THE PRETENTIOUS YOUNG LADIES: A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

Moliere

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LES PRECIEUSES RIDICULES:
COMEDIE EN UN ACTE.
1659.

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(THE ORIGINAL IN PROSE.)
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INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

Moliere began in *The Pretentious Young Ladies* to paint men and women as they are; to make living characters and existing manners the ground−work of his plays. From that time he abandoned all imitation of Italian or Spanish imbroglios and intrigues.

There is no doubt that aristocratic society attempted, about the latter years of the reign of Louis XIII., to amend the coarse and licentious expressions, which, during the civil wars had been introduced into literature as well as into manners. It was praiseworthy of some high−born ladies in Parisian society to endeavour to refine the language and the mind. But there was a very great difference between the influence these ladies exercised from 1620 until 1640, and what took place in 1658, the year when Moliere returned to Paris. The Hotel de Rambouillet, and the aristocratic drawing−rooms, had then done their work, and done it well; but they were succeeded by a clique which cared only for what was nicely said, or rather what was out of the common. Instead of using an elegant and refined diction, they employed only a pretentious and conceitedly affected style, which became highly ridiculous; instead of improving the national idiom they completely spoilt it. Where formerly D'Urfe, Malherbe, Racan, Balzac, and Voiture reigned, Chapelain, Scudery, Menage, and the Abbe Cotin, “the father of the French Riddle,” ruled in their stead. Moreover, every lady in Paris, as well as in the provinces, no matter what her education was, held her drawing−room, where nothing was heard but a ridiculous, exaggerated, and what was worse, a borrowed phraseology. The novels of Mdlle. de Scudery became the text−book of the *precieux* and the *precieuses*, for such was the name given to these gentlemen and ladies who set up for wits, and thought they displayed exquisite taste, refined ideas, fastidious judgment, and consummate and critical discrimination, whilst they only uttered vapid and blatant nonsense. What other language can be used when we find that they called the sun *l'aimable eclairant le plus beau du monde, l'epoux de la nature*, and that when speaking of an old gentleman with grey hair, they said, not as a joke, but seriously, *il a des quittances d'amour*. A few of their expressions, however, are employed even at the present time, such as, *chatier son style*; to correct one's style; *depenser une heure*, to spend an hour; *revetir ses pensees d'expressions nobles*, to clothe one's thoughts in noble expressions, etc.

Though the *precieux and precieuses* had been several times attacked before, it remained for Moliere to give them their death blow, and after the performance of his comedy the name became a term of ridicule and contumely. What enhanced the bitterness of the attack was the difference between Moliere's natural style and the affected tone of the would−be elegants he brought upon the stage.

This comedy, in prose, was first acted at Paris, at the Theatre du Petit Bourbon, on the 18th of November, 1659, and met with great success. Through the influence of some noble *precieux* and *precieuses* it was forbidden until the 2d of December, when the concourse of spectators was so great that it had to be performed twice a day, that the prices of nearly all the places were raised (See Note 7, page xxv.), and that it ran for four months together. We have referred in our prefatory memoir of Moliere to some of the legendary anecdotes connected with this play.

It has also been said that our author owed perhaps the first idea of this play to a scarcely−known work, *le Cercle des Femmes, ou le Secret du Lit Nuptial; entretiens comiques*, written by a long−forgotten author, Samuel Chapuzeau, in which a servant, dressed in his master's clothes, is well received by a certain lady who had rejected the master. But as the witty dialogue is the principal merit in Moliere's play, it is really of no great consequence who first suggested the primary idea.

The piece, though played in 1659, was only printed on the 29th of January, 1660, by Guillaume de Luyne, a bookseller in Paris, with a preface by Moliere, which we give here below:

A strange thing it is, that People should be put in print against their Will. I know nothing so unjust, and should pardon any other Violence much sooner than that.

Not that I here intend to personate the bashful Author, and out of a point of Honour undervalue my Comedy. I should very unseasonably disoblige all the People of Paris, should I accuse them of having applauded a foolish Thing: as the Public is absolute Judge of such sort of Works, it would be Impertinence in me to contradict it; and even if I should have had the worst Opinion in the World of my *Pretentious Young Ladies* before they appeared

upon the Stage, I must now believe them of some Value, since so many People agree to speak in their behalf. But as great part of the Pleasure it gave depends upon the Action and Tone of the Voice, it behooved me, not to let them be deprived of those Ornaments; and that success they had in the representation, was, I thought, sufficiently favorable for me to stop there. I was, I say, determined, to let them only be seen by Candlelight, that I might give no room for any one to use the Proverb; [Footnote: In Moliere's time it was proverbially said of a woman, " *Elle est belle a la chandelle, mais le grand jour gate tout*." She is beautiful by candle−light, but day−light spoils everything.] nor was I willing they should leap from the Theatre de Bourbon into the *Galerie du Palais*. [Footnote: The *Galerie du Palais* was the place where Moliere's publisher lived.] Notwithstanding, I have been unable to avoid it, and am fallen under the Misfortune of seeing a surreptitious Copy of my Play in the Hands of the Booksellers, together with a Privilege, knavishly obtained, for printing it. I cried out in vain, O Times! O Manners! They showed me that there was a Necessity for me to be in print, or have a Law−suit; and the last evil is even worse than the first. Fate therefore must be submitted to, and I must consent to a Thing, which they would not fail to do without me.

Lord, the strange Perplexity of sending a book abroad! and what an awkward Figure an Author makes the first time he appears in print! Had they allowed me time, I should have thought it over better, and have taken all those Precautions which the Gentlemen Authors, who are now my Brethren, commonly make use of upon the like Occasions. Besides, some noble Lord, whom I should have chosen, in spite of his Teeth, to be the Patron of my Work, and whose Generosity I should have excited by an Epistle Dedicatory very elegantly composed, I should have endeavoured to make a fine and learned Preface; nor do I want books which would have supplied me with all that can be said in a scholarly Manner upon Tragedy and Comedy; the Etymology of them both, their Origin, their Definition, and so forth. I should likewise have spoken to my friends, who to recommend my Performance, would not have refused me Verses, either in French or Latin. I have even some that would have praised me in Greek, and Nobody is ignorant, that a Commendation in Greek is of a marvellous efficacy at the Beginning of a Book. But I am sent Abroad without giving me time to look about me; and I can't so much as obtain the Liberty of speaking two words, to justify my Intention, as to the subject of this Comedy. I would willingly have shewn that it is confined throughout within the Bounds of allowable and decent Satire, that Things the most excellent are liable to be mimicked by wretched Apes, who deserve to be ridiculed; that these absurd Imitations of what is most perfect, have been at all times the Subject of Comedy; and that, for the same Reason, that the truly Learned and truly Brave never yet thought fit to be offended at the Doctor or the Captain in a Comedy, no more than Judges, Princes, and Kings at seeing Trivelin, [Footnote: The Doctor and the Captain were traditional personages of the Italian stage; their parts need no further explanation; Trivelin was a popular Italian actor, who in a humorous and exaggerated way played the parts of Judges, Princes, and Kings.] or any other upon the Stage, ridiculously act the Judge, the Prince, or King; so the true *Precieuses* would be in the wrong to be angry, when the pretentious Ones are exposed, who imitate them awkwardly. In a Word, as I said, I am not allowed breathing time; Mr. de Luyne is going to bind me up this Instant: ... let it be so, since the Fates so ordain it.

