GOLDONI CARLO

THE COMEDIES OF CARLO GOLDONI

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Goldoni C.

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Содержание

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The Comedies of Carlo Goldoni / edited with an introduction by Helen Zimmern

Goldoni, – good, gay, sunniest of souls, —
Glassing half Venice in that verse of thine, —
What though it just reflect the shade and shine
Of common life, nor render, as it rolls,
Grandeur and gloom? Sufficient for thy shoals
Was Carnival: Parini's depths enshrine
Secrets unsuited to that opaline
Surface of things which laughs along thy scrolls.
There throng the People: how they come and go,
Lisp the soft language, flaunt the bright garb, – see, —
On piazza, calle, under portico,
And over bridge! Dear King of Comedy,
Be honoured! Thou that didst love Venice so,
Venice, and we who love her, all love thee!

Robert Browning.

INTRODUCTION

"Painter and son of nature," wrote Voltaire, at that time the arbitrator and the dispenser of fame in cultured Europe, to Carlo Goldoni, then a rising dramatist, "I would entitle your comedies, 'Italy liberated from the Goths.'" The sage of Ferney's quick critical faculty had once again hit its sure mark, for it is Goldoni's supreme merit, and one of his chief titles to fame and glory, that he released the Italian theatre from the bondage of the artificial and pantomime performances that until then had passed for plays, and that, together with Molière, he laid the foundations of the drama as it is understood in our days. Indeed, Voltaire, in his admiration for the Venetian playwright, also called him "the Italian Molière," a comparison that is more accurate than such comparisons between authors of different countries are apt to be, though, like all such judgments, somewhat rough and ready. It is interesting in this respect to confront the two most popular dramas of the two dramatists, Molière's "Le Misanthrope" and Goldoni's "Il Burbero Benefico." Goldoni, while superior in imagination, in spontaneity, deals more with the superficial aspects of humanity. Molière, on the contrary, probes deep into the human soul, and has greater elegance of form. In return, Goldoni is more genial and kindly in his judgments, and, while lacking none of Molière's keenness of observation, is devoid of his bitter satire. Both have the same movement and life, the same intuitive perception of what will please the public, the same sense of dramatic proportion. Goldoni was, however, less happy than Molière as regards the times in which his lines were cast. The French dramatist, like Shakespeare, was born at an age in which his fatherland was traversing a glorious epoch of national story. The Italian lived instead in the darkest period of that political degradation which was the lot of the fairest of European countries, until quite recently, when she emancipated herself, threw off the chains of foreign bondage, and proclaimed herself mistress of her own lands and fortunes. And manners and customs were no less in decadence in private as well as in public, – a sad epoch, truly, though to outsiders it looked light-hearted and merry enough. Goldoni's lot was cast in the final decades of the decrepitude of Venice, the last of the Italian proud Republics, which survived only to the end of the eighteenth century, indeed dissolved just four years after her great dramatist's demise. His long life comprised almost the whole of that century, from the wars of the Spanish Succession, which open the history of that era, to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle and the French Revolution.

Historical events had, however, merely an outward and accidental influence on this great artist-nature, entirely absorbed in his work, and indifferent, even unconscious, to all that surged around him in this respect. To be assured that this is so, we need merely peruse Goldoni's own Memoirs, composed by him in his old age, and which, according to Gibbon's verdict, are even more amusing to read than his very comedies.

"The immortal Goldoni," as his countrymen love to call him, was born in Venice in 1707. His family were of Modenese origin. The grandfather, who held a lucrative and honourable post in the Venetian Chamber of Commerce, married as his first wife a lady from his native town, who died, leaving him a son. He then espoused a widow with two daughters, the elder of whom, in due course, he gave in marriage to this son. The couple became the parents of the playwright.

