

BARTOLO. Nita.
 NITA. Well?
 BARTOLO. This is a very uncomfortable state of things.
 NITA. Very. How do you find your clockwork this evening.
 BARTOLO. Ticking, ticking, thank you. And you?
 NITA. I fancy I want regulating.
 BARTOLO. Eh?
 NITA. I think I'm rather fast.
 BARTOLO. Nita, you surprise and shock me.
 NITA. Mechanically speaking, I mean.
 BARTOLO. Oh, I take you. This condition of existence is rather degrading. We are common clockwork, I believe?
 NITA. Mere Geneva. The cheapest thing in the trade.
 BARTOLO. So I was given to understand.
 NITA. It might have been worse. We might have been Waterbury, with interchangeable insides.
 BARTOLO. That's true. But when I remember the delicately-beautiful apparatus with which I was filled from head to foot — and which never, never ticked — when I contemplate the exquisite adjustment of means to end — which never, never wanted oiling — I am shocked to think that I am reduced to a mere mechanical complication of arbors, pallets, wheels, mainsprings, and escapements!
 NITA. Still you were always complaining. You never were quite well.
 BARTOLO. Because I eat too much.
 NITA. That's true.
 BARTOLO. Never weary of putting into operation the exquisitely-beautiful apparatus of digestion, I over-taxed its powers. I was a scientific enthusiast and I over-did it. Still, it is something to have an apparatus that never, never aches. I — I — hallo!
 NITA. What's the matter?
 BARTOLO (*very slowly*). I — beg your pardon. I — think — I — must be running down. May — I — trouble you? They've thoughtlessly — put the key-hole — in — the — small of my back — and — I — can't get at it. (NITA *winds him up*.) Thank you. That's very nice, indeed. Now I can go on again. Hallo! c'ck! c'ck! c'ck!
 NITA. What's wrong now?
 BARTOLO. I — c'ck — c'ck — I am not conversant with clockwork; but do you feel, from time to time, a kind of jerkiness that catches you just *here*?
 NITA. No; I work as smooth as butter. The continued ticking is tiresome; but it's only for an hour.
 BARTOLO. The ticking is simply maddening. C'ck! C'ck! There it is again!
 NITA. Something wrong with your works, I'm afraid. Stop a bit — I'll see. (*Opens door in chest, revealing a quantity of clockwork.*) No; all right there. Turn round. (*He does so; she opens door in the back of his head.*) No; the head appears to be empty. (*Opens door in his side.*) I see what it is; a halfpenny has got into your escapement. Stop a bit. (*Takes out halfpenny.*)
 BARTOLO. Bless my heart, how dangerous! What a relief! Thank you very much. You may keep it for your trouble; but do not — oh, do not spend it on foolishness.
 NITA. While I'm about it, I'll just oil you, and then — (*Proceeds to oil his*

works with a feather.)

BARTOLO (*squirming*). Don't! You tickle!

Enter PIETRO, looking very ill.

PIETRO (*not seeing them*). The Duke and Duchess will be here in half an hour — their escort is already in sight. Dying by slow poison is a very painful process, and I couldn't have held out much longer. (*Sees them.*) Nita! what are you doing?

NITA. I'm oiling Bartolo.

BARTOLO. I am being oiled by Nita, and she *does* tickle! I don't like it. At least I *do* like it, but it's wrong.

PIETRO. How dare you take such a liberty? Shut the gentleman up at once. Nice occupation for a young lady!

NITA. But there's something wrong with his works.

PIETRO. That's no affair of yours. If Bartolo's works are out of order, that is a matter for Bartolo's medical attendant — I mean his clockmaker. Don't let me catch you oiling him again.

NITA. Ha! Ha! Ha!

PIETRO. If this occurs again, I'll take both your keys away — upon my word I will!