

1252 614  
**FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION**

**No. 2459**

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**“ Q ”**

**A Farce in One Act**

**BY**

**STEPHEN LEACOCK**

**AND**

**BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS**

*Cornell Dramatic Club*

**NET 1/- NET**

**THE  
CORNELL  
DRAMATIC CLUB**

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“Q”

A FARCE IN ONE ACT

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“Q”  
A FARCE IN ONE ACT

By

STEPHEN LEACOCK and  
BASIL MACDONALD HASTINGS

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THE TIDE.

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(*with* EDEN PHILLPOTTS).

“Q,” the story on which this play is founded, may be found in Mr. Stephen Leacock’s *Nonsense Novels*, published by Mr. John Lane, The Bodley Head, Vigo Street, W.

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# CHARACTERS

JACK ANNERLY—*an amateur.*

GEORGE GNOOF—*a spiritualist.*

BLIGHT—*a butler.*

DORA DNIEPER—*a revue girl.*

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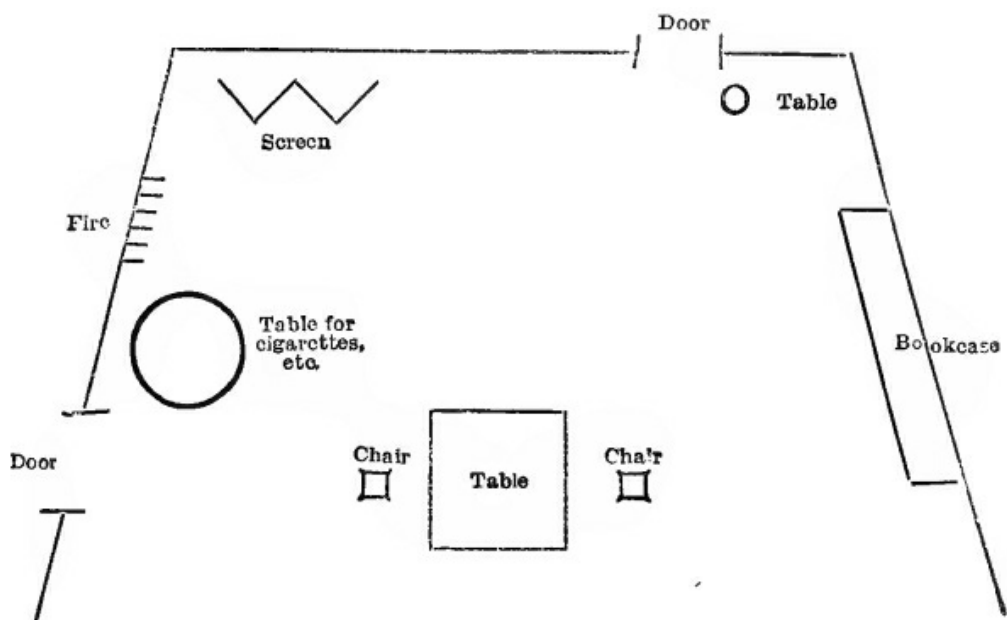
JACK ANNERLY *Mr. Charles Hawtrey.*

GEORGE GNOOF *Mr. Miles Malleon.*

BLIGHT *Mr. E. W. Tarver.*

DORA DNIEPER *Miss Mona Harrison.*

The play produced by MR. CHARLES HAWTREY.



# A PSYCHIC PSTORY OF THE PSUPER NATURAL

*The scene is the sitting-room of JACK ANNERLY'S chambers. It is smartly furnished, the essentials being doors <sub>R.</sub> and <sub>L.C.</sub>, table <sub>C.</sub> with chairs to <sub>R.</sub> and <sub>L.</sub> of it, and a large screen up <sub>R.</sub> against wall. When the curtain rises BLIGHT, the butler, backs into the room from the door <sub>L.C.</sub> followed by DORA DNIEPER. BLIGHT is a grave, side-whiskered person, DORA vivacious and very prettily dressed.*

DORA (*as she enters*). I don't care twopence what you say, Blight. I must see him to-night.

BLIGHT. He'll never forgive me.

DORA (*seating herself <sub>R.</sub> of table <sub>C.</sub>*). Look here, Blight. Jack Annerly owes me £50!

BLIGHT. Owes it to you!