This grandfather had a considerable influence over Goldoni's youth, and also modified his later life. A good-natured, not ill-intentioned man, he was nevertheless hopelessly extravagant, and inordinately addicted to material pleasures, – at that time, it must ever in justice be remembered, the only outlet possible to male energies and ambitions. For a pleasure-lover, the Venice of that day was an earthly paradise, and the result in this case was that the elder Goldoni put no restraint upon himself whatever. It so happened that he had the entire control not only of his wife's comfortable fortune, but of that of her two daughters. With this he hired a large villa, six leagues from Venice, where he lived in so free and open-handed a manner as to rouse the jealousy of the neighbouring proprietors. A fanatic for the stage and all that pertained to it, he caused comedies and operas to

be performed under his roof; the best singers and actors were hired to minister to his amusement; reckless expenditure and joyous living were the watchwords of the house. It was in this atmosphere that the child Carlo was reared, no wonder it affected his character. It may be said that he imbibed a love for the play with his first breath. Unfortunately, ere he was a man, the pleasure-loving and open-handed grandfather caught cold and died, to be followed soon after by his wife. At a blow all was changed for the Goldoni family. Carlo's father, having lacked proper training, was unable to maintain himself in his father's position, which was offered him; the property had to be sold, and when all debts were paid there remained only the mother's dowry for the maintenance of the whole family. However, there was clearly good stuff in Goldoni's father. Already a man of some years, he resolved nevertheless to study medicine in order to earn an honest livelihood, and, wonderful to tell, he became a very popular and successful physician, practising first at Perugia. It was there that, only eight years old, Carlino, as he was then called, wrote a comedy, which so vastly pleased his father that in consequence he resolved to give him the best education within his reach. To this end he placed him in the local Jesuit school. At first the boy, shy and repressed, cut a bad figure, but by the end of the first term he came out at the head of his class, to the immense delight of his father. To reward him for this success, his parents instigated for his benefit what we should now call private theatricals. As women were forbidden to appear on the stage within the Papal States, to which Perugia then belonged, Carlino took the part of the prima donna, and was further called upon to write a prologue, which, according to the taste of the day, was absurdly affected and hyperbolical. Goldoni gives in his Memoirs the opening sentence of this literary effort, and it may serve as a measure of the extent to which he became a reformer of Italian style: —

"Most benignant Heaven, behold us, like butterflies, spreading in the rays of your most splendid sun, the wings of our feeble inventions, which bear our flight towards a light so fair."

To compare this bombast with the crystal clearness and simplicity of the language of Goldoni's comedies, is to gain a fair estimate of what he had to overcome and what he achieved.

A while after, the family removed to Chioggia, the climate of Perugia not being suited to Goldoni's mother. He himself was sent to Rimini to study philosophy in the Dominican school, a study which in those days was considered indispensable for the medical career to which he was destined. But philosophy as taught at Rimini did not attract our hero, and instead of poring over the long passages dictated to him by his professor, he read Plautus, Terence, Aristophanes, and the fragments of Menander. Nor did the philosophic debates amuse him half as much as a company of actors with whom he contrived to knock up an acquaintance. Hearing that these people, to his immense regret, were leaving Rimini, and that of all places in the world they were proceeding to Chioggia, it occurred to the youthful scamp that nothing could be more easy and delightful than to go with them in the big barge they had hired for their transit. The rogue knew full well that his mother at least would forgive him his escapade in the pleasure of having him back again. So he went, and there was an end of his philosophy. As he foresaw, his mother pardoned him, and his father happened to be absent on business. From Pavia, where he was staying with a relative, at that time governor of the city, Dr. Goldoni wrote that his Marchese had promised to be kind to his eldest son. "So," went on the letter, "if Carlo behaves well, he will provide for him." This sentence filled Carlo the disobedient with alarm. Nevertheless, when his father returned, he forgave him almost as readily as his mother had done. They were not strict disciplinarians, these Goldoni, but easy-going folk, who liked to live and let live.

