The Bores

by Molière

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LES FÂCHEUX.

COMÉDIE.

* * * * *

THE BORES.

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS. (THE ORIGINAL IN VERSE.) AUGUST 17TH, 1661.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

The Bores is a character-comedy; but the peculiarities taken as the text of the play, instead of being confined to one or two of the leading personages, are exhibited in different forms by a succession of characters, introduced one after the other in rapid course, and disappearing after the brief performance of their rôles. We do not find an evolution of natural situations, proceeding from the harmonious conduct of two or three individuals, but rather a disjointed series of tableaux—little more than a collection of monologues strung together on a weak thread of explanatory comments, enunciated by an unwilling listener.

The method is less artistic, if not less natural; less productive of situations, if capable of greater variety of illustrations. The circumstances under which Molière undertook to compose the play explain his resort to the weaker manner of analysis. The Superintendent-General of finance, [Footnote: In Sir James Stephen's Lectures on the History of France, vol. ii. page 22, I find: "Still further to centralize the fiscal economy of France, Philippe le Bel created a new ministry. At the head of it he placed an officer of high rank, entitled the Superintendent-General of Finance, and, in subordination to him, he appointed other officers designated as Treasurers."] Nicolas Fouquet desiring to entertain the King, Queen, and court at his mansion of Vaux-le-Vicomte, asked for a comedy at the hands of the Palais-Royal company, who had discovered the secret of pleasing the Grand Monarque. Molière had but a fortnight's notice; and he was expected, moreover, to accommodate his muse to

various prescribed styles of entertainment.

Fouquet wanted a cue for a dance by Beauchamp, for a picture by Lebrun, for stage devices by Torelli. Molière was equal to the emergency. Never, perhaps, was a literary work written to order so worthy of being preserved for future generations. Not only were the intermediate ballets made sufficiently elastic to give scope for the ingenuity of the poet's auxiliaries, but the written scenes themselves were admirably contrived to display all the varied talent of his troupe.

The success of the piece on its first representation, which took place on the 17th of August, 1661, was unequivocal; and the King summoned the author before him in order personally to express his satisfaction. It is related that, the Marquis de Soyecourt passing by at the time, the King said to Molière, "There is an original character which you have not yet copied." The suggestion was enough. The result was that, at the next representation, Dorante the hunter, a new bore, took his place in the comedy.

Louis XIV. thought he had discovered in Molière a convenient mouthpiece for his dislikes. The selfish king was no lover of the nobility, and was short-sighted enough not to perceive that the author's attacks on the nobles paved the way for doubts on the divine right of kings themselves. Hence he protected Molière, and entrusted to him the care of writing plays for his entertainments; the public did not, however, see The Bores until the 4th of November of the same year; and then it met with great success.

The bore is ubiquitous, on the stage as in everyday life. Horace painted him in his famous passage commencing Ibam forte via Sacrâ, and the French satirist, Regnier, has depicted him in his eighth satire.

Molière had no doubt seen the Italian farce, "Le Case svaliggiate ovvera gli Interrompimenti di Pantalone," which appears to have directly provided him with the thread of his comedy. This is the gist of it. A girl, courted by Pantaloon, gives him a

rendezvous in order to escape from his importunities; whilst a cunning knave sends across his path a medley of persons to delay his approach, and cause him to break his appointment. This delay, however, is about the only point of resemblance between the Italian play and the French comedy.

There are some passages in Scarron's Epîtres chagrines addressed to the Marshal d'Albret and M. d'Elbène, from which our author must have derived a certain amount of inspiration; for in these epistles the writer reviews the whole tribe of bores, in coarse but vigorous language.

Molière dedicated The Bores to Louis XIV. in the following words:

SIRE,

I am adding one scene to the Comedy, and a man who dedicates a book is a species of Bore insupportable enough. Your Majesty is better acquainted with this than any person in the kingdom: and this is not the first time that you have been exposed to the fury of Epistles Dedicatory. But though I follow the example of others, and put myself in the rank of those I have ridiculed; I dare, however, assure Your Majesty, that what I have done in this case is not so much to present You a book, as to have the opportunity of returning You thanks for the success of this Comedy. I owe, Sire, that success, which exceeded my expectations, not only to the glorious approbation with which Your Majesty honoured this piece at first, and which attracted so powerfully that of all the world; but also to the order, which You gave me, to add a Bore, of which Yourself had the goodness to give me the idea, and which was proved by everyone to be the finest part of the work. [Footnote: See Prefatory Memoir, page xxviii. ?] I must confess, Sire, I never did any thing with such ease and readiness, as that part, where I had Your Majesty's commands to work.

The pleasure I had in obeying them, was to me more than Apollo and all the Muses; and by this I conceive what I should be able to execute in a complete Comedy, were I inspired by the same commands. Those who are born in an elevated rank, may

propose to themselves the honour of serving Your Majesty in great Employments; but, for my part, all the glory I can aspire to, is to amuse You. [Footnote: In spite of all that has been said about Molière's passionate fondness for his profession, I imagine he must now and then have felt some slight, or suffered from some want of consideration. Hence perhaps the above sentence. Compare with this Shakespeare's hundred and eleventh sonnet:

"Oh! for my sake, do you with Fortune chide The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds, That did not better for my life provide Than public means which public manners breeds. Thence comes it that my name receives a brand; And almost thence my nature is subdu'd To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."]

The ambition of my wishes is confined to this; and I think that, to contribute any thing to the diversion of her King, is, in some respects, not to be useless to France. Should I not succeed in this, it shall never be through want of zeal, or study; but only through a hapless destiny, which often accompanies the best intentions, and which, to a certainty, would be a most sensible affliction to SIRE, Your MAJESTY'S most humble, most obedient, and most faithful Servant,

MOLIÈRE.

In the eighth volume of the "Select Comedies of M. de Molière, London, 1732," the play of The Bores is dedicated, under the name of The Impertinents, to the Right Honourable the Lord Carteret, [Footnote: John, Lord Carteret, born 22nd April, 1690, twice Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, was Secretary of State and head of the Ministry from February, 1742, until November 23, 1744, became Earl Granville that same year, on the death of his mother; was president of the Council in 1751, and died in 1763.] in the following words:

MY LORD,

It is by Custom grown into a sort of Privilege for Writers, of whatsoever Class, to attack Persons of Rank and Merit by these kind of Addresses. We conceive a certain

Charm in Great and Favourite Names, which sooths our Reader, and prepossesses him in our Favour: We deem ourselves of Consequence, according to the Distinction of our Patron; and come in for our Share in the Reputation he bears in the World. Hence it is, MY LORD, that Persons of the greatest Worth are most expos'd to these Insults.

For however usual and convenient this may be to a Writer, it must be confess'd, MY LORD, it may be some degree of Persecution to a Patron; Dedicators, as Molière observes, being a Species of Impertinents, troublesome enough. Yet the Translator of this Piece hopes he may be rank'd among the more tolerable ones, in presuming to inscribe to Your LORDSHIP the Facheux of Molière done into English; assuring himself that Your LORDSHIP will not think any thing this Author has writ unworthy of your Patronage; nor discourage even a weaker Attempt to make him more generally read and understood.

Your LORDSHIP is well known, as an absolute Master, and generous Patron of Polite Letters; of those Works especially which discover a Moral, as well as Genius; and by a delicate Raillery laugh men out of their Follies and Vices: could the Translator, therefore, of this Piece come anything near the Original, it were assured of your Acceptance. He will not dare to arrogate any thing to himself on this Head, before so good a Judge as Your LORDSHIP: He hopes, however, it will appear that, where he seems too superstitious a Follower of his Author, 'twas not because he could not have taken more Latitude, and have given more Spirit; but to answer what he thinks the most essential part of a Translator, to lead the less knowing to the Letter; and after better Acquaintance, Genius will bring them to the Spirit.

The Translator knows your LORDSHIP, and Himself too well to attempt Your Character, even though he should think this a proper occasion: The Scholar—the Genius—the Statesman—the Patriot—the Man of Honour and Humanity.—Were a Piece finish'd from these Out-lines, the whole World would agree in giving it Your

LORDSHIP.