DORA. Well, he promised me it. And—as usual—I spent it before I got it. Now to-night I want £50 badly. All I've got in the world is 4d. (*She counts the coppers in her bag.*) The landlord of my flat has got to have £50 by twelve o'clock to-night or my furniture goes into the street.

BLIGHT. They all say that, miss.

DORA. What!

BLIGHT. Er—ahem!—I beg your pardon. Of course not. But really I don't think you'll get your £50, miss. And you'll get me into awful trouble for letting you in. Good lord, there's his latchkey. Whatever shall I do.

DORA. Leave it to me, Blight. You won't get blamed. I'll hide behind this screen and you must pretend that you know nothing about me.

(DORA *hides behind screen up <sub>R.</sub> Enter JACK ANNERLY He is in evening dress, overcoat and silk hat. In his hand he has a letter which he has just picked up on the mat and opened.*)

ANNERLY. Blight, can you lend me £50?

BLIGHT. No, sir.

ANNERLY. If I don't find £50 by twelve o'clock my furniture will be turned into the street. And all I have at the moment is 4d.

(*He counts coppers in his pocket.*)

BLIGHT. Dear me, sir.

ANNERLY. Yes, Blight, 4d. I've got to raise £49 19s. 8d. in a hurry—or my furniture goes for good. My furniture. That includes your bed.

BLIGHT (*helping ANNERLY off with his coat*). I suppose it does, sir.

ANNERLY. Haven't you really got any money? What about your wages. I always pay them.

BLIGHT. Yes, sir. But you always borrow them back again.

ANNERLY. True. The world is black to-night, Blight. I might get Dora Dnieper to let me have her spare room, but the little cat's in the same predicament. I believe she gets thrown into the street to-morrow as well.

*(There is a ring at the front door bell.)*

*(BLIGHT goes off L.C. ANNERLY goes to table above door takes cigarette and lights it. DORA comes out quietly from behind screen. BLIGHT returns.)*

BLIGHT (*waving DORA back*). It is the gentleman from the floor below, Mr. George Gnoof, sir.

ANNERLY. That bore.

BLIGHT. He is a government servant and a spiritualist, sir.

ANNERLY. A spiritualist! Do you think he's got any money?

BLIGHT. At least £1,200 a year. Chief Inspector of Returned Empties, sir.

ANNERLY. Ah, show him in, Blight. A spiritualist, eh?

*(BLIGHT shows in MR. GEORGE GNOOF, a low-browed, chinless, idiotic-looking fellow, wearing glasses and red slippers.)*

GNOOF (*gushingly*). Ah, my dear Annerly! I heard you pass my floor and I thought I would take the liberty of inviting myself to smoke a pipe with you. (*He carries a large calabash pipe.*)

ANNERLY. My dear Gnoof—in fact I will say my dear George, you are most welcome. You come most opportunely. I wish to consult you. Take a seat.

GNOOF (*sitting L. of table C.*). This is indeed an honour.

ANNERLY. Not at all. Blight, leave us. And on no account disturb us for at least half an hour. I wish for a peaceful communion of thought with Mr. Gnoof.

GNOOF. This is most flattering.

*(Exit BLIGHT L.C.)*



ANNERLY (*sitting R. of table*). Listen, George. You are a spiritualist.

GNOOF. A humble votary, shall I say. I certainly pay my subscription to an occult magazine.

ANNERLY. That is why I wish to consult you. Now first of all is your mind perfectly composed?

GNOOF. I think I may say, my dear Annerly, that it is.

ANNERLY. Good. I have your attention! . . . Last night—I saw—Q.

GNOOF. Indeed.

ANNERLY. Yes, I saw Q.

GNOOF. Not, of course, a billiard cue?

ANNERLY. No, no. Q. The—er—somethingth letter of the alphabet.

GNOOF. I know. I know. A round O with a wiggle on it.

ANNERLY. Precisely. But as you have already guessed I use Q merely as a symbol for a personality.

GNOOF. Quite so.

ANNERLY. Now, my dear George, you believe in the supernatural. You believe in phantasms of the dead?

GNOOF. Phantasms?

ANNERLY. Yes. Phantasms. Or, if you prefer the word, phanograms, or say if you will phano-grammatical manifestations, or more simply psycho-phantasmal phenomena. Well, last night I saw the phanogram of Q.

GNOOF. Good gracious!

