (aside)—She hesitates. It must be that she does not hear me. (*Increasing his tone*): Miss, will you accept these flowers—FLOWERS ? I plucked them sleeping on the hill—HILL.

Prudence (also increasing her tone) — Certainly, Mr. Jones. They are beautiful—BEAU-U-TIFUL.

Jones (*aside*) — How she screams in my ear. (*Aloud.*) Yes, I plucked them from their slumber—SLUMBER, on the hill—HILL.

Prudence (*aside*) — Poor man, what an effort it seems to him to speak. (*Aloud.*) I perceive you are poetical. Are you fond of poetry? (*Aside.*) He hesitates. I must speak louder. (*In a scream.*) Poetry—POETRY—POETRY!

Jones (*aside*) — Bless me, the woman would wake the dead! (*Aloud*): Yes, Miss, I ad-o-r-e it.

Prudence—Can you repeat some poetry—POETRY?

Jones—I know only one poem. It is this:

You'd scarce expect one of my age—AGE,
To speak in public on the stage—STAGE.

Prudence (*putting her lips to his ear and shouting*) — Bravo—bravo!

Jones (*in the same way*)—Thank you! THANK—

Prudence (*putting her hands over her ears*) — Mercy on 'is! Do you think I'm DEAF, sir?

Jones (*also stopping his ears*) — And do you fancy me deaf, Miss?

[*They now speak in their natural tones.*]

Prudence—Are you not, sir? You surprise me!

Jones—No, Miss. I was led to believe that you were deaf. Snobbleton told me so.

Prudence—Snobbleton! Why he told me that you were deaf.

Jones—Confound the fellow! he has been making game of us. Here he is. (*Perceiving Snobbleton.*) You shall answer for this, sir.

Prudence—Yes, sir, you shall answer for this, sir.

Snobbleton (*advancing*) — Ha! ha! ha! And to whom must I answer? Ah, Jones, do you remember that college joke? We quit even now. Bye! bye! (*Leaves stage hurriedly.*)

Jones (*looking surprisedly at Prudence*)—Well, what do you think of that?

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