But that requires a Hand—the Person, who presents This, thinks it sufficient to be indulg'd the Honour of subscribing himself

My LORD, Your Lordship's most devoted, most obedient, humble servant,

THE TRANSLATOR.

Thomas Shadwell, whom Dryden flagellates in his Mac-Flecknoe, and in the second part of Absalom and Achitophel, and whom Pope mentions in his Dunciad, wrote The Sullen Lovers, or the Impertinents, which was first performed in 1668 at the Duke of York's Theatre, by their Majesties' Servants.

This play is a working up of The Bores and The Misanthrope, with two scenes from The Forced Marriage, and a reminiscence from The Love-Tiff. It is dedicated to the "Thrice Noble, High and Puissant Prince William, Duke, Marquis, and Earl of Newcastle," because all Men, who pretend either to Sword or Pen, ought "to shelter themselves under Your Grace's Protection." Another reason Shadwell gives for this dedication is in order "to rescue this (play) from the bloody Hands of the Criticks, who will not dare to use it roughly, when they see Your Grace's Name in the beginning." He also states, that "the first Hint I received was from the Report of a Play of Molière's of three Acts, called Les Fascheux, upon which I wrote a great part of this before I read that." He borrowed, after reading it, the first scene in the second act, and Molière's story of Piquet, which he translated into Backgammon, and says, "that he who makes a common practice of stealing other men's wit, would if he could with the same safety, steal anything else." Shadwell mentions, however, nothing of borrowing from The Misanthrope and The Forced Marriage. The preface was, besides political difference, the chief cause of the quarrel between Shadwell and Dryden; for in it the former defends Ben Jonson against the latter, and mentions that—"I have known some of late so insolent to say that Ben Jonson wrote his best playes without wit, imagining that all the wit playes consisted in bringing two

persons upon the stage to break jest, and to bob one another, which they call repartie." The original edition of The Sullen Lovers is partly in blank verse; but, in the first collected edition of Shadwell's works, published by his son in 1720, it is printed in prose. Stanford, "a morose, melancholy man, tormented beyond measure with the impertinence of people, and resolved to leave the world to be quit of them" is a combination of Alceste in The Misanthrope, and Éraste in The Bores; Lovel, "an airy young gentleman, friend to Stanford, one that is pleased with, and laughs at, the impertinents; and that which is the other's torment, is his recreation," is Philinte of The Misanthrope; Emilia and Carolina appear to be Célimène and Eliante; whilst Lady Vaine is an exaggerated Arsinoé of the same play. Sir Positive At-all, "a foolish knight that pretends to understand everything in the world, and will suffer no man to understand anything in his Company, so foolishly positive, that he will never be convinced of an error, though never so gross," is a very good character, and an epitome of all the Bores into one.

The prologue of The Sullen Lovers begins thus:—

"How popular are Poets now-a-days! Who can more Men at their first summons raise, Than many a wealthy home-bred Gentleman, By all his Interest in his Country can. They raise their Friends; but in one Day arise 'Gainst one poor Poet all these Enemies."

PREFACE.

Never was any Dramatic performance so hurried as this; and it is a thing, I believe, quite new, to have a comedy planned, finished, got up, and played in a fortnight. I do not say this to boast of an impromptu, or to pretend to any reputation on that account: but only to prevent certain people, who might object that I have not introduced here all the species of Bores who are to be found. I know that the number of them is great, both at the Court and in the City, and that, without episodes, I

might have composed a comedy of five acts and still have had matter to spare. But in the little time allowed me, it was impossible to execute any great design, or to study much the choice of my characters, or the disposition of my subject. I therefore confined myself to touching only upon a small number of Bores; and I took those which first presented themselves to my mind, and which I thought the best fitted for amusing the august personages before whom this play was to appear; and, to unite all these things together speedily, I made use of the first plot I could find. It is not, at present, my intention to examine whether the whole might not have been better, and whether all those who were diverted with it laughed according to rule. The time may come when I may print my remarks upon the pieces I have written: and I do not despair letting the world see that, like a grand author, I can quote Aristotle and Horace. In expectation of this examination, which perhaps may never take place, I leave the decision of this affair to the multitude, and I look upon it as equally difficult to oppose a work which the public approves, as it is to defend one which it condemns.

There is no one who does not know for what time of rejoicing the piece was composed; and that fete made so much noise, that it is not necessary to speak of it [Footnote: The Bores, according to the Preface, planned, finished, got up, and played in a fortnight, was acted amidst other festivities, first at Vaux, the seat of Monsieur Fouquet, Superintendent of Finances, the 17th of August, 1661, in the presence of the King and the whole Court, with the exception of the Queen. Three weeks later Fouquet was arrested, and finally condemned to be shut up in prison, where he died in 1672. It was not till November, 1661, that The Bores was played in Paris.] but it will not be amiss to say a word or two of the ornaments which have been mixed with the Comedy.

The design was also to give a ballet; and as there was only a small number of first-rate dancers, it was necessary to separate the entrées [Footnote: See Prefatory Memoir, page xxx., note 12] of this ballet, and to interpolate them with the Acts of

the Play, so that these intervals might give time to the same dancers to appear in different dresses; also to avoid breaking the thread of the piece by these interludes, it was deemed advisable to weave the ballet in the best manner one could into the subject, and make but one thing of it and the play. But as the time was exceedingly short, and the whole was not entirely regulated by the same person, there may be found, perhaps, some parts of the ballet which do not enter so naturally into the play as others do. Be that as it may, this is a medley new upon our stage; although one might find some authorities in antiquity: but as every one thought it agreeable, it may serve as a specimen for other things which may be concerted more at leisure.

Immediately upon the curtain rising, one of the actors, whom you may suppose to be myself, appeared on the stage in an ordinary dress, and addressing himself to the King, with the look of a man surprised, made excuses in great disorder, for being there alone, and wanting both time and actors to give his Majesty the diversion he seemed to expect; at the same time in the midst of twenty natural cascades, a large shell was disclosed, which every one saw: and the agreeable Naiad who appeared in it, advanced to the front of the stage, and with an heroic air pronounced the following verses which Mr. Pellison had made, and which served as a Prologue.

PROLOGUE.

(_The Theatre represents a garden adorned with Termini and several fountains. A Naiad coming out of the water in a shell.)

Mortals, from Grots profound I visit you, Gallia's great Monarch in these Scenes to view; Shall Earth's wide Circuit, or the wider Seas, Produce some Novel Sight your Prince to please; Speak He, or wish: to him nought can be hard, Whom as a living Miracle you all regard. Fertile in Miracles, his Reign demands Wonders at universal Nature's Hands, Sage, young, victorious, valiant, and august, Mild as severe, and powerful as he's just, His Passions, and his Foes alike to foil, And noblest Pleasures

join to noblest Toil; His righteous Projects ne'er to misapply, Hear and see all, and act incessantly: He who can this, can all; he needs but dare, And Heaven in nothing will refuse his Prayer. Let Lewis but command, these Bounds shall move, And trees grow vocal as Dodona's Grove. Ye Nymphs and Demi-Gods, whose Presence fills Their sacred Trunks, come forth; so Lewis wills; To please him be our task; I lead the way, Quit now your ancient Forms but for a Day, With borrow'd Shape cheat the Spectator's Eye, And to Theatric Art yourselves apply.

(Several Dryads, accompanied by Fawns and Satyrs, come forth out of the Trees and Termini.)

Hence Royal Cares, hence anxious Application, (His fav'rite Work) to bless a happy Nation: His lofty Mind permit him to unbend, And to a short Diversion condescend; The Morn shall see him with redoubled Force, Resume the Burthen and pursue his Course, Give Force to Laws, his Royal Bounties share, Wisely prevent our Wishes with his Care. Contending Lands to Union firm dispose, And lose his own to fix the World's Repose. But now, let all conspire to ease the Pressure Of Royalty, by elegance of Pleasure. Impertinents, avant; nor come in sight, Unless to give him more supreme Delight.