The father now resolved to keep his son at home at Chioggia, that he might begin to study medicine under his guidance. Very desultory study it was, both father and son thinking more of the theatre and of actors than of the pharmacopœia. So medicine, too, had to be abandoned. Goldoni's mother then bethought her of the law, and Carlo was sent to Venice to study under the care of an uncle. At Venice he found no less than seven theatres in full swing, and all of them he frequented in turn, enjoying especially the operas of Metastasio, which were the latest novelty, – that author who may be said to have done for Italian opera what Goldoni did for Italian comedy, though unfortunately

the music to which his graceful verses have been set has not, like them, proved immortal. After some months of alternate gaiety and study of jurisprudence, Carlo was moved to Pavia to complete his studies, a vacancy having been found for him there in the Papal College. Various preliminaries were needful to obtain admission, among them the tonsure. During the delay caused by these formalities, Carlo devoted himself to the study of dramatic literature in the library of one of the professors. Here he found, beside his old friends, the classical dramatists, the English, Spanish, and French playwrights. But the Italian, where were they? he asked himself, and at once the resolve awoke in him that he would do his very utmost towards reviving the drama of his native land and tongue. What he would do should be to imitate the style and precision of the great authors of antiquity, but to give to his plays more movement, happier terminations, and characters better formulated. "We owe," he says, "respect to the great writers who have smoothed the way for us in science and in art, but every age has its dominant genius and every climate its national taste. The Greek and Roman writers knew human nature and copied it closely, but without illusion and without skill. To this is owing that want of moderation and decency which has led to the proscription of the drama by the Church."

At Pavia, Goldoni spent his time over everything else but study, nor was his sojourn there long, for a satire composed and published, taken together with other pranks, led to his expulsion from the College. His parents as usual forgave him, and he was allowed to accompany his father on one of his business journeys, during the course of which Goldoni tells that he obtained much knowledge of men and things. At Modena, it happened that the pair fell in with some very devout people, and saw the "admonition" of an abbé of their acquaintance, who was punished in public after a severe and impressive fashion. Carlo, who was at the time suffering from a juvenile attack of disgust with the world, felt this spectacle arouse in him the desire to become a Capuchin monk. His wise father did not contradict him, and took him to Venice, ostensibly to present him to the Director of the Capuchins. But he plunged him also into a round of gaieties, dinners, suppers, theatres; and Carlo discovered that, to avoid the perils of this world, it was not needful to renounce it altogether. He had now arrived at man's estate, it was requisite he should have an occupation. Through the kindness of friends he obtained a position in the service of the government, not lucrative but yet remunerative, which he contrived to make useful to his dramatic training, the one idea to which he ever remained faithful. This position, Chancellor to the Podestà, required almost continual change of place, and although Goldoni himself liked it very well, his mother disapproved of it highly, calling it a gipsy's post.

In 1731, Goldoni lost his father, an irreparable sorrow to him. He now found himself, at twenty-four, the head of his family. His mother consequently insisted he should give up his wanderings and assume the lawyer's toga. He therefore went to Padua to finish his studies, and this time he studied really, passing a brilliant examination, though the whole night previously he had spent at the gaming-table, whence the University beadle had to fetch him to come before his examiners.

Behold him now a full-fledged lawyer, but with few clients and causes to defend. His fruitless leisure was employed in scribbling almanacs in terza rima, in which he sought to insert such prophecies as were likely to fulfil themselves. In hopes of further bettering his fortunes, he also wrote a tragedy called "Amalasunta." He had hoped this would bring him in one hundred zecchini. Unfortunately, however, he had at the same time let himself in for a love affair, from which there was no other exit but that which his father had taught him to adopt in similar cases, namely, flight from the scene of action. So, putting the MSS. of "Amalasunta" under his arm, he bolted from his native town. This was to be the beginning of his artistic career. Milan was his destination, where he arrived in the full swing of the Carnival. Here he was brought in contact with Count Prata, Director of the Opera. At a reception at the house of the prima ballerina, Goldoni undertook to read his "Amalasunta." The leading actor took exception to it from the outset, and by the time the reading was ended none of the audience were left in the room except Count Prata. The play ended, the Count told the author that his opera was composed with due regard to the rules of Aristotle and Horace, but was not framed according to the rules laid down for Italian opera in their day.

"In France," he continued, "you can try to please the public, but here in Italy, it is the actors and actresses whom you must consult, as well as the composer of the music and the stage decorators. Everything must be done according to a certain form, which I will explain to you. Each of the three principal personages of the opera must sing five airs, two in the first act, two in the second, and one in the third. The second actress and the second soprano can only have three, and the lower rank of artists must be contented with one, or at most two. The author must submit his words to the musician, and must take care that two pathetic airs do not follow each other. The same rule must be observed with regard to the airs of bravura, of action, of secondary action, as also with regard to the minuet and rondeau. And above all things remember that on no account must moving or showy airs be given to the performers of the second rank. These poor people must take what they can get, and make no attempt to shine."