In the third volume of the "Select Comedies of M. de Moliere," this comedy is called "The Conceited Ladies." It is dedicated to Miss Le Bas in the following words:—−

MADAM, Addresses of this Nature are usually fill'd with Flattery : And it is become so general and known a Practice for Authors of every kind to bedeck with all Perfections Those to whom they present their Writings, that Dedications are, by most People, at Present, interpreted like Dreams, directly backwards. I dare not, therefore, attempt Your Character, lest even Truth itself should be suspected—Thus far, however, I'll venture to declare, that if sprightly blooming Youth, endearing sweet Good−nature, flowing gentile Wit, and an easy unaffected Conversation, maybe reckon'd Charms,—*Miss* LE BAS is exquisitely charming.

The following COMEDY of *Monsieur* MOLIERE, that celebrated Dramatick Writer, was, by him, intended to reprove a vain, fantastical, conceited and preposterous Humour, which about that time prevailed very much in *France*. It had the desir'd good Effect, and conduced a great deal towards rooting out a Taste so unreasonable and ridiculous.—−As Pride, Conceit, Vanity, and Affectation, are Foibles so often found amongst the Fair Sex at present, I have attempted this Translation, in hopes of doing service to my pretty Country−Women.—And, certainly, it must have a double efficacy, under the Patronage of one who is so bright an Example of the contrary fine Accomplishments, which a large Fortune makes her not the less careful to improve.

I am not so presumptuous to imagine that my *English* can do sufficient Justice to the sense of this admir'd

AUTHOR; and, therefore, have caused the ORIGINAL to be placed against it Page for Page, hoping that, both together, may prove an agreeable and useful Entertainment.——But I have detain'd you too long already, and shall only add, that I am, with much respect, and every good Wish, MADAM, *Your most Obedient Humble Servant*, THE TRANSLATOR.

The *Precieuses Ridicules* have been partly imitated in " *The Damoiselles a la Mode*, Compos'd and Written by Richard Flecknoe. London: Printed for the Author, 1667. To their graces the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, the Author dedicates this his comedy more humbly than by way of epistle." This gentleman, who was "so distinguished as a wretched poet, that his name had almost become proverbial," and who gave the title to Dryden's *Mac−Flecknoe*, is said to have been originally a Jesuit. Langbaine states "that his acquaintance with the nobility was more than with the Muses." In the preface our author says: "This Comedy is taken out of several excellent pieces of *Moliere*. The main plot out of his *Pretieusee's Ridiculee's*; the Counterplot of *Sganarelle* out of his *Escole des Femmes*, and out of the *Escole des Marys*, the two *Naturals*; all which, like so many *Pretieuse* stones, I have brought out of *France*; and as a Lapidary set in one Jewel to adorn our English stage."

This motley play was never acted; at least the author says: "for the Acting it, those who have the Governing of the Stage, have their Humours, and wou'd be intreated; and I have mine and won't intreat them; and were all Dramatick Writers of my mind, they shou'd wear their old *Playes* Thred−bare e're they shou'd have any *New*, till they better understood their own Interest, and how to distinguish betwixt good and bad."

The "Prologue intended for the overture of the Theater 1666," opens thus:—

"In these sad Times our Author has been long
Studying to give you some diversion;
And he has ta'en the way to do't, which he
Thought most diverting, mirth and Comedy;
And now he knows there are inough i' the Town
At name of mirth and Comedy will frown,
And sighing say, the times are bad; what then?
Will their being sad and heavy better them?"

[Footnote: In 1665 the plague broke out in London, and in the succeeding year the great fire took place; only at Christmas 1666 theatrical performances began again.]

According to the list of "The Representers, as they were first design'd." I see that Nell Gwyn should have played the part of " *Lysette*, the *Damoiselle's* waiting Woman."

James Miller, a well−known dramatist, and joint−translator of Moliere, with H. Baker, has also imitated part of "the *Pretentious Young Ladies*," and with another part borrowed from Moliere's *School for Husbands*, two characters taken from Moliere's *Learned Ladies*, and some short speeches borrowed from the *Countess of Escarbagnas*, he composed a comedy, which was played at Drury Lane, March 6th, 1735, under the title of *The Man of Taste, or, The Guardians*. Mr. Miller appears to have been a man of indomitable spirit and industry. Being a clergyman, with a very small stipend, he wrote plays to improve his circumstances, but offended both his bishop and the public. At last he was presented to the very valuable living of Upcerne, in Dorsetshire, and was also successful with a translation of *Mahomet* of Voltaire, but died within the year after his induction. *The Man of Taste* was printed for J. Watts, MDCCXXXV., and is dedicated to Lord Weymouth. We give part of the dedication:

"As to the Attempt here made to expose the several Vices and Follies that at present flourish in Vogue, I hope your Lordship will think it confined within the bounds of a modest and wholesome Chastisement. That it is a very seasonable one, I believe, every Person will acknowledge. When what is set up for the Standard of Taste, is but just the Reverse of Truth and Common Sense; and that which is dignify'd with the Name of Politeness, is deficient in nothing—but Decency and Good Manners: When all Distinctions of Station and Fortune are broke in upon, so that a *Peer* and a *Mechanick* are cloathed in the same Habits, and indulge in the same Diversions and Luxuries: When Husbands are ruin'd, Children robb'd, and Tradesmen starv'd, in order to give Estates to a *French* Harlequin, and *Italian* Eunuch, for a Shrug or a Song; [Footnote: Farinelli, an eminent Italian soprano, went to England in 1734, remained there three years, sang chiefly at the Theatre of Lincoln's−Inn−Fields, then under the direction of Porpora, his old Master, became a great favorite, and made about, L5,000 a year. As *The Man of Taste* was performed at a rival house, Drury Lane, the bitterness of the allusion may be easily understood. The

French Comedians acted at the Haymarket from November 22, 1734 to June 1735, hence the allusion to a French Harlequin.] shall not fair and fearless Satire oppose this Outrage upon all Reason and Discretion. Yes, My Lord, resentment can never better be shown, nor Indignation more laudably exerted than on such an occasion."

The Prologue, spoken by Mr. Cibber, is racy. We give the first half of it:—

"Wit springs so slow in our bleak Northern Soil,
It scarce, at best, rewards the Planter's Toil.
But now, when all the Sun−shine, and the Rain,
Are turn'd to cultivate a Foreign grain;
When, what should cherish, preys upon the Tree,
What generous Fruit can you expect to see?
Our Bard, to strike the Humour of the Times,
Imports these Scenes from kindlier Southern Climes;
Secure his Pains will with Applause be crown'd,
If you're as fond of Foreign sense as ... sound:
And since their Follies have been bought so dear,
We hope their Wit a moderate Price may bear.
Terence, Great Master! who, with wond'rous Art,
Explor'd the deepest Secrets of the Heart;
That best Old Judge of Manners and of Men,
First grac'd this Tale with his immortal Pen.
Moliere, the Classick of the Gallick Stage,
First dar'd to modernize the Sacred Page;
Skilful, the one thing wanting to supply,
Humour, that Soul of Comic Poesy.
The Roman Fools were drawn so high ... the Pit
Might take 'em now for Modern Men of Wit.
But Moliere painted with a bolder Hand,
And mark'd his Oafs with the Fool's−Cap and Band:
To ev'ry Vice he tagged the just Reproach,
Shew'd Worth on Foot, and Rascals in a Coach."

[Footnote: The plot of *The Man of Taste*, as we have said before, was partly borrowed from Moliere's *School for Husbands*, partly from the *Pretentious Young Ladies*, and other of his plays. The first−mentioned French comedy owes part of its plot to Terence's *Adelphi*, hence the allusion to "his immortal Pen." in the above poem.]