ANNERLY. Yes. I saw Q as plainly as if he were standing here. But perhaps (*rising and pacing the room*) I had better tell you something of my past relationship with Q and you will understand exactly what the present situation is. When I first knew Q—don't you think you ought to take notes?

(*He is now above table C.*)

GNOOF. Indeed, yes. A most valuable suggestion. (*He produces notebook and pencil and puts down all that ANNERLY says in shorthand.*)

ANNERLY. When first I knew Q he lived not very far from a small town which I will call X (GNOOF *makes a note*) and was betrothed to a beautiful and accomplished girl whom I will call M.

GNOOF. One moment. I strongly suspect that Q and M are not the real names of your acquaintances, but are in reality two letters of the alphabet selected almost at

random to disguise the names of your friends.

ANNERLY. You have guessed correctly. When Q and I——

GNOOF (*puzzled*). I?

ANNERLY. Yes, I. Me. Myself.

GNOOF. Of course.

ANNERLY. When Q and I first became friends he had a favourite dog which if necessary I might name Z (GNOOF *makes a note*) and which followed him in and out of X on his daily walk.

GNOOF. In and out of X!

ANNERLY. Yes. In *and* out.

GNOOF. This is really very extraordinary. That Z should have followed Q out of X, I can readily understand, but that he should first have followed him in seems to pass the bounds of comprehension.

ANNERLY (*sitting on back of table*). My dear friend, I can sympathize with you in your bewilderment, but that is not the most extraordinary part of the story. Q and Miss—(*he pauses to glance at GNOOF'S notebook*)—Miss M were to be married. Everything was arranged. The wedding was to take place on the last day of the year. Exactly six months and four days before the appointed day—I remember the date because the coincidence struck me as peculiar at the time—Q came to me late in the evening in great distress. He had just had, he said, a premonition of his own death. (*Comes down R.*) That evening while sitting with Miss M on the verandah of her house he had distinctly seen a projection of the dog R pass along the road.

GNOOF. One moment. Did you not say that the dog's name was Z?

ANNERLY (*frowning*). Quite so. Z, or more correctly ZR, since Q was in the habit, perhaps from motives of affection, of calling him R as well as Z. Well then, the projection or phanogram of the dog passed in front of them so plainly that Miss M swore that she could have believed that it was the dog himself. Opposite the house, the phantasm stopped for a moment and wagged its tail. (*He wags his finger.*) Then it passed on and quite suddenly disappeared around the corner of a stone wall as if hidden by the bricks. What made the thing still more mysterious was that Miss M's mother who is partially blind had only partially seen the dog.

GNOOF (*repeating and writing*). “—had only partially seen the dog.” Yes?

ANNERLY (*moving up stage*). This singular coincidence was interpreted by Q no doubt correctly, to indicate his own approaching death. I did what I could to remove this feeling, but it was impossible to do so, and he presently wrung my hand and left

me firmly convinced that he would not live till morning. (*Sits R. at table C.*)

GNOOF. Good Heavens! And he died that night?

ANNERLY. No. He did not. That is the inexplicable part of it.

GNOOF (*sympathetically*). Tell me about it.

ANNERLY. He rose that morning as usual, dressed himself with his customary care, omitting none of his clothes—make a note of that!—and walked down to his office at the usual hour. He told me afterwards that he remembered the circumstances so clearly from the fact that he had gone to the office by the usual route instead of taking any other direction.

GNOOF. Stop a moment. Did anything unusual happen to mark that particular day?

ANNERLY. I anticipated that you would ask that question, but as far as I can gather absolutely nothing happened.

GNOOF (*breathless with excitement*). And did he die the next night?

ANNERLY. No, he did not.

GNOOF (*after a pause*). My dear Annerly, our relations, of course, have hitherto only been of a formal character, and I must not assume too great an intimacy, but you can imagine how eager I am to hear the rest of this astounding narrative.

ANNERLY. You shall. Q went to his office each day after that with absolute regularity. He saw Miss M regularly and the time fixed for their marriage drew nearer each day.

GNOOF. Each day?

ANNERLY. Yes, every day. For some time before his marriage I saw but little of him, but two weeks before that event I passed Q one day in the street. He seemed for a moment about to stop, then he raised his hat, smiled and passed on.

GNOOF. One moment. If you will allow me a question that seems of importance, did he pass on, and then smile and raise his hat, or did he smile in his hat, raise it and then pass on afterwards?