The Count would have said more, but the author had heard enough. He thanked his kind critic, took leave of his hostess, went back to the inn, ordered a fire, and reduced "Amalasunta" to ashes. This performance completed, not without natural regret, he ordered a good supper, which he consumed with relish, after which he went to bed and slept tranquilly all night. On the morrow, dining with the Venetian Ambassador, he recounted to him his adventures. The Ambassador, compassionating his destitute condition, and finding pleasure in his company, found a post for him in his household as a sort of chamberlain. This position, by no means arduous, left Goldoni plenty of time for himself. He now made the acquaintance of a quack doctor, a certain Buonafede, who went by the name of the Anonimo, and was a very prince of charlatans. This man, among other devices to attract customers, carried about with him a company of actors, who, after assisting him in distributing the objects which he sold and collecting the money for them, gave a representation in his small theatre erected in the public square. It so happened that the company of comedians which had been engaged for that Easter season at Milan, unexpectedly failed to keep their engagement, so that the Milanese were left without players. The Anonimo proposed his company, Goldoni through the Venetian Minister helped him to attain his end, and wrote for the first performance an intermezzo, "The Venetian Gondolier," which was set to music by the composer attached to the company, and had, as Goldoni himself says, all the success so slight an effort deserved. This little play was the first of his works performed and afterwards published.

At this time in Italy, the so-called *Commedie dell' arte* or *a soggetto* held the boards; extremely artificial, stilted forms of dramatic composition, which, it is true, testified to the quick and ready wit of the Italians, but also to a puerile taste, far removed from artistic finish. These plays were all performed by actors in masks, after the manner of the classical drama, and in the greater number of cases the players were supplied merely with the plot and the situations of the play, the dialogue having to be supplied by the invention of the actors themselves; the outline was often of the roughest nature, much after the manner of modern drawing-room charades, but there were certain stock characters, such as an old man who is the butt of the tricks and deceptions of the others, an extravagant son, scampish servants, and corrupt or saucy chambermaids. These characters and their established costumes were derived from different cities of Italy, and were traditional from the earliest appearance of the *Commedie dell' arte*. Thus, the father, Pantaloon, a Venetian merchant, the doctor, a lawyer or professor from learned Bologna, and Brighella and Harlequin, Bergamasque servants as stupid as the corrupt or saucy maid-servants and lovers from Rome and Tuscany were sharp. Lance and Speed in "Two Gentlemen of Verona" are good specimens of these characters. The merchant and the doctor, called in Italian "the two old men," always wore a mantle. Pantaloon, or Pantaleone, is a corruption of the cry, *Plantare il Leone*, (Plant the Lion), to the sound of which, and under shadow of their banner, the Lion of their patron St. Mark, the Venetians had conquered their territories and wealth. Pantaloon was the impersonation, however, not of fighting but of trading Venice, and wore the merchant costume still in use, with but slight modification, in Goldoni's day. The dress of the doctor was that of the lawyers of the great university, and the strange mask which was worn by this character imitated

a wine-mark which disfigured the countenance of a certain well-known legal luminary, according to a tradition extant among the players in Goldoni's time. Finally, "Brighella and Arlecchino," called in Italy Zanni,[1] were taken from Bergamo as the extremes of sharpness or stupidity, the supposed two characteristics of the inhabitants of that city. Brighella represented a meddlesome, waggish, and artful servant, who wore a sort of livery with a dark mask, copied after the tanned skin of the men of that sub-Alpine region. Some actors in this part were called Finocchio, Scappino (Molière's Scapin), but it was always the same character, and always a Bergamasque. Arlecchino, or Harlequin, too, had often different names, but he never changed his birthplace, was always the same fool, and wore the same dress, a coat of different-coloured patches, cobbled together anyhow (hence the patchwork dress of the modern pantomime). The hare's tail which adorned his hat formed in Goldoni's time part of the ordinary costume of the Bergamasque peasants. Pantaloon's disguise was completed by a beard of ridiculous cut, and he always wore slippers. It is in allusion to this that Shakespeare calls the sixth age of man, "the lean and slippered pantaloon."