[Footnote: The Naiad was represented by Madeleine Beéjart, even then good-looking, though she was more than forty years old. The verses are taken from the eighth volume of the "Select Comedies of M. de Molière in French and English, London, 1732," and as fulsome as they well can be. The English translation, which is not mine, fairly represents the official nonsense of the original.]

(The Naiad brings with her, for the Play, one part of the Persons she has summoned to appear, whilst the rest begin a Dance to the sound of Hautboys, accompanied by Violins.)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ÉRASTE, in love with Orphise.

DAMIS, guardian to Orphise.

ALCIDOR, a bore.

LISANDRE, a bore.

ALCANDRE, a bore.

ALCIPPE, a bore.

DORANTE, a bore.

CARITIDÈS, a bore.

ORMIN, a bore.

FILINTE, a bore.

LA MONTAGNE, servant to Éraste.

L'ÉPINE, servant to Damis.

LA RIVIERE and TWO COMRADES.

ORPHISE, in love with Éraste.

ORANTE, a female bore.

CLIMÈNE, a female bore.

Scene.—PARIS.

* * * * *

[Footnote: Molière himself played probably the parts of Lisandre the dancer, Alcandre the duellist, or Alcippe the gambler, and perhaps all three, with some slight changes in the dress. He also acted Caritidès the pedant, and Dorante the lover of the chase. In the inventory taken after Molière's death we find: "A dress for the Marquis of the Fâcheux, consisting in a pair of breeches very large, and fastened below with ribbands, (rhingrave), made of common silk, blue and gold-coloured stripes, with plenty of flesh-coloured and yellow trimmings, with Colbertine, a doublet of

Colbertine cloth trimmed with flame-coloured ribbands, silk stockings and garters." The dress of Caritidès in the same play, "cloak and breeches of cloth, with picked trimmings, and a slashed doublet." Dorante's dress was probably "a hunting-coat, sword and belt; the above-mentioned hunting-coat ornamented with fine silver lace, also a pair of stag-hunting gloves, and a pair of long stockings (bas a botter) of yellow cloth." The original inventory, given by M. Soulié, has toile Colbertine, for "Colbertine cloth." I found this word in Webster's Dictionary described from The Fop's Dictionary of 1690 as "A lace resembling net-work, the fabric of Mons. Colbert, superintendent of the French king's manufactures." In Congreve's The Way of the World, Lady Wishfort, quarrelling with her woman Foible (Act v., Scene i), says to her, among other insults: "Go, hang out an old Frisoneer gorget, with a yard of yellow colberteen again!"]

THE BORES (LES FÁCHEUX.)

ACT I.

SCENE I.—ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ER. Good Heavens! under what star am I born, to be perpetually worried by bores? It seems that fate throws them in my way everywhere; each day I discover some new specimen. But there is nothing to equal my bore of to-day. I thought I should never get rid of him; a hundred times I cursed the harmless desire, which seized me at dinner time, to see the play, where, thinking to amuse myself, I unhappily was sorely punished for my sins. I must tell you how it happened, for I cannot yet think about it coolly. I was on the stage,

[Footnote: It was the custom for young men of fashion to seat themselves upon the stage (see Vol. I.. Prefatory Memoir, page 26, note 7). They often crowded it to such an extent, that it was difficult for the actors to move. This custom was abolished

only in 1759, when the Count de Lauraguais paid the comedians a considerable sum of money, on the condition of not allowing any stranger upon the stage.]

in a mood to listen to the piece which I had heard praised by so many. The actors began; everyone kept silence; when with a good deal of noise and in a ridiculous manner, a man with large rolls entered abruptly, crying out "Hulloa, there, a seat directly!" and, disturbing the audience with his uproar, interrupted the play in its finest passage. Heavens! will Frenchmen, altho' so often corrected, never behave themselves like men of common-sense? Must we, in a public theatre, show ourselves with our worst faults, and so confirm, by our foolish outbursts what our neighbours everywhere say of us? Thus I spoke; and whilst I was shrugging my shoulders, the actors attempted to continue their parts. But the man made a fresh disturbance in seating himself, and again crossing the stage with long strides, although he might have been quite comfortable at the wings, he planted his chair full in front, and, defying the audience by his broad back, hid the actors from three-fourths of the pit. A murmur arose, at which anyone else would have felt ashamed; but he, firm and resolute, took no notice of it, and would have remained just as he had placed himself, if, to my misfortune, he had not cast his eyes on me. "Ah, Marquis!" he said, taking a seat near me, "how dost thou do? Let me embrace thee." Immediately my face was covered with blushes that people should see I was acquainted with such a giddy fellow. I was but slightly known to him for all that: but so it is with these men, who assume an acquaintance on nothing, whose embraces we are obliged to endure when we meet them, and who are so familiar with us as to thou and thee us. He began by asking me a hundred frivolous questions, raising his voice higher than the actors. Everyone was cursing him; and in order to check him I said, "I should like to listen to the play." "Hast thou not seen it, Marquis? Oh, on my soul, I think it very funny, and I am no fool in these matters. I know the canons of perfection, and Corneille reads to me all that he writes." Thereupon he gave me a summary of the piece, informing me scene after scene of what was about to happen; and when we

came to any lines which he knew by heart, he recited them aloud before the actor could say them. It was in vain for me to resist; he continued his recitations, and towards the end rose a good while before the rest. For these fashionable fellows, in order to behave gallantly, especially avoid listening to the conclusion. I thanked Heaven, and naturally thought that, with the comedy, my misery was ended. But as though this were too good to be expected, my gentleman fastened on me again, recounted his exploits, his uncommon virtues, spoke of his horses, of his love-affairs, of his influence at court, and heartily offered me his services. I politely bowed my thanks, all the time devising some way of escape. But he, seeing me eager to depart, said, "Let us leave; everyone is gone." And when we were outside, he prevented my going away, by saying, "Marquis, let us go to the Cours to show my carriage."

[Footnote: The Cours is that part of the Champs-Elysées called le Cours-la-Reine; because Maria de Medici, the wife of Henry IV., had trees planted there. As the theatre finished about seven o'clock in the evening, it was not too late to show a carriage.]

"It is very well built, and more than one Duke and Peer has ordered a similar one from my coach-maker." I thanked him, and the better to get off, told him that I was about to give a little entertainment. "Ah, on my life, I shall join it, as one of your friends, and give the go-by to the Marshal, to whom I was engaged." "My banquet," I said, "is too slight for gentlemen of your rank." "Nay," he replied, "I am a man of no ceremony, and I go simply to have a chat with thee; I vow, I am tired of grand entertainments." "But if you are expected, you will give offence, if you stay away." "Thou art joking, Marquis! We all know each other; I pass my time with thee much more pleasantly." I was chiding myself, sad and perplexed at heart at the unlucky result of my excuse, and knew not what to do next to get rid of such a mortal annoyance, when a splendidly built coach, crowded with footmen before and behind, stopped in front of us with a great clatter; from which leaped forth a young man

gorgeously dressed; and my bore and he, hastening to embrace each other, surprised the passers-by with their furious encounter. Whilst both were plunged in these fits of civilities, I quietly made my exit without a word; not before I had long groaned under such a martyrdom, cursing this bore whose obstinate persistence kept me from the appointment which had been made with me here.

LA M. These annoyances are mingled with the pleasures of life. All goes not, sir, exactly as we wish it. Heaven wills that here below everyone should meet bores; without that, men would be too happy.

ER. But of all my bores the greatest is Damis, guardian of her whom I adore, who dashes every hope she raises, and has brought it to pass that she dares not see me in his presence. I fear I have already passed the hour agreed on; it is in this walk that Orphise promised to be.

LA M. The time of an appointment has generally some latitude, and is not limited to a second.

ER. True; but I tremble; my great passion makes out of nothing a crime against her whom I love.

LA M. If this perfect love, which you manifest so well, makes out of nothing a great crime against her whom you love; the pure flame which her heart feels for you on the other hand converts all your crimes into nothing.

ER. But, in good earnest, do you believe that I am loved by her?

LA M. What! do you still doubt a love that has been tried?

ER. Ah, it is with difficulty that a heart that truly loves has complete confidence in such a matter. It fears to flatter itself; and, amidst its various cares, what it most wishes is what it least believes. But let us endeavour to discover the delightful creature.