Mrs. Aphra Behn, a voluminous writer of plays, novels, poems, and letters, all of a lively and amorous turn, was the widow of a Dutch merchant, and partly occupied the time not engaged in literary pursuits in political or gallant intrigues. Her comedies are her best works, and although some of her scenes are often indecent, and not a few of her expressions indelicate, yet her plots are always lively and well sustained and her dialogues very witty. The date of her birth is unknown, but she died on the 16th of April, 1689, and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

In 1682, was performed, at the Theatre, Dorset Garden, her play. *The False Count, or a New Way to Play an Old Game*. The prologue attacks the Whigs most furiously, and the epilogue, spoken by Mrs. Barry, is very indecent. The plot of this play, or rather farce, is very improbable, and the language is more than free. Julia, in love with Don Carlos, afterwards Governor of Cadiz, was forced by her father to marry Francisco, a rich old man, formerly a leather−seller; the latter going with his family to sea on a party of pleasure, are taken prisoners by Carlos and his servants, disguised as Turks. They are carried to a country house, and made to believe they are in the Grand Turk's seraglio. There is also an underplot, in which Isabella, Francisco's proud and vain daughter, is courted by Guilion, a supposed Count, but in reality a chimney−sweep, whose hand she accepts. In the end everything is discovered, and Guilion comes to claim his wife in his sooty clothes.

Thomas Shadwell, a dramatist, and the poet−laureate of William III., who has been flagellated by Dryden in his *MacFlecknoe* and in the second part of *Absalom* and *Achitophel*, and been mentioned with contempt by Pope in his *Dunciad*, took from the *Precieuses Ridicules* Mascarille and Jodelet, and freely imitated and united them in

the character of La Roch, a sham Count, in his *Bury−Fair*, acted by His Majesty's servants in 1689. This play, dedicated to Charles, Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, was written “during eight months' painful sickness.” In the Prologue Shadwell states:

That every Part is Fiction in his Play;
Particular Reflections there are none;
Our Poet knows not one in all your Town.
If any has so very little Wit,
To think a Fop's Dress can his Person fit,
E'en let him take it, and make much of it.

Whilst, in The *Pretentious Young Ladies*, Mascarille and Jodelet impose upon two provincial girls, in *Bury−Fair*, La Roch, “a French peruke−maker” succeeds in deceiving Mrs. Fantast and Mrs. Gertrude under the name of Count de Cheveux. The Count is very amusing, and though a coward to boot, pretends to be a great warrior. His description of war is characteristic; he states that “de great Heros always burne and kille de Man, Woman, and Shilde for deir Glory.”

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LA GRANGE, \
            ) _repulsed Lovers_.
DU CROISY, /

GORGIBUS, _a good citizen_.

[Footnote: Gorgibus was the name of certain characters in old comedies.
The actor, L'Epy, who played this part, had a very loud voice; hence
Moliere gave him probably this name.]

THE MARQUIS DE MASCARILLE, _valet to La Grange_.

[Footnote: _Mascarille_ was played by Moliere, and has a personality
quite distinct from the servant of the same name in the _Blunderer_ and
the _Love−Tiff_. The dress in which he acted this part, has not been
mentioned in the inventory taken after his death, but in a pamphlet,
published in 1660, he is described as wearing an enormous wig, a very
small hat, a ruff like a morning gown, rolls in which children could
play hide−and−seek, tassels like cornucopise, ribbons that covered his
shoes, with heels half a foot in height.]

THE VISCOUNT JODELET, _valet to Du Croisy_.

ALMANZOR, _footman to the pretentious ladies_.

TWO CHAIRMEN.

MUSICIANS.

MADELON, _daughter to Gorgibus_, \
                                  ) _The pretentious young ladies_.
CATHOS, _niece to Gorgibus_,     /

MAROTTE, _maid to the pretentious young ladies_.

LUCILE.   \
           ) _two female neighbours_.
CELIMENE. /


SCENE−−GORGIBUS' HOUSE, PARIS.
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SCENE—GORGIBUS' HOUSE, PARIS.

THE PRETENTIOUS YOUNG LADIES. (LES PRECIEUSES RIDICULES.)

SCENE I.—LA GRANGE, DU CROISY.

DU. CR. Mr. La Grange.

LA. GR. What?

DU. CR. Look at me for a moment without laughing.

LA. GR. Well?

DU. CR. What do you say of our visit? Are you quite pleased with it?

LA. GR. Do you think either of us has any reason to be so?

DU. CR. Not at all, to say the truth.

LA. GR. As for me, I must acknowledge I was quite shocked at it. Pray now, did ever anybody see a couple of country wenches giving themselves more ridiculous airs, or two men treated with more contempt than we were? They could hardly make up their mind to order chairs for us. I never saw such whispering as there was between them; such yawning, such rubbing of the eyes, and asking so often what o'clock it was. Did they answer anything else but “yes,” or “no,” to what we said to them? In short, do you not agree with me that if we had been the meanest persons in the world, we could not have been treated worse?

DU. CR. You seem to take it greatly to heart.

LA. GR. No doubt I do; so much so, that I am resolved to be revenged on them for their impertinence. I know well enough why they despise us. Affectation has not alone infected Paris, but has also spread into the country, and our ridiculous damsels have sucked in their share of it. In a word, they are a strange medley of coquetry and affectation. I plainly see what kind of persons will be well received by them; if you will take my advice, we will play them such a trick as shall show them their folly, and teach them to distinguish a little better the people they have to deal with.

DU. CR. How can you do this?

LA. GR. I have a certain valet, named Mascarille, who, in the opinion of many people, passes for a kind of wit; for nothing now−a−days is easier than to acquire such a reputation. He is an extraordinary fellow, who has taken it into his head to ape a person of quality. He usually prides himself on his gallantry and his poetry, and despises so much the other servants that he calls them brutes.

DU. CR. Well, what do you mean to do with him?

LA. GR. What do I mean to do with him? He must ... but first, let us be gone.

SCENE II.—GORGIBUS, DU CROISY, LA GRANGE.

GORG. Well, gentlemen, you have seen my niece and my daughter. How are matters going on? What is the result of your visit?

LA. GR. They will tell you this better than we can. All we say is that we thank you for the favour you have done us, and remain your most humble servants.

DU. CR. Your most humble servants.

GORG. (*Alone*). Hoity−toity! Methinks they go away dissatisfied. What can be the meaning of this? I must find it out. Within there!

SCENE III.—GORGIBUS, MAROTTE.

MAR. Did you call, sir?
GORG. Where are your mistresses?
MAR. In their room.
GORG. What are they doing there?
MAR. Making lip salve.
GORG. There is no end of their salves. Bid them come down. (*Alone*). These hussies with their salves have, I think, a mind to ruin me. Everywhere in the house I see nothing but whites of eggs, lac virginal, and a thousand other fooleries I am not acquainted with. Since we have been here they have employed the lard of a dozen hogs at least, and four servants might live every day on the sheep's trotters they use.

SCENE IV.—−MADELON, CATHOS, GORGIBUS.

GORG. Truly there is great need to spend so much money to grease your faces. Pray tell me, what have you done to those gentlemen, that I saw them go away with so much coldness. Did I not order you to receive them as persons whom I intended for your husbands?

MAD. Dear father, what consideration do you wish us to entertain for the irregular behaviour of these people?

CAT. How can a woman of ever so little understanding, uncle, reconcile herself to such individuals?

GORG. What fault have you to find with them?

MAD. Their's is fine gallantry, indeed. Would you believe it? they began with proposing marriage to us.

GORG. What would you have them begin with—with a proposal to keep you as mistresses? Is not their proposal a compliment to both of you, as well as to me? Can anything be more polite than this? And do they not prove the honesty of their intentions by wishing to enter these holy bonds?

MAD. O, father! Nothing can be more vulgar than what you have just said. I am ashamed to hear you talk in such a manner; you should take some lessons in the elegant way of looking at things.