When Goldoni began to write, the drama had fallen into a sadly burlesque condition. Shortly after the first performance of his "Venetian Gondolier," a play called "Belisario" was represented, in which the blinded hero was led on to the stage by Harlequin, and beaten with a stick to show him the way. This indignity of presentation awoke in Goldoni a desire to write a play on the same theme. Asking the principal actor in this farce, what he thought of it, the man replied, "It is a joke, a making fun of the public, but this sort of thing will go on till the stage is reformed." And he encouraged Goldoni to put his purpose into action. He did indeed begin a play on this theme, but wars and sieges hindered its performance; for the War of the Polish Succession broke out, that war called the war of Don Carlos, regarding which Carlyle is so sarcastic in his Life of Frederick the Great; and Milan was occupied by the King of Sardinia, to the great astonishment of Goldoni, who, although he lived in the house of an ambassador, and should have been well informed of current events, knew no more about them than an infant. He now accompanied his chief to Crema, Modena, and Parma, in which latter city, he, the man of peace *par excellence*, assisted at the great battle of June 1734. The impressions then gained, he afterwards utilised in his comedy, "L'Amante Militare." Indeed, skilful workman that he was, he always turned to account whatever befell him, whatever he saw or heard, and his wandering and adventurous life furnished him many opportunities for studying men and manners.

It would lead us too far to follow Goldoni through all the incidents of his varied history. It must suffice to indicate the salient points. In 1736, having freed himself from service to the Ambassador, and having again now consorted with actors, now exercised his legal profession, he married the woman who proved his good angel, Nicoletta Conio, who accompanied him all his life, modest, affectionate, indulgent, long-suffering, light-hearted even in the midst of adverse fortune, enamoured of him and of his fame, his truest friend, comforter, inspirer, and stay: in a word, an ideal woman, whose character has been exquisitely sketched by the modern Italian playwright, Paolo Ferrari, in his graceful comedy, "Goldoni e le sue sedici Commedie." Shortly after this marriage, and in large part thanks to his wife's encouragement and faith in him, Goldoni issued finally from out the tortuous labyrinth of conventional tragedies, *intermezzi cantabili*, and serious and comic operas in which hitherto his talents had been imprisoned, and found his true road, that of character comedy. His first attempt at a reforming novelty was the abolition of the mask, to which he had a just objection, considering it, with perfect reasonableness, as fatal to the development of the drama of character.

But he was not to go on his road unhindered. War, so frequent in those days of petty States, once more crossed his plans, and this conjoined to his native love for roaming, inherited from his restless father, caused him to sojourn in many cities, and encounter many adventures gay and grave, all recounted by him with unfailing good temper in his Memoirs, in which he never says an unkind

[1] Jacks; Zanni being a nickname for Giovanni, John.

word, even of his worst enemies; for Goldoni's was an essentially amicable character. He writes of himself: —

"My mental nature is perfectly analogous to my physical; I fear neither cold nor heat, neither do I let myself be carried away by anger, nor be intoxicated by success… My great aim in writing my Comedies has been not to spoil nature, and the sole scope of my Memoirs is to tell the truth… I was born pacific, and have always kept my equanimity."

These words sum up the man and the author. In Goldoni the perfect equilibrium of the faculties of the man correspond to the perfectly just and accurate sense of truth and naturalness which is revealed in the writer.

After five years spent in Pisa, practising, and not unsuccessfully, as a lawyer, and hoping he had sown his theatrical wild oats, and had now settled down as a quiet burgher, Goldoni was roused from this day-dream (which after all did not reflect his deepest sentiments, but only an acquired worldly wisdom) by an offer from Medebac, the leader of a group of comedians, to join his fortune to theirs as dramatic author to the company. After some hesitation, his old love for the stage gained the upper hand, and Goldoni assented, binding himself to Medebac for a certain number of years. From that time forward he remained true to his real passion, the theatre.