LA M. Sir, your necktie is loosened in front.

ER. No matter.

LA M. Let me adjust it, if you please.

ER. Ugh, you are choking me, blockhead; let it be as it is.

LA M. Let me just comb…

ER. Was there ever such stupidity! You have almost taken off my ear with a tooth of the comb.

[Footnote: The servants had always a comb about them to arrange the wigs of their masters, whilst the latter thought it fashionable to comb and arrange their hair in public (see The Pretentious Young Ladies).]

LA M. Your rolls…

ER. Leave them; you are too particular.

LA M. They are quite rumpled.

ER. I wish them to be so.

LA M. At least allow me, as a special favour, to brush your hat, which is covered with dust.

ER. Brush, then, since it must be so.

LA M. Will you wear it like that?

ER. Good Heavens, make haste!

LA M. It would be a shame.

ER. (After waiting). That is enough.

LA M. Have a little patience.

ER. He will be the death of me!

LA M. Where could you get all this dirt?

ER. Do you intend to keep that hat forever?

LA M. It is finished.

ER. Give it me, then.

LA M. (Letting the hat fall). Ah!

ER. There it is on the ground. I am not much the better for all your brushing! Plague take you!

LA M. Let me give it a couple of rubs to take off…

ER. You shall not. The deuce take every servant who dogs your heels, who wearies his master, and does nothing but annoy him by wanting to set himself up as indispensable!

SCENE II.—ORPHISE, ALCIDOR, ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

(Orphise passes at the foot of the stage; Alcidor holds her hand.)

ER. But do I not see Orphise? Yes, it is she who comes. Whither goeth she so fast, and what man is that who holds her hand? (He bows to her as she passes, and she turns her head another way).

SCENE III.—ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ER. What! She sees me here before her, and she passes by, pretending not to know me! What can I think? What do you say? Speak if you will.

LA M. Sir, I say nothing, lest I bore you.

ER. And so indeed you do, if you say nothing to me whilst I suffer such a cruel martyrdom. Give me some answer; I am quite dejected. What am I to think? Say, what do you think of it? Tell me your opinion.

LA M. Sir, I desire to hold my tongue, and not to set up for being indispensable.

ER. Hang the impertinent fellow! Go and follow them; see what becomes of them,

and do not quit them.

LA M. (Returning). Shall I follow at a distance?

ER. Yes.

LA M. (Returning). Without their seeing me, or letting it appear that I was sent after them?

ER. No, you will do much better to let them know that you follow them by my express orders.

LA M. (Returning). Shall I find you here?

ER. Plague take you. I declare you are the biggest bore in the world!

SCENE IV.—ÉRASTE, alone.

Ah, how anxious I feel; how I wish I had missed this fatal appointment! I thought I should find everything favourable; and, instead of that, my heart is tortured.

SCENE V.—LISANDRE, ÉRASTE.

LIS. I recognized you under these trees from a distance, dear Marquis; and I came to you at once. As one of my friends, I must sing you a certain air which I have made for a little Couranto, which pleases all the connoisseurs at court, and to which more than a score have already written words.

[Footnote: See Vol. I., page 164, note 14.]

I have wealth, birth, a tolerable employment, and am of some consequence in France; but I would not have failed, for all I am worth, to compose this air which I am going to let you hear. (He tries his voice). La, la; hum, hum; listen attentively, I beg. (he sings an air of a Couranto). Is it not fine?

ER. Ah!

LIS. This close is pretty. (He sings the close over again four or five times successively). How do you like it?

ER. Very fine, indeed.

LIS. The steps which I have arranged are no less pleasing, and the figure in particular is wonderfully graceful. (He sings the words, talks, and dances at the same time; and makes Éraste perform the lady's steps). Stay, the gen-man crosses thus; then the lady crosses again: together: then they separate, and the lady comes there. Do you observe that little touch of a faint? This fleuret? These coupés running after the fair one.

[Footnote: A fleuret was an old step in dancing formed of two half coupées and two steps on the point of the toes.]

[Footnote: A coupé is a movement in dancing, when one leg is a little bent, and raised from the ground, and with the other a motion is made forward.]

Back to back: face to face, pressing up close to her. (After finishing). What do you think of it, Marquis?

ER. All those steps are fine.

LIS. For my part, I would not give a fig for your ballet-masters.

ER. Evidently.

LIS. And the steps then?

ER. Are wonderful in every particular.

LIS. Shall I teach you them, for friendship's sake?

ER. To tell the truth, just now I am somewhat disturbed ….

LIS. Well, then, it shall be when you please. If I had those new words about me, we would read them together, and see which were the prettiest.

ER. Another time.

LIS. Farewell. My dearest Baptiste has not seen my Couranto; I am going to look for him. We always agree about the tunes; I shall ask him to score it.

(Exit, still singing.)

[Footnote: Jean Baptiste Lulli had been appointed, in the month of May of 1661, the same year that The Bores was first played, Surintendant et Compositeur de la musique de la chambre du Roi.]

SCENE VI.—ÉRASTE, alone.

Heavens! must we be compelled daily to endure a hundred fools, because they are men of rank, and must we, in our politeness, demean ourselves so often to applaud, when they annoy us?

SCENE VII.—ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

LA M. Sir, Orphise is alone, and is coming this way.

ER. Ah, I feel myself greatly disturbed! I still love the cruel fair one, and my reason bids me hate her.

LA M. Sir, your reason knows not what it would be at, nor yet what power a mistress has over a man's heart. Whatever just cause we may have to be angry with a fair lady, she can set many things to rights by a single word.

ER. Alas, I must confess it; the sight of her inspires me with respect instead of with anger.

SCENE VIII.—ORPHISE, ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ORPH. Your countenance seems to me anything but cheerful. Can it be my presence, Éraste, which annoys you? What is the matter? What is amiss? What makes you heave those sighs at my appearance?

ER. Alas! can you ask me, cruel one, what makes me so sad, and what will kill me? Is it not malicious to feign ignorance of what you have done to me? The gentleman whose conversation made you pass me just now…

ORPH. (Laughing). Does that disturb you?

ER. Do, cruel one, anew insult my misfortune. Certainly, it ill becomes you to jeer at my grief, and, by outraging my feelings, ungrateful woman, to take advantage of my weakness for you.

ORPH. I really must laugh, and declare that you are very silly to trouble yourself thus. The man of whom you speak, far from being able to please me, is a bore of whom I have succeeded in ridding myself; one of those troublesome and officious fools who will not suffer a lady to be anywhere alone, but come up at once, with soft speech, offering you a hand against which one rebels. I pretended to be going away, in order to hide my intention, and he gave me his hand as far as my coach. I soon got rid of him in that way, and returned by another gate to come to you.

ER. Orphise, can I believe what you say? And is your heart really true to me?

ORPH. You are most kind to speak thus, when I justify myself against your frivolous complaints. I am still wonderfully simple, and my foolish kindness…

ER. Ah! too severe beauty, do not be angry. Being under your sway, I will implicitly believe whatever you are kind enough to tell me. Deceive your hapless lover if you will; I shall respect you to the last gasp. Abuse my love, refuse me yours, show me another lover triumphant; yes, I will endure everything for your divine charms. I shall die, but even then I will not complain.

ORPH. As such sentiments rule your heart, I shall know, on my side …

SCENE IX.—ALCANDRE, ORPHISE, ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ALC. (To Orphise). Marquis, one word. Madame, I pray you to pardon me, if I am indiscreet in venturing, before you, to speak with him privately. (Exit Orphise).

SCENE X.—ALCANDRE, ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ALC. I have a difficulty, Marquis, in making my request; but a fellow has just insulted me, and I earnestly wish, not to be behind-hand with him, that you would at once go and carry him a challenge from me. You know that in a like case I should joyfully repay you in the same coin.