ANNERLY (*rising and moving down R.*). Your question is quite justified, though I think I can answer with perfect accuracy that he first smiled (*he smiles*), then stopped smiling (*he also stops*), and raised his hat (*he lifts his hand*), and then stopped raising his hat (*he lowers his hand*) and passed on. (*He crosses L.*)

GNOOF. Good. (*He jots it down.*)

ANNERLY. However, the essential fact is this. On the day appointed for the wedding, Q and Miss M were duly married. (*He is now just L. of GNOOF.*)

GNOOF (*gasping*). Impossible. Duly married, both of them!

ANNERLY. Yes. Both at the same time. After the wedding Mr. and Mrs. Q——

GNOOF (*perplexed*). Mr. and Mrs. Q?

ANNERLY. Yes. Mr. and Mrs. Q, for after the wedding Miss M took the name of Q, left England and went out to Australia, where they were to reside. Then, until last night (*he crosses R.*) I heard nothing whatever of Q for a year and a half.

GNOOF (*trembling with excitement*). And last night?

ANNERLY (*very quietly*). Last night Q appeared in this room, or rather a phantasm or psychic manifestation of him. He seemed in great distress, made gestures which I could not understand and kept turning his trouser pockets inside out.

GNOOF (*who has his pencil sticking out of his mouth*). His trouser pockets?

ANNERLY. Yes, like this. (*He illustrates the behaviour of Q in the matter of the trouser pockets.*) I was too spellbound to question him and tried in vain to divine his meaning. Presently the phantasm seized a pencil from the table—(*He snatches the pencil from GNOOF'S mouth*)—and wrote the words “forty-nine pounds, nineteen shillings and eightpence to-morrow night, urgent.” (*He writes this on table.*)

GNOOF (*rising, walking round to back of table and scrutinizing the inscription*). How do you interpret the meaning which Q's phanogram meant to convey?

ANNERLY. I think it means this. Q, who is evidently dead, meant to visualize that fact, meant so to speak to deatomize the idea that he was demonetized.

GNOOF. Demonetized? (*They are side by side behind table.*)

ANNERLY. Yes, stony. Suffering from cramp in the kick.

GNOOF. Cramp in the kick? What on earth is that?

ANNERLY (*pettishly*). Oh, it means broke to the wide. (*He moves R.*). You really ought to go out more. . . . Q is evidently in urgent need of the sum of forty-nine pounds nineteen shillings and eightpence.

GNOOF. And how do you intend to get it to him?

ANNERLY. Ah! . . . I intend to try a bold and daring experiment, which, if it succeeds, will bring us into immediate connection with the world of spirits. My plan is to leave the money here upon the edge of the table. Then, if after the necessary ritual has been observed it has gone, I shall know that Q has contrived to deastralize himself and has taken the money. The only question is do you happen to have forty-

nine pounds, nineteen and eightpence about you? I myself, unfortunately, have nothing but small change.

GNOOF. My dear Annerly, by a piece of rare good fortune I happen to-day to have drawn my month's salary. Here it is, a hundred pounds in notes.

ANNERLY (*to himself*). Splendid! . . . Now let us place fifty pounds of them on the edge of the table. It is fourpence more than Q wants but I dare say he'll find some use for it, especially in a world of spirits. Now I want you to follow my instructions implicitly. First of all we place the table in the middle of the room. It is already there. The chairs—(*he picks up chair<sub>R</sub> of table and GNOOF picks up that on<sub>L</sub>*)—must be carefully set against the wall and so placed that no two of them occupy the same place as any other two. (*They place the two chairs against back wall.*) The pictures and ornaments about the room are to be left entirely undisturbed. The waste paper basket (*GNOOF dives under the table after the basket*) must be reversed so that its contents, if any, rest on the floor of the room instead of the wicker base of the basket. (*GNOOF reverses the waste paper basket.*) Good! The ritual also prescribes that one of the participating parties shall take off his boots.

GNOOF (*climbing out from under the table*). Oh, may I?

ANNERLY. Yes, I thought of you.

GNOOF (*as he takes off his slippers*). I must admit to you, my dear Annerly, that I am not without misgivings about the success of the experiment. (*He is kneeling with his arms resting on<sub>L</sub> of table.*) My own mental temperament and disposition may not be of the precise kind necessary for its success.