The company proceeded to Venice, at that time in the last days of its glory, but dying gaily, merrily. The Venice of those days, an author of the time said, was as immersed in pleasure as in water. And above all did its inhabitants love the play. To this city, among this people, Goldoni returned, one of its own children, endowed with its nature, apt to understand its wishes and inclinations. And here, among his compatriots, he resolved not to follow the bad theatrical taste in vogue in favour of spectacular plays and scurrilous *Commedie dell' arte*, but to take up for Italy the task accomplished by Molière for France, and to re-conduct comedy into the right road, from which it had wandered so far.

"I had no rivals to combat," he writes, "I had only prejudices to surmount."

The first play written for unmasked actors proved unsuccessful. Goldoni was not daunted. He wrote a second. It was applauded to the echo, and he saw himself well launched upon his career as a reformer. The great obstacle to his entire success lay in the difficulty of finding actors, as the masked parts could be taken by greatly inferior players; and also by the circumstance, already pointed out to him by his critic of "Amalasunta," that an Italian playwright had to think more of pleasing his actors than his public. What Goldoni had to endure from this *gens irritabilis*, from their rancour, vapours, caprices, stolid and open opposition to his reform, is told with much good nature and sense of fun in his Memoirs. It can have been far from easy to endure, and no doubt often exasperated the author, though in his old age he can speak of it so calmly and dispassionately. But Goldoni, even as a young man, was wise, and proceeded slowly, first making himself and his name known and popular on the old lines, and only risking his new ideas under favourable conditions. Thus he respected the antique unities of time and action, which, after all, save in the hands of great genius, are most conducive to dramatic success, and he only infringed the unity of place to a certain extent, always confining the action of the comedies within the walls of the same town. He says, with a sagacity not common in his profession, that he should not have met with so much opposition, had it not been for the indiscreet zeal of his admirers, who exalted his merits to so excessive a degree, that wise and cultivated people were roused to contradict such fanaticism. As to the ill feeling roused by the ridicule freely showered by Goldoni upon the corrupt customs of his time, he takes no heed of it, save to redouble his efforts in the same direction. Like Molière, he had the courage to put upon the boards the defects and absurdities of his own age, not merely those of a bygone time. And his satire, though keen, is never bitter. His laugh is an honest one. As Thackeray says of Fielding, "it clears the air." His dramatic censure is considered to have been instrumental in putting down the State-protected gambling which was the plague-spot of Venice in those days, and further in giving the first death-blows to that debased survival from the time of chivalry, the *Cavaliere Servente*, or *Cicisbeo*.

Goldoni's diligence was as great and untiring as his invention was fertile. Thus once, provoked by an unjust *fiasco*, he publicly promised that he would write and produce sixteen new comedies in the course of the next year, and he kept his pledge, though at the time of making it he had not one of these plays even planned. And among this sixteen are some of his Masterpieces, such as "Pamela" and the "Bottega del Caffé." The theme of Pamela was not exactly his choice. He had been teased to compose a play after the novel of Richardson, then all the fashion in Italy. At first he believed it an impossible task, owing to the great difference in the social rules of the two countries. In England a noble may marry whom he likes; his wife becomes his equal, his children in no wise suffer. Not so in the Venice of that time. The oligarchical rule was so severe, that a patrician marrying a woman of the lower class forfeited his right to participate in the government, and deprived his offspring of the patriciate. "Comedy, which is or should be," says Goldoni, "the school of society, should never expose the weakness of humanity save to correct it, wherefore it is not right to recompense virtue at the expense of posterity." However, the necessity of finding themes, conjoined to this insistence on the part of his friends, induced Goldoni to try his hand with Pamela. He changed the *dénouement*, however, in compliance with Venetian social prejudices, making Pamela turn out to be the daughter of a Scotch peer under attainder, whose pardon Bonfil obtains.

It must not be supposed, however, that Goldoni, although he had now reached the apex of success and fame, was to find his course one of plain sailing. Enmities, rivalries, assailed him on all sides; and these, in the Italy of that date, took a peculiarly venomous character, men's ambitions and energies having no such legitimate outlets as are furnished to-day by politics and interests in the general welfare. Everything was petty, everything was personal. Goldoni's chief rival, and consequently enemy, was Carlo Gozzi, the writer of fantastic dramas, and stilted, hyperbolical dramatic fables, entirely forgotten now, which found a certain favour among the public of that day, one having indeed survived in European literature in the shape of Schiller's "Turandot." A fierce skirmish of libellous fly-sheets and derisive comedies was carried on by the respective combatants and partisans, filling now one theatre, now another, according as the taste of the public was swayed or tickled.