GORG. I care neither for elegant ways nor songs. I tell you marriage is a holy and sacred affair; to begin with that is to act like honest people.

[Footnote: The original has a play on words. Madelon says, in addressing her father, *vous devriez un pen vous faire apprendre le bel air des choses*, upon which he answers, *je n'ai que faire ni d'air ni de chanson*. *Air* means tune as well as look, appearance.]

MAD. Good Heavens! If everybody was like you a love−story would soon be over. What a fine thing it would have been if Cyrus had immediately espoused Mandane, and if Aronce had been married all at once to Clelie.

[Footnote: *Cyrus* and *Mandane* are the two principal characters of Mademoiselle de Scudery's novel *Artamene, on the Grand Cyrus*; *Aronce* and *Clelie* of the novel *Clelie*, by the same author.]

GORG. What is she jabbering about?

MAD. Here is my cousin, father, who will tell as well as I that matrimony ought never to happen till after other adventures. A lover, to be agreeable, must understand how to utter fine sentiments, to breathe soft, tender, and passionate vows; his courtship must be according to the rules. In the first place, he should behold the fair one of whom he becomes enamoured either at a place of worship, [Footnote: See note 15, page 33.] or when out walking, or at some public ceremony; or else he should be introduced to her by a relative or a friend, as if by chance, and when he leaves her he should appear in a pensive and melancholy mood. For some time he should conceal his passion from the object of his love, but pay her several visits, in every one of which he ought to introduce some gallant subject to exercise the wits of all the company. When the day comes to make his declarations—which generally should be contrived in some shady garden−walk while the company is at a distance—it should be quickly followed by anger, which is shown by our blushing, and which, for a while, banishes the lover from our presence. He finds afterwards means to pacify us, to accustom us gradually to hear him depict his passion, and to draw from us that confession which causes us so much pain. After that come the adventures, the rivals who thwart mutual inclination, the persecutions of fathers, the jealousies arising without any foundation, complaints, despair, running away with, and its consequences. Thus things are carried on in fashionable life, and veritable gallantry cannot dispense with these forms. But to come out point−blank with a proposal of marriage,—to make no love but with a marriage−contract, and begin a novel at the wrong end! Once more, father, nothing can be more tradesmanlike, and the mere thought of it makes me sick at heart.

GORG. What deuced nonsense is all this? That is highflown language with a vengeance!

CAT. Indeed, uncle, my cousin hits the nail on the head. How can we receive kindly those who are so awkward in gallantry. I could lay a wager they have not even seen a map of the country of *Tenderness*, and that *Love−letters*, *Trifling attentions*, *Polite epistles*, and *Sprightly verses*, are regions to them unknown.

[Footnote: The map of the country of Tenderness (*la carte de Tendre*) is found in the first part of *Clelie* (see note 2, page 146); Love−letter (*Billetdoux*); Polite epistle (*Billet galant*); Trifling attentions (*Petit Soins*); Sprightly verses (*Jolts vers*), are the names of villages to be found in the map, which is a curiosity in its way.]

Do you not see that the whole person shews it, and that their external appearance is not such as to give at first

sight a good opinion of them. To come and pay a visit to the object of their love with a leg without any ornaments, a hat without any feathers, a head with its locks not artistically arranged, and a coat that suffers from a paucity of ribbons. Heavens! what lovers are these! what stinginess in dress! what barrenness of conversation! It is not to be allowed; it is not to be borne. I also observed that their ruffs

[Footnote: The ruff (*rabat*) was at first only the shirt−collar pulled out and worn outside the coat. Later ruffs were worn, which were not fastened to the shirt, sometimes adorned with lace, and tied in front with two strings with tassels. The *rabat* was very fashionable during the youthful years of Louis XIV.]

were not made by the fashionable milliner, and that their breeches were not big enough by more than half−a−foot.

GORG. I think they are both mad, nor can I understand anything of this gibberish. Cathos, and you Madelon...

MAD. Pray, father, do not use those strange names, and call us by some other.

GORG. What do you mean by those strange names? Are they not the names your godfathers and godmothers gave you?

MAD. Good Heavens! how vulgar you are! I confess I wonder you could possibly be the father of such an intelligent girl as I am. Did ever anybody in genteel style talk of Cathos or of Madelon? And must you not admit that either of these names would be sufficient to disgrace the finest novel in the world?

CAT. It is true, uncle, an ear rather delicate suffers extremely at hearing these words pronounced, and the name of Polixena, which my cousin has chosen, and that of Amintha, which I took, possesses a charm, which you must needs acknowledge.

[Footnote: The *precieuses* often changed their names into more poetical and romantic appellations. The Marquise de Rambouillet, whose real name was Catherine, was known under the anagram of Arthenice.]

GORG. Hearken; one word will suffice. I do not allow you to take any other names than those that were given you by your godfathers and godmothers; and as for those gentlemen we are speaking about, I know their families and fortunes, and am determined they shall be your husbands. I am tired of having you upon my hands. Looking after a couple of girls is rather too weighty a charge for a man of my years.

CAT. As for me, uncle, all I can say is, that I think marriage a very shocking business. How can one endure the thought of lying by the side of a man, who is really naked?

MAD. Give us leave to take breath for a short time among the fashionable world of Paris, where we are but just arrived. Allow us to prepare at our leisure the groundwork of our novel, and do not hurry on the conclusion too abruptly.

GORG. (*Aside*). I cannot doubt it any longer; they are completely mad. (*Aloud*). Once more, I tell you, I understand nothing of all this gibberish; I will be master, and to cut short all kinds of arguments, either you shall both be married shortly, or, upon my word, you shall be nuns; that I swear.

[Footnote: This scene is the mere outline of the well known quarrel between Chrysale, Philaminte, and Belinda in the "*Femmes Savantes*" (see vol. iii.) but a husband trembling before his wife, and only daring to show his temper to his sister, is a much more tempting subject for a dramatic writer than a man addressing in a firm tone his daughter and niece.]

SCENE VI.—CATHOS, MADELON.

CAT. Good Heavens, my dear, how deeply is your father still immersed in material things! how dense is his understanding, and what gloom overcasts his soul!

MAD. What can I do, my dear? I am ashamed of him. I can hardly persuade myself I am indeed his daughter; I believe that an accident, some time or other, will discover me to be of a more illustrious descent.

CAT. I believe it; really, it is very likely; as for me, when I consider myself...

SCENE VII.—CATHOS, MADELON, MAROTTE.

MAR. Here is a footman asks if you are at home, and says his master is coming to see you.

MAD. Learn, you dunce, to express yourself a little less vulgarly. Say, here is a necessary evil inquiring if it is commodious for you to become visible.

[Footnote: All these and similar sentences were really employed by the *precieuses*.]

MAR. I do not understand Latin, and have not learned philosophy out of Cyrus, as you have done.

[Footnote: *Artamene, ou le Grand Cyrus*, (1649−1653) a novel in ten volumes by Madle. de Scudery.]

MAD. Impertinent creature! How can this be borne! And who is this footman's master?

MAR. He told me it was the Marquis de Mascarille.

MAD. Ah, my dear! A marquis! a marquis! Well, go and tell him we are visible. This is certainly some wit who has heard of us.

CAT. Undoubtedly, my dear.

MAD. We had better receive him here in this parlour than in our room. Let us at least arrange our hair a little and maintain our reputation. Come in quickly, and reach us the Counsellor of the Graces.

MAR. Upon my word, I do not know what sort of a beast that is; you must speak like a Christian if you would have me know your meaning.

CAT. Bring us the looking−glass, you blockhead! and take care not to contaminate its brightness by the communication of your image.