ANNERLY (*standing above table*). My dear friend, pray have no alarm on that score. I am sure that the event will show that for psychic work of this character your mind is a media—(*he puts a finger on GNOOF'S forehead*)—or if the word is better, a transparency of the very first order.

GNOOF (*beaming with delight*). Do you really think so?

ANNERLY. I do. Now it only remains for us to bind up our eyes and await the advent of Q in the adjoining rooms. According to the ritual sixty seconds is ample time for the spirit to manifest itself and you had better count the seconds on your side, noiselessly of course, until you reach sixty. You will wait in that room (*indicating right*) and I in the hall (*indicating<sub>L.C.</sub>*). There are no other means of access to the room so that if the money goes we shall know that it has safely reached Q. Now before we put on the eye-bandages kindly perform these psychic exercises with me. (*He proceeds to make ridiculous wavings in the air with his hands, all*

*of which GNOOF repeats.) Good. Now tie this round your head. (They both bandage their eyes and proceed on tiptoe towards their respective doors.)*

GNOOF (*as ANNERLY opens the door L.C.*). Oh, Annerly, my dear fellow, if we should fail. Doesn't your very soul tremble at the possibility?

ANNERLY (*looking back*). My dear Gnoof, I think I may express myself as quietly confident.

*(He goes off L.C. and GNOOF goes off R. Immediately they are off DORA DNEIPER rushes out from behind the screen, grabs the banknotes which she thrusts into her bag and with a mumbled "Where are those four coppers?" extracts four pennies from her bag and places them on the side of the table. She then darts back behind the screen. Now the door L.C. opens and ANNERLY comes in. He has pushed the bandage up from his eyes to the top of his forehead. He tiptoes down to the table where he stares at the fourpence as if he had been stung.)*

ANNERLY (*beside himself with surprise and, disgust*). Great Scott! The blessed stuff has gone. Four coppers! What the devil——!

*(The voice of GNOOF is heard off R.)*

GNOOF (*calling*). Annerly, Annerly, the sixty seconds are up and I have heard rustlings.

ANNERLY (*replacing his bandage and going through door L.*). So have I! So have I. I think we've waited quite long enough. Come along in, Gnoof.

*(GNOOF and ANNERLY enter from R. and L.C. They both go down to the table removing their eye-bandages.)*

GNOOF (*with a wild yell of delight*). It's gone! It's gone! The fifty pounds are gone. And look, Annerly, my dear, dear fellow, he has honourably left us fourpence change. What a triumph! It is wonderful. Epoch making. To think that we are in direct monetary communication with the spirit world.

ANNERLY (*who has been peering all round, under the table and elsewhere in search for the missing notes*). Yes, yes, it's certainly very remarkable. In fact it's the damned funniest thing I ever struck in my life.

GNOOF. And this fourpence! These four bronze coins! They have come from the astral sphere. We must have two each, my dear Annerly, and set them in gold and diamonds to suspend from our watch chains.

ANNERLY (*crossing R.*). Oh, I don't want the damned man's coppers.

GNOOF. And the glorious part of it is, of course, that what we have done once we can do again.

ANNERLY (*turning sharply*). What's that?

GNOOF. I say that there seems no reason why there should not be a renewal of our inter-communication with the spirit world.

ANNERLY. By Jove, yes. That is one redeeming feature of the situation. You have another fifty pounds about you, haven't you?

GNOOF. Certainly, my dear fellow. But alas, alas!

ANNERLY. What are you alassing about?

GNOOF. How can we dare. We must wait until we are asked. Your friend Q would probably regard it as a liberty and decline to take away money which he did not need. We must not pauperize Q.

ANNERLY. I wish you wouldn't be so beastly squeamish.

GNOOF. But I ask you, dare we repeat the experiment if you don't receive a second invitation?

ANNERLY (*suddenly becoming transfixed*). By Jove, Gnoof, there is Q.

(*He points to the back of the pit and gazes away in the distance as if fascinated by a vision.*)

ANNERLY (*running from L. to R. and getting beside* ). Where? Where?

ANNERLY (*in an ecstatic state*). Over there. Over there by the wall. He is passing through it.

GNOOF (*agonized*). Oh where! I wish I could see him.

ANNERLY. You've never been introduced so he cannot reveal himself to you.