ER. (After a brief silence). I have no desire to boast, but I was a soldier before I was a courtier. I served fourteen years, and I think I may fairly refrain from such a step with propriety, not fearing that the refusal of my sword can be imputed to cowardice. A duel puts one in an awkward light, and our King is not the mere shadow of a monarch. He knows how to make the highest in the state obey him, and I think that he acts like a wise Prince. When he needs my service, I have courage enough to perform it; but I have none to displease him. His commands are a supreme law to me; seek some one else to disobey him. I speak to you, Viscount, with entire frankness; in every other matter I am at your service. Farewell.

[Footnote: During his long reign, Louis XIV. tried to put a stop to duelling; and, though he did not wholly succeed, he prevented the seconds from participating in the fight,—a custom very general before his rule, and to which Éraste alludes in saying that he does not "fear that the refusal of his (my) sword can be imputed to cowardice."]

SCENE XI.—ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ER. To the deuce with these bores, fifty times over! Where, now, has my beloved gone to?

LA M. I know not.

ER. Go and search everywhere till you find her. I shall await you in this walk.

BALLET TO ACT I.

First Entry.

Players at Mall, crying out "Ware!" compel Éraste to draw back. After the players at Mall have finished, Éraste returns to wait for Orphise.

Second Entry.

Inquisitive folk advance, turning round him to see who he is, and cause him again to retire for a little while.

* * * * *

ACT II.

SCENE I.—ÉRASTE, alone.

Are the bores gone at last? I think they rain here on every side. The more I flee from them, the more I light on them; and to add to my uneasiness, I cannot find her whom I wish to find. The thunder and rain have soon passed over, and have not dispersed the fashionable company. Would to Heaven that those gifts which it showered upon us, had driven away all the people who weary me! The sun sinks fast; I am surprised that my servant has not yet returned.

SCENE II.—ALCIPPE, ÉRASTE.

ALC. Good day to you.

ER. (Aside). How now! Is my passion always to be turned aside?

ALC. Console me, Marquis, in respect of a wonderful game of piquet which I lost

yesterday to a certain Saint-Bouvain, to whom I could have given fifteen points and the deal. It was a desperate blow, which has been too much for me since yesterday, and would make me wish all players at the deuce; a blow, I assure you, enough to make me hang myself in public.—I wanted only two tricks, whilst the other wanted a piquet. I dealt, he takes six, and asks for another deal. I, having a little of everything, refuse. I had the ace of clubs (fancy my bad luck!) the ace, king, knave, ten and eight of hearts, and as I wanted to make the point, threw away king and queen of diamonds, ten and queen of spades. I had five hearts in hand, and took up the queen, which just made me a high sequence of five. But my gentleman, to my extreme surprise, lays down on the table a sequence of six low diamonds, together with the ace. I had thrown away king and queen of the same colour. But as he wanted a piquet, I got the better of my fear, and was confident at least of making two tricks. Besides the seven diamonds he had four spades, and playing the smallest of them, put me in the predicament of not knowing which of my two aces to keep. I threw away, rightly as I thought, the ace of hearts; but he had discarded four clubs, and I found myself made Capot by a six of hearts, unable, from sheer vexation, to say a single word.

[Footnote: In the seventeenth century, piquet was not played with thirty-two, but with thirty-six, cards; the sixes, which are now thrown away, remained then in the pack. Every player received twelve cards, and twelve remained on the table. He who had to play first could throw away seven or eight cards, the dealer four or five, and both might take fresh ones from those that were on the table. A trick counted only when taken with one of the court-cards, or a ten.

Saint-Bouvain, after having taken up his cards, had in hand six small diamonds with the ace, which counted 7, a sequence of six diamonds from the six to the knave counted 16, thus together 23, before he began to play. With his seven diamonds he made seven tricks, but only counted 3, for those made by the ace, knave, and ten; this gave him 26. Besides his seven diamonds he had four spades, most likely the

ace, king, knave, and a little one, and a six of hearts; though he made all the tricks he only counted 3, which gave him 29. But as Alcippe had not made a single trick, he was capot, which gave Saint-Bouvain 40; this with the 29 he made before, brought the total up to 69. As the latter only wanted a piquet, that is 60,—which is when a player makes thirty in a game, to which an additional thirty are then added, Saint-Bouvain won the game. Alcippe does not, however, state what other cards he had in his hand at the moment the play began besides the ace of clubs and a high sequence of five hearts, as well as the eight of the same colour.]

By Heaven, account to me for this frightful piece of luck. Could it be credited, without having seen it?

[Footnote: Compare with Molière's description of the game of piquet Pope's poetical history of the game of Ombre in the third Canto of The Rape of the Lock.]

ER. It is in play that luck is mostly seen.

ALC. 'Sdeath, you shall judge for yourself if I am wrong, and if it is without cause that this accident enrages me. For here are our two hands, which I carry about me on purpose. Stay, here is my hand, as I told you; and here …

ER. I understood everything from your description, and admit that you have a good cause to be enraged. But I must leave you on certain business. Farewell. But take comfort in your misfortune.

ALC. Who; I? I shall always have that luck on my mind; it is worse than a thunderbolt to me. I mean to shew it to all the world. (He retires and on the point of returning, says meditatively) A six of hearts! two points.

ER. Where in the world are we? Go where we will, we see nothing but fools.

SCENE III.—ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ER. Ha! how long you have been, and how you have made me suffer.

LA M. Sir, I could not make greater haste.

ER. But at length do you bring me some news?

LA M. Doubtless; and by express command, from her you love, I have something to tell you.

ER. What? Already my heart yearns for the message. Speak!

LA M. Do you wish to know what it is?

ER. Yes; speak quickly.

LA M. Sir, pray wait. I have almost run myself out of breath.

ER. Do you find any pleasure in keeping me in suspense?

LA M. Since you wish to know at once the orders which I have received from this charming person, I will tell you…. Upon my word, without boasting of my zeal, I went a great way to find the lady; and if…

ER. Hang your digressions!

LA M. Fie! you should somewhat moderate your passion; and Seneca…

ER. Seneca is a fool in your mouth, since he tells me nothing of all that concerns me. Tell me your message at once.

LA M. To satisfy you, Orphise … An insect has got among your hair.

ER. Let it alone.

LA M. This lovely one sends you word …

ER. What?

LA M. Guess.

ER. Are you aware that I am in no laughing mood?

LA M. Her message is, that you are to remain in this place, that in a short time you shall see her here, when she has got rid of some country-ladies, who greatly bore all people at court.

ER. Let us, then stay in the place she has selected. But since this message affords me some leisure, let me muse a little. (Exit La Montagne). I propose to write for her some verses to an air which I know she likes.

(He walks up and down the stage in a reverie).

SCENE IV.—ORANTE, CLIMÈNE, ÉRASTE (at the side of the stage, unseen.)

OR. Everyone will be of my opinion.

CL. Do you think you will carry your point by obstinacy?

OR. I think my reasons better than yours.

CL. I wish some one could hear both.

OR. I see a gentleman here who is not ignorant; he will be able to judge of our dispute. Marquis, a word, I beg of you. Allow us to ask you to decide in a quarrel between us two; we had a discussion arising from our different opinions, as to what may distinguish the most perfect lovers.

ER. That is a question difficult to settle; you had best look for a more skilful judge.

OR. No: you speak to no purpose. Your wit is much commended; and we know you. We know that everyone, with justice, gives you the character of a…

ER. Oh, I beseech you …

OR. In a word, you shall be our umpire, and you must spare us a couple of minutes.

CL. (To Orante). Now you are retaining one who must condemn you: for, to be brief, if what I venture to hold be true, this gentleman will give the victory to my arguments.

ER. (Aside). Would that I could get hold of any rascal to invent something to get me off!

OR. (To Climène). For my part, I am too much assured of his sense to fear that he will decide against me. (To Éraste). Well, this great contest which rages between us is to know whether a lover should be jealous.

CL. Or, the better to explain my opinion and yours, which ought to please most, a jealous man or one that is not so?

OR. For my part, I am clearly for the last.

CL. As for me, I stand up for the first.

OR. I believe that our heart must declare for him who best displays his respect.

CL. And I that, if our sentiments are to be shewn, it ought to be for him who makes his love most apparent.

OR. Yes; but we perceive the ardour of a lover much better through respect than through jealousy.