SCENE VIII.—MASCARILLE, TWO CHAIRMEN.

MASC. Stop, chairman, stop. Easy does it! Easy, easy! I think these boobies intend to break me to pieces by bumping me against the walls and the pavement.

1 CHAIR. Ay, marry, because the gate is narrow and you would make us bring you in here.

MASC. To be sure, you rascals! Would you have me expose the fulness of my plumes to the inclemency of the rainy season, and let the mud receive the impression of my shoes? Begone; take away your chair.

2 CHAIR. Then please to pay us, sir.

MASC. What?

2 CHAIR. Sir, please to give us our money, I say.

MASC. (*Giving him a box on the ear*). What, scoundrel, to ask money from a person of my rank!

2 CHAIR. Is this the way poor people are to be paid? Will your rank get us a dinner?

MASC. Ha, ha! I shall teach you to keep your right place. Those low fellows dare to make fun of me!

1 CHAIR. (*Taking up one of the poles of his chair*). Come, pay us quickly.

MASC. What?

1 CHAIR. I mean to have my money at once.

MASC. That is a sensible fellow.

1 CHAIR. Make haste, then.

MASC. Ay, you speak properly, but the other is a scoundrel, who does not know what he says. There, are you satisfied?

1 CHAIR. No, I am not satisfied; you boxed my friend's ears, and ... (*holding up his pole*).

MASC. Gently; there is something for the box on the ear. People may get anything from me when they go about it in the right way. Go now, but come and fetch me by and by to carry me to the Louvre to the *petit coucher*.

[Footnote: Louis XIV. and several other Kings of France, received their courtiers when rising or going to bed. This was called *lever* and *coucher*. The *lever* as well as the *coucher* was divided into *petit* and *grand*. All persons received at court had a right to come to the *grand lever* and *coucher*, but only certain noblemen of high rank and the princes of the royal blood could remain at the *petit lever* and *coucher*, which was the time between the king putting on either a day or night shirt, and the time he went to bed or was fully dressed. The highest person of rank always claimed the right of handing to the king his shirt.]

SCENE IX.—MAROTTE, MASCARILLE.

MAR. Sir, my mistresses will come immediately.
MASC. Let them not hurry themselves; I am very comfortable here, and can wait.
MAR. Here they come.

SCENE X.—MADELON, CATHOS, MASCARILLE, ALMANZOR.

MASC. (*After having bowed to them*). Ladies, no doubt you will be surprised at the boldness of my visit, but your reputation has drawn this disagreeable affair upon you; merit has for me such potent charms, that I run everywhere after it.

MAD. If you pursue merit you should not come to us.

CAT. If you find merit amongst us, you must have brought it hither yourself.

MASC. Ah! I protest against these words. When fame mentioned your deserts it spoke the truth, and you are going to make *pic*, *repic*, and *capot* all the gallants from Paris.

[Footnote: Dryden, in his *Sir Martin Mar−all* (Act i. sc. i), makes Sir Martin say: “If I go to picquet...he will picque and repicque, and capot me twenty times together” I believe that these terms in Moliere's and Dryden's times had a different meaning from what they have now.]

MAD. Your complaisance goes a little too far in the liberality of its praises, and my cousin and I must take care not to give too much credit to your sweet adulation.

CAT. My dear, we should call for chairs.

MAD. Almanzor!

ALM. Madam.

MAD. Convey to us hither, instantly, the conveniences of conversation.

MASC. But am I safe here? (*Exit Almanzor*.)

CAT. What is it you fear?

MASC. Some larceny of my heart; some massacre of liberty. I behold here a pair of eyes that seem to be very naughty boys, that insult liberty, and use a heart most barbarously. Why the deuce do they put themselves on their guard, in order to kill any one who comes near them? Upon my word! I mistrust them; I shall either scamper away, or expect very good security that they do me no mischief.

MAD. My dear, what a charming facetiousness he has!

CAT. I see, indeed, he is an Amilcar.

[Footnote: Amilcar is one of the heroes of the novel *Clelie*, who wishes to be thought sprightly.]

MAD. Fear nothing, our eyes have no wicked designs, and your heart may rest in peace, fully assured of their innocence.

CAT. But, pray, Sir, be not inexorable to the easy chair, which, for this last quarter of an hour, has held out its arms towards you; yield to its desire of embracing you.

MASC. (*After having combed himself, and, adjusted the rolls of his stockings*). Well, ladies, and what do you think of Paris?

[Footnote: It was at that time the custom for men of rank to comb their hair or periwigs in public.]

[Footnote: The rolls (*canons*) were large round pieces of linen, often adorned with lace or ribbons, and which were fastened below the breeches, just under the knee.]

MAD. Alas! what can we think of it? It would be the very antipodes of reason not to confess that Paris is the grand cabinet of marvels, the centre of good taste, wit, and gallantry.

MASC. As for me, I maintain that, out of Paris, there is no salvation for the polite world.

CAT. Most assuredly.

MASC. Paris is somewhat muddy; but then we have sedan chairs.

MAD. To be sure; a sedan chair is a wonderful protection against the insults of mud and bad weather.

MASC. I am sure you receive many visits. What great wit belongs to your company?

MAD. Alas! we are not yet known, but we are in the way of being so; for a lady of our acquaintance has promised us to bring all the gentlemen who have written for the Miscellanies of Select Poetry.

[Footnote: Moliere probably alludes to a Miscellany of Select Poetry, published in 1653, by de Sercy, under the title of *Poesies choisies de M. M. Corneille Benserade, de Scudery, Boisrobert, Sarrazin, Desmarets, Baraud, Saint−Laurent, Colletet. Lamesnardiere, Montreuil, Viguier, Chevreau, Malleville, Tristan, Testu, Maucroy, de Prade, Girard et de L'Age*. A great number of such miscellanies appeared in France, and in England also, about

that time.]

CAT. And certain others, whom, we have been told, are likewise the sovereign arbiters of all that is handsome.

MASC. I can manage this for you better than any one; they all visit me; and I may say that I never rise without having half−a−dozen wits at my levee.

MAD. Good Heavens! you will place us under the greatest obligation if you will do us the kindness; for, in short, we must make the acquaintance of all those gentlemen if we wish to belong to the fashion. They are the persons who can make or unmake a reputation at Paris; you know that there are some, whose visits alone are sufficient to start the report that you are a *Connaisseuse*, though there should be no other reason for it. As for me, what I value particularly is, that by means of these ingenious visits, we learn a hundred things which we ought necessarily to know, and which are the quintessence of wit. Through them we hear the scandal of the day, or whatever niceties are going on in prose or verse. We know, at the right time, that Mr. So−and−so has written the finest piece in the world on such a subject; that Mrs. So−and−so has adapted words to such a tune; that a certain gentleman has written a madrigal upon a favour shown to him; another stanzas upon a fair one who betrayed him; Mr. Such−a−one wrote a couplet of six lines yesterday evening to Miss Such−a−one, to which she returned him an answer this morning at eight o'clock; such an author is engaged on such a subject; this writer is busy with the third volume of his novel; that one is putting his works to press. Those things procure you consideration in every society, and if people are ignorant of them, I would not give one pinch of snuff for all the wit they may have.

CAT. Indeed, I think it the height of ridicule for any one who possesses the slightest claim to be called clever not to know even the smallest couplet that is made every day; as for me, I should be very much ashamed if any one should ask me my opinion about something new, and I had not seen it.