GNOOF. But surely——

ANNERLY. Don't talk. The phanogram is communicating with me. He seems to be in distress again. Look. He is making signs. (ANNERLY *affects to repeat the gestures of the phanogram, putting up his ten fingers five times to indicate fifty pounds.*) He is crossing! He is crossing! He has crossed the bar!

GNOOF. Gone into the bar.

ANNERLY. Certainly not. Crossed the bar! Don't you know your Tennyson?

GNOOF (*beside himself with excitement*). But what can it mean? What can it mean? Show me those signs again. (ANNERLY *does so.*) How do you interpret them?

ANNERLY. I suspect, in fact I may say that I am confident that Q, for some reason which we cannot fathom, wishes us to leave another fifty pounds for him.

GNOOF. By Jove, I believe you've hit it.

ANNERLY. I think I have. At any rate let us try. We can but fail. . . . Now place the notes on the table as before. (GNOOF *does so.*) Let me see. We have all the furniture correctly adjusted. It only remains for us to perform the psychic exercises, put on our eye-bandages and leave the room for sixty seconds.

*(He makes similar gestures as before, GNOOF doing them concurrently. They then tiptoe R. and L.)*

GNOOF (*stopping*). Annerly, my dear, dear friend, I feel sure we shan't succeed again.

ANNERLY. You are too modest. All will be well as long as you keep your mind so poised as to readily offer a mark for any astral disturbance.

*(Exit GNOOF R. ANNERLY, who is determined this time to see what really does happen to the money, pulls off his bandages and waits by the door L.C. DORA DNIEPER runs out from behind the screen and goes down to the table. ANNERLY hears her and comes out just as she grabs the notes.)*

ANNERLY (*hissing under his breath*). So it was you, you little devil, was it? How the dickens did you get here? Hand over those notes.

DORA. Not likely.

ANNERLY. Oh yes, you shall, you little thief!

DORA. That's the pot calling the kettle black, isn't it, Jack?

ANNERLY. You're an impudent little hussy. Hand over those notes or I'll take them by force.

DORA. If you lay a finger on me I'll give the show away to this idiotic friend of yours.

ANNERLY (*pleadingly*). Look here, Dora, I must have the money, My sticks'll be chucked into the street if I don't pay. You had the first fifty. Give me the second and we'll call it square.

DORA. I'll make a bargain with you. Listen!

ANNERLY. Look out. Here he comes.

*(GNOOF enters from R. walking elaborately on tiptoe with his eyes bandaged.)*

GNOOF (*in a hushed whisper*). I heard voices. Are you there, Annerly?

ANNERLY. Yes, Gnoof. Just here. I believe Q is still in the room. *(He is hustling*



DORA *behind the screen.*) Perhaps we had better not uncover for the moment.

GNOOF. Certainly not. Let us give the phanogram plenty of scope.

ANNERLY *(after hiding DORA safely).* The sounds are gone. I think we may safely uncover.

*(GNOOF snatches off his bandage and gives a wild yell of delight when he sees that the notes are gone.)*

GNOOF. It is wonderful! Wonderful! We have succeeded again. I must report this extraordinary happening to the Society for Psychical Research.

ANNERLY. Oh no, no! You mustn't dream of doing such a thing. I am almost certain that it would break off our relations with Q. In fact, he as good as told me so. There is no harm in telling you now that the sounds you heard to-night were the voices of Q and me. Q wishes us to gather together all the capital that we can and to send it across to him in order that he may be able to organize a corporate association of phanograms.

GNOOF. If only it were possible to-night. But alas! I only had that paltry hundred on me.

ANNERLY. No. Not to-night. Not on any account to-night. Q does not wish it, but to-morrow night certainly.

GNOOF. Really. To-morrow night!

ANNERLY. Yes, dear friend. To-morrow night. Here are your slippers *(he is showing him off the door L.)* and mind, bring all the money that you have—but no more.

GNOOF. No more?

ANNERLY. On no account. Q is most strict about that. No one is to send more money than he actually possesses. Good night.

GNOOF. Good night, my benefactor.

*(Exit GNOOF L.C.)*

*(DORA bursts from behind screen and taking ANNERLY'S hands dances round joyfully with him.)*

CURTAIN.

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*Continued from second page of cover.*

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## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of “*Q*”: *A Farce in One Act* by Stephen Leacock & Basil Hastings]