CL. It is my opinion that he who is attached to us, loves us the more that he shows himself jealous?

OR. Fie, Climène, do not call lovers those men whose love is like hatred, and who, instead of showing their respect and their ardour, give themselves no thought save how to become wearisome; whose minds, being ever prompted by some gloomy passion, seek to make a crime out of the slightest actions, are too blind to believe them innocent, and demand an explanation for a glance; who, if we seem a little sad, at once complain that their presence is the cause of it, and when the least joy sparkles in our eyes, will have their rivals to be at the bottom of it; who, in short, assuming a right because they are greatly in love, never speak to us save to pick a quarrel, dare to forbid anyone to approach us, and become the tyrants of their very conquerors. As for me, I want lovers to be respectful; their submission is a sure proof of our sway.

CL. Fie, do not call those men true lovers who are never violent in their passion;

those lukewarm gallants, whose tranquil hearts already think everything quite sure, have no fear of losing us, and overweeningly suffer their love to slumber day by day, are on good terms with their rivals, and leave a free field for their perseverance. So sedate a love incites my anger; to be without jealousy is to love coldly. I would that a lover, in order to prove his flame, should have his mind shaken by eternal suspicions, and, by sudden outbursts, show clearly the value he sets upon her to whose hand he aspires. Then his restlessness is applauded; and, if he sometimes treats us a little roughly, the pleasure of seeing him, penitent at our feet, to excuse himself for the outbreak of which he has been guilty, his tears, his despair at having been capable of displeasing us, are a charm to soothe all our anger.

OR. If much violence is necessary to please you, I know who would satisfy you; I am acquainted with several men in Paris who love well enough to beat their fair ones openly.

CL. If to please you, there must never be jealousy, I know several men just suited to you; lovers of such enduring mood that they would see you in the arms of thirty people without being concerned about it.

OR. And now you must, by your sentence, declare whose love appears to you preferable.

(Orphise appears at the back of the stage, and sees Éraste between Orante and Climène).

ER. Since I cannot avoid giving judgment, I mean to satisfy you both at once; and, in order, not to blame that which is pleasing in your eyes, the jealous man loves more, but the other loves wisely.

CL. The judgment is very judicious; but…

ER. It is enough. I have finished. After what I have said permit me to leave you.

SCENE V.—ORPHISE, ÉRASTE.

ER. (Seeing Orphise, and going to meet her). How long you have been, Madam, and how I suffer …

ORPH. Nay, nay, do not leave such a pleasant conversation. You are wrong to blame me for having arrived too late. (Pointing to Orante and Climène, who have just left). You had wherewithal to get on without me.

ER. Will you be angry with me without reason, and reproach me with what I am made to suffer? Oh, I beseech you, stay …

ORPH. Leave me, I beg, and hasten to rejoin your company.

SCENE VI.—ÉRASTE, alone.

Heaven! must bores of both sexes conspire this day to frustrate my dearest wishes? But let me follow her in spite of her resistance, and make my innocence clear in her eyes.

SCENE VII.—DORANTE, ÉRASTE.

DOR. Ah, Marquis, continually we find tedious people interrupting the course of our pleasures! You see me enraged on account of a splendid hunt, which a booby … It is a story I must relate to you.

ER. I am looking for some one, and cannot stay.

DOR. (Retaining him). Egad, I shall tell it you as we go along. We were a well selected company who met yesterday to hunt a stag; on purpose we went to sleep on the ground itself—that is, my dear sir, far away in the forest. As the chase is my greatest pleasure, I wished, to do the thing well, to go to the wood myself; we decided to concentrate our efforts upon a stag which every one said was seven years old.

[Footnote: The original expression is cerf dix-corps; this, according to the

dictionnaire de chasse, is a seven years' old animal.]

But my own opinion was—though I did not stop to observe the marks—that it was only a stag of the second year.

[Footnote: The technical term is: "a knobbler;" in French, _un cerf à sa seconde tête.]

We had separated, as was necessary, into different parties, and were hastily breakfasting on some new-laid eggs, when a regular country-gentleman, with a long sword, proudly mounted on his brood-mare, which he honoured with the name of his good mare, came up to pay us an awkward compliment, presenting to us at the same time, to increase our vexation, a great booby of a son, as stupid as his father. He styled himself a great sportsman, and begged that he might have the pleasure of accompanying us. Heaven preserve every sensible sportsman, when hunting, from a fellow who carries a dog's horn, which sounds when it ought not; from those gentry who, followed by ten mangy dogs, call them "my pack," and play the part of wonderful hunters. His request granted, and his knowledge commended, we all of us started the deer,

[Footnote: The original has frapper à nos brisées; brisées means "blinks." According to Dr. Ash's Dictionary, 1775, "Blinks are the boughs or branches thrown in the way of a deer to stop its course."]

within thrice the length of the leash, tally-ho! the dogs were put on the track of the stag. I encouraged them, and blew a loud blast. My stag emerged from the wood, and crossed a pretty wide plain, the dogs after him, but in such good order that you could have covered them all with one cloak. He made for the forest. Then we slipped the old pick upon him; I quickly brought out my sorrel-horse. You have seen him?

ER. I think not.

DOR. Not seen him? The animal is as good as he is beautiful; I bought him some

days ago from Gaveau.

[Footnote: A well-known horse-dealer in Molière's time.]

I leave you to think whether that dealer, who has such a respect for me, would deceive me in such a matter; I am satisfied with the horse. He never indeed sold a better, or a better-shaped one. The head of a barb, with a clear star; the neck of a swan, slender, and very straight; no more shoulder than a hare; short-jointed, and full of vivacity in his motion. Such feet—by Heaven! such feet!—double-haunched: to tell you the truth, it was I alone who found the way to break him in. Gaveau's Little John never mounted him without trembling, though he did his best to look unconcerned. A back that beats any horse's for breadth; and legs! O ye Heavens!

[Footnote: Compare the description of the horse given by the Dauphin in Shakespeare's Henry V., Act iii., Scene 6, and also that of the "round hoof'd, short jointed" jennet in the Venus and Adonis of the same author.]

In short, he is a marvel; believe me, I have refused a hundred pistoles for him, with one of the horses destined for the King to boot. I then mounted, and was in high spirits to see some of the hounds coursing over the plain to get the better of the deer. I pressed on, and found myself in a by-thicket at the heels of the dogs, with none else but Drecar.

[Footnote: A famous huntsman in Molière's time.]

There for an hour our stag was at bay. Upon this, I cheered on the dogs, and made a terrible row. In short, no hunter was ever more delighted! I alone started him again; and all was going on swimmingly, when a young stag joined ours. Some of my dogs left the others. Marquis, I saw them, as you may suppose, follow with hesitation, and Finaut was at a loss. But he suddenly turned, which delighted me very much, and drew the dogs the right way, whilst I sounded horn and hallooed, "Finaut! Finaut!" I again with pleasure discovered the track of the deer by a mole-hill, and blew away at my leisure. A few dogs ran back to me, when, as ill-luck would have it, the young

stag came over to our country bumpkin. My blunderer began blowing like mad, and bellowed aloud, "Tallyho! tallyho! tallyho!" All my dogs left me, and made for my booby. I hastened there, and found the track again on the highroad. But, my dear fellow, I had scarcely cast my eyes on the ground, when I discovered it was the other animal, and was very much annoyed at it. It was in vain to point out to the country fellow the difference between the print of my stag's hoof and his. He still maintained, like an ignorant sportsman, that this was the pack's stag; and by this disagreement he gave the dogs time to get a great way off. I was in a rage, and, heartily cursing the fellow, I spurred my horse up hill and down dale, and brushed through boughs as thick as my arm. I brought back my dogs to my first scent, who set off, to my great joy, in search of our stag, as though he were in full view. They started him again; but, did ever such an accident happen? To tell you the truth, Marquis, it floored me. Our stag, newly started, passed our bumpkin, who, thinking to show what an admirable sportsman he was, shot him just in the forehead with a horse-pistol that he had brought with him, and cried out to me from a distance, "Ah! I've brought the beast down!" Good Heavens! did any one ever hear of pistols in stag-hunting? As for me, when I came to the spot, I found the whole affair so odd, that I put spurs to my horse in a rage, and returned home at a gallop, without saying a single word to that ignorant fool.