MASC. It is really a shame not to know from the very first all that is going on; but do not give yourself any farther trouble, I will establish an academy of wits at your house, and I give you my word that not a single line of poetry shall be written in Paris, but what you shall be able to say by heart before anybody else. As for me, such as you see me, I amuse myself in that way when I am in the humour, and you may find handed about in the fashionable assemblies

[Footnote: In the original French the word is *ruelle*, which means literally “a small street,” “a lane,” hence any narrow passage, hence the narrow opening between the wall and the bed. The *Precieuses* at that time received their visitors lying dressed in a bed, which was placed in an alcove and upon a raised platform. Their fashionable friends (*alcovistes*) took their places between the bed and the wall, and thus the name *ruelle* came to be given to all fashionable assemblies. In Dr. John Ash's New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language, published in London 1755, I still find *ruelle* defined: “a little street, a circle, an assembly at a private house.”]

of Paris two hundred songs, as many sonnets, four hundred epigrams, and more than a thousand madrigals all made by me, without counting riddles and portraits.

[Footnote: This kind of literature, in which one attempted to write a portrait of one's self or of others, was then very much in fashion. La Bruyere and de Saint−Simon in France, as well as Dryden and Pope in England, have shown what a literary portrait may become in the hands of men of talent.]

MAD. I must acknowledge that I dote upon portraits; I think there is nothing more gallant.

MASC. Portraits are difficult, and call for great wit; you shall see some of mine that will not displease you.

CAT. As for me, I am awfully fond of riddles.

MASC. They exercise the intelligence; I have already written four of them this morning, which I will give you to guess.

MAD. Madrigals are pretty enough when they are neatly turned.

MASC. That is my special talent; I am at present engaged in turning the whole Roman history into madrigals.

[Footnote: Seventeen years after this play was performed, Benserade published *les Metamorphoses d' Ovide mises en rondeaux*.]

MAD. Goodness gracious! that will certainly be superlatively fine; I should like to have one copy at least, if you think of publishing it.

MASC. I promise you each a copy, bound in the handsomest manner. It does not become a man of my rank to scribble, but I do it only to serve the publishers, who are always bothering me.

MAD. I fancy it must be a delightful thing to see one's self in print.

MASC. Undoubtedly; but, by the by, I must repeat to you some extempore verses I made yesterday at the house of a certain duchess, an acquaintance of mine. I am deuced clever at extempore verses.

CAT. Extempore verses are certainly the very touch−stone of genius.

MASC. Listen then.

MAD. We are all ears.

MASC.

Oh! oh! quite without heed was I,
As harmless you I chanced to spy,
Slily your eyes
My heart surprise,
Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief I cry!

CAT. Good Heavens! this is carried to the utmost pitch of gallantry.

MASC. Everything I do shows it is done by a gentleman; there is nothing of the pedant about my effusions.

MAD. They are more than two thousand miles removed from that.

MASC. Did you observe the beginning, *oh! oh?* there is something original in that *oh! oh!* like a man who all of a sudden thinks about something, *oh! oh!* Taken by surprise as it were, *oh! oh!*

MAD. Yes, I think that *oh! oh!* admirable.

MASC. It seems a mere nothing.

CAT. Good Heavens! How can you say so? It is one of these things that are perfectly invaluable.

MAD. No doubt on it; I would rather have written that *oh! oh!* than an epic poem.

MASC. Egad, you have good taste.

MAD. Tolerably; none of the worst, I believe.

MASC. But do you not also admire *quite without heed was I? quite without heed was I*, that is, I did not pay attention to anything; a natural way of speaking, *quite without heed was I, of no harm thinking*, that is, as I was going along, innocently, without malice, like a poor sheep, *you I chanced to spy*, that is to say, I amused myself with looking at you, with observing you, with contemplating you. *Slily your eyes*. ... What do you think of that word *slily*—is it not well chosen?

CAT. Extremely so.

MASC. *Slily*, stealthily; just like a cat watching a mouse—*slily*.

MAD. Nothing can be better.

MASC. My heart surprise, that is, carries it away from me, robs me of it. *Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief!* Would you not think a man were shouting and running after a thief to catch him? *Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief!*

[Footnote: The scene of Mascarille reading his extempore verses is something like Trissotin in *Les Femmes savantes* (see vol. III.) reading his sonnet for the Princess Uranie. But Mascarille comments on the beauties of his verses with the insolent vanity of a man who does not pretend to have even one atom of modesty; Trissotin, a professional wit, listens in silence, but with secret pride, to the ridiculous exclamations of the admirers of his genius.]

MAD. I must admit the turn is witty and sprightly.

MASC. I will sing you the tune I made to it.

CAT. Have you learned music?

MASC. I? Not at all.

CAT. How can you make a tune then?

MASC. People of rank know everything without ever having learned anything.

MAD. His lordship is quite in the right, my dear.

MASC. Listen if you like the tune: *hem, hem, la, la.* The inclemency of the season has greatly injured the delicacy of my voice but no matter, it is in a free and easy way. (*He sings*). *Oh! Oh! quite without heed was I*, etc.

CAT. What a passion there breathes in this music. It is enough to make one die away with delight!

MAD. There is something plaintive in it.

MASC. Do you not think that the air perfectly well expresses the sentiment, *stop thief, stop thief?* And then as if some one cried out very loud, *stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop thief!* Then all at once like a person out of breath, *Stop thief!*

MAD. This is to understand the perfection of things, the grand perfection, the perfection of perfections. I declare it is altogether a wonderful performance. I am quite enchanted with the air and the words.

CAT. I never yet met with anything so excellent.

MASC. All that I do comes naturally to me; it is without study.

MAD. Nature has treated you like a very fond mother; you are her darling child.

MASC. How do you pass away the time, ladies?

CAT. With nothing at all.

MAD. Until now we have lived in a terrible dearth of amusements.

MASC. I am at your service to attend you to the play, one of those days, if you will permit me. Indeed, a new comedy is to be acted which I should be very glad we might see together.

MAD. There is no refusing you anything.

MASC. But I beg of you to applaud it well, when we shall be there; for I have promised to give a helping hand to the piece. The author called upon me this very morning to beg me so to do. It is the custom for authors to come and read their new plays to people of rank, that they may induce us to approve of them and give them a reputation. I leave you to imagine if, when we say anything, the pit dares contradict us. As for me, I am very punctual in these things, and when I have made a promise to a poet, I always cry out “Bravo” before the candles are lighted.

MAD. Do not say another word; Paris is an admirable place. A hundred things happen every day which people in the country, however clever they may be, have no idea of.

CAT. Since you have told us, we shall consider it our duty to cry up lustily every word that is said.

MASC. I do not know whether I am deceived, but you look as if you had written some play yourself.

MAD. Eh! there may be something in what you say.

MASC. Ah! upon my word, we must see it. Between ourselves, I have written one which I intend to have brought out.

CAT. Ay! to what company do you mean to give it?

MASC. That is a very nice question, indeed. To the actors of the hotel de Bourgogne; they alone can bring things into good repute; the rest are ignorant creatures who recite their parts just as people speak in every−day life; they do not understand to mouth the verses, or to pause at a beautiful passage; how can it be known where the fine lines are, if an actor does not stop at them, and thereby tell you to applaud heartily?

[Footnote: The company of actors at the hotel de Bourgogne were rivals to the troop of Moliere; it appears, however, from contemporary authors, that the accusations brought by our author against them were well−founded.]

CAT. Indeed! that is one way of making an audience feel the beauties of any work; things are only prized when they are well set off.

MASC. What do you think of my top−knot, sword−knot, and rosettes? Do you find them harmonize with my coat?

[Footnote: In the original *petite oie*; this was first, the name given to the giblets of a goose, *oie*; next it came to mean all the accessories of dress, ribbons, laces, feathers, and other small ornaments. In one of the old translations of Moliere *petite oie* is rendered by “muff,” and *Perdrigeon* (see next note), I suppose, with a faint idea of *perdrix*, a partridge, by “bird of paradise feathers!!”]