ER. You could not have done better; your prudence was admirable. That is how we must get rid of bores. Farewell.

DOR. When you like, we will go somewhere where we need not dread country-hunters.

ER. (Alone). Very well. I think I shall lose patience in the end. Let me make all haste, and try to excuse myself.

BALLET TO ACT II.

First Entry.

Bowlers stop Éraste to measure a distance about which there is a dispute. He gets clear of them with difficulty, and leaves them to dance a measure, composed of all the postures usual to that game.

Second Entry.

Little boys with slings enter and interrupt them, who are in their turn driven out by

Third Entry.

Cobblers, men and women, their fathers, and others, who are also driven out in their turn.

Fourth Entry.

A gardener, who dances alone, and then retires.

* * * * *

ACT III.

SCENE I.—ÉRASTE, LA MONTAGNE.

ER. It is true that on the one hand my efforts have succeeded; the object of my love is at length appeased. But on the other hand I am wearied, and the cruel stars have persecuted my passion with double fury. Yes, Damis, her guardian, the worst of bores, is again hostile to my tenderest desires, has forbidden me to see his lovely niece, and wishes to provide her to-morrow with another husband. Yet Orphise, in spite of his refusal, deigns to grant me this evening a favour; I have prevailed upon the fair one to suffer me to see her in her own house, in private. Love prefers above all secret favours; it finds a pleasure in the obstacle which it masters; the slightest conversation with the beloved beauty becomes, when it is forbidden, a supreme favour. I am going to the rendezvous; it is almost the hour; since I wish to be there rather before than after my time.

LA M. Shall I follow you?

ER. No. I fear least you should make me known to certain suspicious persons.

LA M. But ….

ER. I do not desire it.

LA M. I must obey you. But at least, if at a distance….

ER. For the twentieth time will you hold your tongue? And will you never give up this practice of perpetually making yourself a troublesome servant?

SCENE II.—CARITIDÈS; ÉRASTE.

CAR. Sir, it is an unseasonable time to do myself the honour of waiting upon you; morning would be more fit for performing such a duty, but it is not very easy to meet you, for you are always asleep, or in town. At least your servants so assure me. I have chosen this opportunity to see you. And yet this is a great happiness with which fortune favours me, for a couple of moments later I should have missed you.

ER. Sir, do you desire something of me?

CAR. I acquit myself, sir, of what I owe you; and come to you … Excuse the boldness which inspires me, if…

ER. Without so much ceremony, what have you to say to me?

CAR. As the rank, wit, and generosity which every one extols in you…

ER. Yes, I am very much extolled. Never mind that, sir.

CAR. Sir, it is a vast difficulty when a man has to introduce himself; we should always be presented to the great by people who commend us in words, whose voice, being listened to, delivers with authority what may cause our slender merit to be known. In short, I could have wished that some persons well-informed could have told you, sir, what I am…

ER. I see sufficiently, sir, what you are. Your manner of accosting me makes that clear.

CAR. Yes, I am a man of learning charmed by your worth; not one of those learned men whose name ends simply in us. Nothing is so common as a name with a Latin termination. Those we dress in Greek have a much superior look; and in order to have one ending in ès, I call myself Mr. Caritidès.

ER. Caritidès be it. What have you to say?

CAR. I wish, sir, to read you a petition, which I venture to beg of you to present to the King, as your position enables you to do.

ER. Why, sir, you can present it yourself! …

CAR. It is true that the King grants that supreme favour; but, from the very excess of his rare kindness, so many villainous petitions, sir, are presented that they choke the good ones; the hope I entertain is that mine should be presented when his Majesty is alone.

ER. Well, you can do it, and choose your own time.

CAR. Ah, sir, the door-keepers are such terrible fellows! They treat men of learning like snobbs and butts; I can never get beyond the guard-room. The ill-treatment I am compelled to suffer would make me withdraw from court for ever, if I had not conceived the certain hope that you will be my Mecaeænas with the King. Yes, your influence is to me a certain means …

ER. Well, then, give it me; I will present it.

CAR. Here it is. But at least, hear it read.

ER. No …

CAR. That you may be acquainted with it, sir, I beg.

"TO THE KING.

"Sire,—Your most humble, most obedient, most faithful and most learned subject

and servant, Caritidès, a Frenchman by birth, a Greek

[Footnote: The original has Grec, a Greek. Can Caritidès have wished to allude to the græaca fides? Grec means also a cheat at cards, and is said to owe its name to a certain Apoulos, a knight of Greek origin, who was caught in the very act of cheating at play in the latter days of Louis XIV.'s reign, even in the palace of the grand monarque.]

_by profession, having considered the great and notable abuses which are perpetrated in the inscriptions on the signs of houses, shops, taverns, bowling-alleys, and other places in your good city of Paris; inasmuch as certain ignorant composers of the said inscriptions subvert, by a barbarous, pernicious and hateful spelling, every kind of sense and reason, without any regard for etymology, analogy, energy or allegory whatsoever, to the great scandal of the republic of letters, and of the French nation, which is degraded and dishonoured, by the said abuses and gross faults, in the eyes of strangers, and notably of the Germans, curious readers and inspectors of the said inscriptions…"

[Footnote: This is an allusion either to the reputation of the Germans as great drinkers, or as learned decipherers of all kinds of inscriptions.]

ER. This petition is very long, and may very likely weary…

CAR. Ah, sir, not a word could be cut out.

ER. Finish quickly.

CAR. (Continuing). "Humbly petitions your Majesty to constitute, for the good of his state and the glory of his realm, an office of controller, supervisor, corrector, reviser and restorer in general of the said inscriptions; and with this office to honour your suppliant, as well in consideration of his rare and eminent erudition, as of the great and signal services which he has rendered to the state and to your Majesty, by making the anagram of your said Majesty in French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, Arabic…"

ER. (Interrupting him). Very good. Give it me quickly and retire: it shall be seen by the King; the thing is as good as done.

CAR. Alas! sir, to show my petition is everything. If the King but see it, I am sure of my point; for as his justice is great in all things, he will never be able to refuse my prayer. For the rest, to raise your fame to the skies, give me your name and surname in writing, and I will make a poem, in which the first letters of your name shall appear at both ends of the lines, and in each half measure.

ER. Yes, you shall have it to-morrow, Mr. Caritidès. (Alone). Upon my word, such learned men are perfect asses. Another time I should have heartily laughed at his folly.

SCENE III.—ORMIN, ÉRASTE.

ORM. Though a matter of great consequence brings me here, I wished that man to leave before speaking to you.

ER. Very well. But make haste; for I wish to be gone.

ORM. I almost fancy that the man who has just left you has vastly annoyed you, sir, by his visit. He is a troublesome old man whose mind is not quite right, and for whom I have always some excuse ready to get rid of him. On the Mall, in the Luxembourg,

[Footnote: The Mall was a promenade in Paris, shaded by trees, near the Arsenal.]

[Footnote: The Luxembourg was in Molière's time the most fashionable promenade of Paris.]

and in the Tuileries he wearies people with his fancies; men like you should avoid the conversation of all those good-for-nothing pedants. For my part I have no fear of troubling you, since I am come, sir, to make your fortune.

ER. (Aside). This is some alchymist: one of those creatures who have nothing, and

are always promising you ever so much riches. (Aloud). Have you discovered that blessed stone, sir, which alone can enrich all the kings of the earth?

ORM. Aha! what a funny idea! Heaven forbid, sir, that I should be one of those fools. I do not foster idle dreams; I bring you here sound words of advice which I would communicate, through you, to the King, and which I always carry about me, sealed up. None of those silly plans and vain chimeras which are dinned in the ears of our superintendents;

[Footnote: This is an allusion to the giver of the feast, Mons. Fouquet, surintendant des finances. See also page 299, note I.]

none of your beggarly schemes which rise to no more than twenty or thirty millions; but one which, at the lowest reckoning, will give the King a round four hundred millions yearly, with ease, without risk or suspicion, without oppressing the nation in any way. In short, it is a scheme for an inconceivable profit, which will be found feasible at the first explanation. Yes, if only through you I can be encouraged …

ER. Well, we will talk of it. I am rather in a hurry.

ORM. If you will promise to keep it secret, I will unfold to you this important scheme.

ER. No, no; I do not wish to know your secret.

ORM. Sir, I believe you are too discreet to divulge it, and I wish to communicate it to you frankly, in two words. I must see that none can hear us. (After seeing that no one is listening, he approaches Eraste's ear). This marvellous plan, of which I am the inventor, is…

ER. A little farther off, sir, for a certain reason.

ORM. You know, without any need of my telling you, the great profit which the King yearly receives from his seaports. Well, the plan of which no one has yet thought, and which is an easy matter, is to make all the coasts of France into famous

ports. This would amount to vast sums; and if …

ER. The scheme is good, and will greatly please the King. Farewell. We shall see each other again.

ORM. At all events assist me, for you are the first to whom I have spoken of it.

ER. Yes, yes.

ORM. If you would lend me a couple of pistoles, you could repay yourself out of the profits of the scheme ….

ER. (Gives money to Ormin). Gladly. (Alone). Would to Heaven, that at such a price I could get rid of all who trouble me! How ill-timed their visit is! At last I think I may go. Will any one else come to detain me?

SCENE IV.—FILINTE, ÉRASTE.

FIL. Marquis, I have just heard strange tidings.

ER. What?

FIL. That some one has just now quarrelled with you.

ER. With me?

FIL. What is the use of dissimulation? I know on good authority that you have been called out; and, as your friend, I come, at all events, to offer you my services against all mankind.

ER. I am obliged to you; but believe me you do me….

FIL. You will not admit it; but you are going out without attendants. Stay in town, or go into the country, you shall go nowhere without my accompanying you.

ER. (Aside). Oh, I shall go mad.

FIL. Where is the use of hiding from me?

ER. I swear to you, Marquis, that you have been deceived.

FIL. It is no use denying it.

ER. May Heaven smite me, if any dispute….

FIL. Do you think I believe you?

ER. Good Heaven, I tell you without concealment that….

FIL. Do not think me such a dupe and simpleton.

ER. Will you oblige me?

FIL. No.

ER. Leave me, I pray.

FIL. Nothing of the sort, Marquis.

ER. An assignation to-night at a certain place….

FIL. I do not quit you. Wherever it be, I mean to follow you.

ER. On my soul, since you mean me to have a quarrel, I agree to it, to satisfy your zeal. I shall be with you, who put me in a rage, and of whom I cannot get rid by fair means.

FIL. That is a sorry way of receiving the service of a friend. But as I do you so ill an office, farewell. Finish what you have on hand without me.

ER. You will be my friend when you leave me. (Alone). But see what misfortunes happen to me! They will have made me miss the hour appointed.

SCENE V.—DAMIS, L'ÉPINE, ÉRASTE, LA RIVIÈRE, and his Companions.

DAM. (Aside). What! the rascal hopes to obtain her in spite of me! Ah! my just wrath shall know how to prevent him!

ER. (Aside). I see some one there at Orphise's door. What! must there always be some obstacle to the passion she sanctions!

DAM. (To L'Epine). Yes, I have discovered that my niece, in spite of my care, is to receive Éraste in her room to-night, alone.

LA R. (To his companions). What do I hear those people saying of our master? Let us approach safely, without betraying ourselves.

DAM. (To L'Epine). But before he has a chance of accomplishing his design, we must pierce his treacherous heart with a thousand blows. Go and fetch those whom I mentioned just now, and place them in ambush where I told you, so that at the name of Éraste they may be ready to avenge my honour, which his passion has the presumption to outrage; to break off the assignation which brings him here, and quench his guilty flame in his blood.

LA R. (Attacking Damis with his companions). Before your fury can destroy him, wretch! you shall have to deal with us!

ER. Though he would have killed me, honour urges me here to rescue the uncle of my mistress. (To Damis). I am on your side, Sir. (He draws his sword and attacks La Rivière and his companions, whom he puts to flight.)

DAM. Heavens! By whose aid do I find myself saved from a certain death? To whom am I indebted for so rare a service?

ER. (Returning). In serving you, I have done but an act of justice.

DAM. Heavens. Can I believe my ears! Is this the hand of Éraste?

ER. Yes, yes, Sir, it is I. Too happy that my hand has rescued you: too unhappy in having deserved your hatred.

DAM. What! Éraste, whom I was resolved to have assassinated has just used his sword to defend me! Oh, this is too much; my heart is compelled to yield; whatever your love may have meditated to-night, this remarkable display of generosity ought to stifle all animosity. I blush for my crime, and blame my prejudice. My hatred has too long done you injustice! To show you openly I no longer entertain it, I unite you

this very night to your love.

SCENE VI.—ORPHISE, DAMIS, ÉRASTE.

ORPH. (Entering with a silver candlestick in her hand). Sir, what has happened that such a terrible disturbance….

DAM. Niece, nothing but what is very agreeable, since, after having blamed, for a long time, your love for Éraste, I now give him to you for a husband. His arm has warded off the deadly thrust aimed at me; I desire that your hand reward him.

ORPH. I owe everything to you; if, therefore, it is to pay him your debt. I consent, as he has saved your life.

ER. My heart is so overwhelmed by this great miracle, that amidst this ecstasy, I doubt if I am awake.

DAM. Let us celebrate the happy lot that awaits you; and let our violins put us in a joyful mood. (As the violins strike up, there is a knock at the door).

ER. Who knocks so loud?

SCENE VII.—DAMIS, ORPHISE, ÉRASTE, L'ÉPINE.

L'EP. Sir, here are masks, with kits and tabors.

(The masks enter, filling the stage).

ER. What! Bores for ever? Hulloa, guards, here. Turn out these rascals for me.

BALLET TO ACT III.

First Entry.

Swiss guards, with halberds, drive out all the troublesome masks, and then retire to make room for a dance of

[Footnote: The origin of the introduction of the Swiss Guards (mercenaries) in the service of the French and other foreign powers may be ascribed to the fact that Switzerland itself, being too poor to maintain soldiers in time of peace, allowed them to serve other nations on condition of coming back immediately to their own cantons in time of war or invasion.

It is particularly with France that Switzerland contracted treaties to furnish certain contingents in case of need. The first of these dates back as far as 1444 between the Dauphin, afterwards Charles VII., and the different cantons. This Act was renewed in 1453, and the number of soldiers to be furnished was fixed once for all, the minimum being 6,000, and the maximum 16,000. The Helvetians, who until 1515 had always been faithful to their engagements, turned traitors in that year against Francis I., who defeated them at Marignan. But the good feeling was soon afterwards re-established, and a new treaty, almost similar to the former, restored the harmony between the two nations.

Another document is extant, signed at Baden in 1553, by which the cantons bind themselves to furnish Henry II. with as many troops as he may want. It is particularly remarkable, inasmuch as it served as a basis for all subsequent ones until 1671. These conventions have not always been faithfully carried out, for the Swiss contracted engagements with other nations, notably with Spain, Naples, and Sardinia, and even with Portugal. At the commencement of the campaign of 1697, Louis XIV. had, notwithstanding all this, as many as 32,000 Swiss in his service, the highest number ever attained. The regulations for the foreign colonels and captains in their relations among themselves, and with the French Government, were not unlike those in force at present for the native soldiery in our Indian possessions. Towards the end of Louis XIV.'s reign the number decreased to 14,400, officers included; it rose in 1773 to 19,836, and during the wars of 1742-48. to 21,300. The ebb and flow of their numbers continued from that time until the Revolution of 1830, when they were finally abolished.

They received a much higher pay than the national troops, and had besides this many other advantages, one of them being that the officers had in the army the next grade higher than that which they occupied in their own regiments; for instance, the colonel of a Swiss regiment had the rank of a major-general, and retired on the pay of a lieutenant-general, &c. They enjoyed the same privileges, with some slight modifications, wherever they served elsewhere.]

Second Entry.

Four shepherds and a shepherdess, who, in the opinion of all who saw it, concluded the entertainment with much grace.

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