CAT. Perfectly.

MASC. Do you think the ribbon well chosen?

MAD. Furiously well. It is real Perdrigeon.

[Footnote: Perdrigeon was the name of a fashionable linen−draper in Paris at that time.]

MASC. What do you say of my rolls?

[Footnote: According to Ash's Dictionary, 1775, *canons*, are “cannions, a kind of boot hose, an ancient dress for the legs.”]

MAD. They look very fashionable.

MASC, I may at least boast that they are a quarter of a yard wider than any that have been made.

MAD. I must own I never saw the elegance of dress carried farther.

MASC. Please to fasten the reflection of your smelling faculty upon these gloves.

MAD. They smell awfully fine.

CAT. I never inhaled a more delicious perfume.

MASC. And this? (*He gives them his powdered wig to smell*).

MAD. It has the true quality odour; it titillates the nerves of the upper region most deliciously.

MASC. You say nothing of my feathers. How do you like them?

CAT. They are frightfully beautiful.

MASC. Do you know that every single one of them cost me a Louis−d'or? But it is my hobby to have generally everything of the very best.

MAD. I assure you that you and I sympathize. I am furiously particular in everything I wear; I cannot endure even stockings, unless they are bought at a fashionable shop.

[Footnote: Without going into details about the phraseology of the *precieuses*, of which the ridiculousness has appeared sufficiently in this scene, it will be observed that they used adverbs, as “furiously, terribly, awfully, extraordinarily, horribly, greatly,” and many more, in such a way that they often appear absurd, as, “I love you horribly,” or, “he was greatly small.” Such a way of speaking is not unknown even at the present time in England; we sometimes hear, “I like it awfully,” “it is awfully jolly.”]

MASC. (*Crying out suddenly*). O! O! O! gently. Damme, ladies, you use me very ill; I have reason to complain of your behaviour; it is not fair.

[Footnote: I employ here the words “to have reason,” because that verb, in the sense of “to have a right, to be right,” seems to have been a courtly expression in Dryden's time. Old Moody answers to Sir Martin Marall (Act iii., Scene 3), “You have reason, sir. There he is again, too; the town phrase; a great compliment I wise! *you have reason*, sir; that is, you are no beast, sir.”]

CAT. What is the matter with you?

MASC. What! two at once against my heart! to attack me thus right and left! Ha! This is contrary to the law of nations, the combat is too unequal, and I must cry out, “Murder!”

CAT. Well, he does say things in a peculiar way.

MAD. He is a consummate wit.

CAT. You are more afraid than hurt, and your heart cries out before it is even wounded.

MASC. The devil it does! it is wounded all over from head to foot.

SCENE XI.—CATHOS, MADELON, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE.

MAR. Madam, somebody asks to see you.
MAD. Who!
MAR. The Viscount de Jodelet.
MASC. The Viscount de Jodelet?
MAR. Yes, sir.
CAT. Do you know him?
MASC. He is my most intimate friend.
MAD. Shew him in immediately.
MASC. We have not seen each other for some time; I am delighted to meet him.
CAT. Here he comes.

SCENE XII.—CATHOS, MADELON, JODELET, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE, ALMANZOR.

MASC. Ah, Viscount!

JOD. Ah, Marquis! (*Embracing each other*).

MASC. How glad I am to meet you!

JOD. How happy I am to see you here.

MASC. Embrace me once more, I pray you.

[Footnote: It was then the fashion for young courtiers to embrace each other repeatedly with exaggerated gestures, uttering all the while loud exclamations. The Viscount de Jodelet is the caricature of a courtier of a former reign; he is very old, very pale, dressed in sombre colours, speaks slowly and through the nose. Geoffrin, the actor, who played this part, was at least seventy years old.]

MAD. (*To Cathos*). My dearest, we begin to be known; people of fashion find the way to our house.

MASC. Ladies, allow me to introduce this gentleman to you. Upon my word, he deserves the honour of your acquaintance.

JOD. It is but just we should come and pay you what we owe; your charms demand their lordly rights from all sorts of people.

MAD. You carry your civilities to the utmost confines of flattery.

CAT. This day ought to be marked in our diary as a red−letter day.

MAD. (*To Almanser*). Come, boy, must you always be told things over and over again? Do you not observe there must be an additional chair?

MASC. You must not be astonished to see the Viscount thus; he has but just recovered from an illness, which, as you perceive, has made him so pale.

[Footnote: Moliere here alludes to the complexion of the actor Geoffrin.]

JOD. The consequence of continual attendance at court and the fatigues of war.

MASC. Do you know, ladies, that in the Viscount you behold one of the heroes of the age. He is a very valiant man.

[Footnote: In the original *un brave a trois poils*, literally, “a brave man with three hairs.” This is an allusion to the moustache and pointed beard on the chin, then called *royale*. We have seen the fashion revived in our days by the late emperor of the French, Napoleon III. and his courtiers; of course, the *royale* was then called *imperiale*.]

JOB. Marquis, you are not inferior to me; we also know what you can do.

MASC. It is true we have seen one another at work when there was need for it.

JOD. And in places where it was hot.

MASC. (*Looking at Cathos and Madelon*). Ay, but not so hot as here. Ha, ha, ha!

JOD. We became acquainted in the army; the first time we saw each other he commanded a regiment of horse aboard the galleys of Malta.

MASC. True, but for all that you were in the service before me; I remember that I was but a young officer when you commanded two thousand horse.

JOD. War is a fine thing; but, upon my word, the court does not properly reward men of merit like us.

MASC. That is the reason I intend to hang up my sword.

CAT. As for me, I have a tremendous liking for gentlemen of the army.

[Footnote: Cathos, who only repeats what her cousin says, and has observed that Mascarille admires Madelon, is resolved to worship more particularly the Viscount de Jodelet.]

MAD. I love them, too; but I like bravery seasoned with wit.

MASC. Do you remember, Viscount, our taking that half−moon from the enemy at the siege of Arras?

[Footnote: Turenne compelled the Prince de Conde and the Spanish army to raise the siege of Arras in 1654.]

JOD. What do you mean by a half−moon? It was a complete full moon.

MASC. I believe you are right.

JOD. Upon my word, I ought to remember it very well. I was wounded in the leg by a hand−grenade, of

which I still carry the marks. Pray, feel it, you can perceive what sort of a wound it was.

CAT. (*Putting her hand to the place*). The scar is really large.

MASC. Give me your hand for a moment, and feel this; there, just at the back of my head. Do you feel it?

MAD. Ay, I feel something.

MASC. A musket shot which I received the last campaign I served in.

JOD. (*Unbuttoning his breast*). Here is a wound which went quite through me at the attack of Gravelines.

[Footnote: In 1658, the Marshal de la Ferte took this town from the Spaniards.]

MASC. (*Putting his hand upon the button of his breeches*). I am going to show you a tremendous wound.

MAD. There is no occasion for it, we believe it without seeing it.

MASC. They are honour's marks, that show what a man is made of.

CAT. We have not the least doubt of the valour of you both.

MASC. Viscount, is your coach in waiting?

JOD. Why?

MASC. We shall give these ladies an airing, and offer them a collation.

MAD. We cannot go out to−day.

MASC. Let us send for musicians then, and have a dance.

JOD. Upon my word, that is a happy thought.

MAD. With all our hearts, but we must have some additional company.

MASC. So ho! Champagne, Picard, Bourguignon, Cascaret, Basque, La Verdure, Lorrain, Provencal, La Violette. I wish the deuce took all these footmen! I do not think there is a gentleman in France worse served than I am! These rascals are always out of the way.

[Footnote: These names, with the exception of Cascaret, La Verdure and La Violette are those of natives of different provinces, and were often given to footmen, according to the place where they were born. *Cascaret* is of Spanish origin, and not seldom used as a name for servants; *La Verdure* means, verdure; *La Violette*, violet.]

MAD. Almanzor, tell the servants of my lord marquis to go and fetch the musicians, and ask some of the gentlemen and ladies hereabouts to come and people the solitude of our ball. (*Exit Almanzor*).

MASC. Viscount, what do you say of those eyes?

JOD. Why, Marquess, what do you think of them yourself?

MASC. I? I say that our liberty will have much difficulty to get away from here scot free. At least mine has suffered most violent attacks; my heart hangs by a single thread.

MAD. How natural is all he says! he gives to things a most agreeable turn.

CAT. He must really spend a tremendous deal of wit.

MASC. To show you that I am in earnest, I shall make some extempore verses upon my passion. (*Seems to think*).

CAT. O! I beseech you by all that I hold sacred, let us hear something made upon us.

JOD. I should be glad to do so too, but the quantity of blood that has been taken from me lately, has greatly exhausted my poetic vein.

MASC. Deuce take it! I always make the first verse well, but I find the others more difficult. Upon my word, this is too short a time; but I will make you some extempore verses at my leisure, which you shall think the finest in the world.

JOD. He is devilish witty.

MAD. He—his wit is so gallant and well expressed.

MASC. Viscount, tell me, when did you see the Countess last?

JOD. I have not paid her a visit these three weeks.

MASC. Do you know that the duke came to see me this morning; he would fain have taken me into the country to hunt a stag with him?

MAD. Here come our friends.

SCENE XIII.—LUCILE, CELIMENE, CATHOS, MADELON, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, ALMANZOR, AND MUSICIANS.

MAD. Lawk! my dears, we beg your pardon. These gentlemen had a fancy to put life into our heels; we sent for you to fill up the void of our assembly.

LUC. We are certainly much obliged to you for doing so.

MASC. This is a kind of extempore ball, ladies, but one of these days we shall give you one in form. Have the musicians come?

ALM. Yes, sir, they are here.

CAT. Come then, my dears, take your places.

MASC. (*Dancing by himself and singing*). La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

MAD. What a very elegant shape he has.

CAT. He looks as if he were a first−rate dancer.

MASC. (*Taking out Madelon to dance*). My freedom will dance a Couranto as well as my feet. Play in time, musicians, in time. O what ignorant wretches! There is no dancing with them. The devil take you all, can you not play in time? La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la? Steady, you country−scrapers!

[Footnote: A Couranto was a very grave, Spanish dance, or rather march, but in which the feet did not rise from the ground.]

JOD. (*Dancing also*). Hold, do not play so fast. I have but just recovered from an illness.

SCENE XIV.—Du CROISY, LA GRANGE, CATHOS, MADELON, LUCILE, CELIMENE, JODELET; MASCARILLE, MAROTTE, AND MUSICIANS.

LA GR. (*With a stick in his hand*). Ah! ah! scoundrels, what are you doing here? We have been looking for you these three hours. (*He beats Mascarille*).

MASC. Oh! oh! oh! you did not tell me that blows should be dealt about.

JOD. (*Who is also beaten*). Oh! oh! oh!

LA GR. It becomes you well, you rascal, to pretend to be a man of rank.

DU CR. This will teach you to know yourself.

SCENE XV.—CATHOS, MADELON, LUCILE, CELIMENE, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, AND MUSICIANS.

MAD. What is the meaning of this?

JOD. It is a wager.

CAT. What, allow yourselves to be beaten thus?

MASC. Good Heavens! I did not wish to appear to take any notice of it; because I am naturally very violent, and should have flown into a passion.

MAD. To suffer an insult like this in our presence!

MASC. It is nothing. Let us not leave off. We have known one another for a long time, and among friends one ought not to be so quickly offended for such a trifle.

SCENE XVI.—DU CROISY, LA GRANGE, MADELON, CATHOS, LUCILE, CELIMENE, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, AND MUSICIANS.

LA GR. Upon my word, rascals, you shall not laugh at us, I promise you. Come in, you there. (*Three or four men enter*).

MAD. What means this impudence to come and disturb us in our own house?

DU CR. What, ladies, shall we allow our footmen to be received better than ourselves? Shall they come to make love to you at our expense, and even give a ball in your honour?

MAD. Your footmen?

LA GR. Yes, our footmen; and you must give me leave to say that it is not acting either handsome or honest to spoil them for us, as you do.

MAD. O Heaven! what insolence!

LA GR. But they shall not have the advantage of our clothes to dazzle your eyes. Upon my word, if you are resolved to like them, it shall be for their handsome looks only. Quick, let them be stripped immediately.

JOD. Farewell, a long farewall to all our fine clothes.

[Footnote: The original has *braverle*; brave, and bravery, had formerly also the meaning of showy, gaudy, rich, in English. Fuller in *The Holy State*, bk. ii., c. 18, says: “If he (the good yeoman) chance to appear in clothes above his rank, it is to grace some great man with his service, and then he blusheth at his own bravery.”]

MASC. The marquisate and viscountship are at an end.

DU. CR. Ah! ah! you knaves, you have the impudence to become our rivals. I assure you, you must go somewhere else to borrow finery to make yourselves agreeable to your mistresses.

LA GR. It is too much to supplant us, and that with our own clothes.

MASC. O fortune, how fickle you are!

DU CR. Quick, pull off everything from them.

LA GR. Make haste and take away all these clothes. Now, ladies, in their present condition you may continue your amours with them as long as you please; we leave you perfectly free; this gentleman and I declare solemnly that we shall not be in the least degree jealous.

SCENE XVII.—MADELON, CATHOS, JODELET, MASCARILLE, AND MUSICIANS.

CAT. What a confusion!
MAD. I am nearly bursting with vexation.
1 MUS. (*To Mascarille*). What is the meaning of this? Who is to pay us?
MASC. Ask my lord the viscount.
1 MUS. (*To Jodelet*). Who is to give us our money?
JOD. Ask my lord the marquis.

SCENE XVIII.—GORGIBUS, MADELON, CATHOS, JODELET, MASCARILLE, AND MUSICIANS.

GORG. Ah! you hussies, you have put us in a nice pickle, by what I can see; I have heard about your fine goings on from those two gentlemen who just left.

MAD. Ah, father! they have played us a cruel trick.

GORG. Yes, it is a cruel trick, but you may thank your own impertinence for it, you jades. They have revenged themselves for the way you treated them; and yet, unhappy man that I am, I must put up with the affront.

MAD. Ah! I swear we will be revenged, or I shall die in the attempt. And you, rascals, dare you remain here after your insolence?

MASC. Do you treat a marquis in this manner? This is the way of the world; the least misfortune causes us to be slighted by those who before caressed us. Come along, brother, let us go and seek our fortune somewhere else; I perceive they love nothing here but outward show, and have no regard for worth unadorned. (*They both leave*).

SCENE XIX.—GORGIBUS, MADELON, CATHOS, AND MUSICIANS.

1 MUS. Sir, as they have not paid us, we expect you to do so, for it was in this house we played.

GORG. (*Beating them*). Yes, yes, I shall satisfy you; this is the coin I will pay you in. As for you, you sluts, I do not know why I should not serve you in the same way; we shall become the common talk and laughing−stock of everybody; this is what you have brought upon yourselves by your fooleries. Out of my sight and hide yourselves, you jades; go and hide yourselves forever. {*Alone*). And you, that are the cause of their folly, you stupid trash, mischievous amusements for idle minds, you novels, verses, songs, sonnets, and sonatas, the devil take you all.