Annoyances with the actors, graspingness on the part of Medebac, made Goldoni abandon his company and pass over to that conducted by Vendramin, an old Venetian noble, – for in those days men of birth thought it no dishonour to conduct a theatre. He was then forty-six years of age, and had written more than ninety theatrical works. For his new patron and theatre he laboured with various interruptions, caused by political events and by his own restless temperament, until 1761, in which space of time he produced some sixty more comedies, besides three comic operas and plays written for a private theatre. And all this labour in less than ten years, and among them some of his best works, such as the trilogy of the Villeggiatura, *Il Curioso Accidente*, *I Rusteghi*, *Le Barufe Chiozote*, and many others, removed from changes of fashion, schools, methods, to which no public has ever been or can be indifferent, eternally fresh and sunny, filled with the spirit of perpetual youth. Notwithstanding, however, the excellence of Goldoni's dramas, the current literary rivalries made themselves felt, and there was a moment when Gozzi's Fables left Goldoni's theatre empty.

It then happened that at this juncture there came to him an offer from Paris to go thither as playwright to the Italian Comedy Company, established there under royal patronage. Was it fatigue, a desire for new laurels, a love of change, the hope of larger gains, that induced him to accept the offer? Perhaps a little of all these. In any case, he assented, binding himself for two years. He was never again to leave France. Paris fascinated him, though he regretted his lovely Venice, and a certain nostalgia peeps forth from his letters now and again. Still his social and pecuniary position was good in the French capital, he was honoured and esteemed, his nephew and adopted son had found lucrative employment there, and, added to all this, even Goldoni was growing old. His eyesight began to fail; he was often indisposed, and no longer inclined to move about and pitch his tent in various cities. A post as Italian teacher at the court brought him much in contact with the royal family. It strikes the readers

of the Memoirs with some amazement to see how Goldoni could live in that society, could hear the talk of intellectual Paris, and not be aware upon the brink of how frightful a precipice all French society then hovered. He actually held the king to be adored by his subjects, and these subjects as happy as it was possible for a people to be, well ruled, kindly governed. The narrative of his life ends at the age of eighty, six years before his death, two before the outbreak of the Revolution. We have not, therefore, his impression of the storm when it broke. We only know, alas! that this light-hearted, gay old child – for a child he remained to the end – died in misery, involved in the general ruin and wreck that overwhelmed all France within that brief space of time. It was, in fact, his nephew who stood between him and starvation; for with the king's deposition had vanished the pension allowed to the aged Italian dramatist. A day after his death a decree of the National Convention restored it to him for the term of his days. The proposed gift came too late, but it honours those who voted it and him who pleaded for it, no less a person than Joseph-Marie Chénier, the poet. When the orator learned that the benevolence he invoked could no longer help its object, he again pleaded for the octogenarian, or rather that the pension should be passed on to the faithful wife in whose arms Goldoni had passed away. "She is old," said Chénier, "she is seventy-six, and he has left her no heritage save his illustrious name, his virtues, and his poverty." It is pleasant to learn that this request was conceded to by the Convention. The French, to their honour be it said, are ever ready to pay tribute to genius.

So sad, so dark, so gloomy, was the end of that gay, bright spirit, Italy's greatest and most prolific comic author. To sum up his merits in a few words is no easy task. It is doubtful whether we should rank him among the geniuses of the world. On the plea of intelligence he certainly cannot claim this rank; his intellectual perceptions might even be called mediocre, as his Memoirs amply prove, but he had a gift, a certain knack of catching the exterior qualities of character and reproducing them in a skilful and amusing mode upon the boards. His art is not of the closet kind. What he put down he had seen, not elaborated from out his brain, and his own genial temperament gave it all an amiable impress. The turning-point of his comedies is always the characters of his personages. His plays are founded on that rather than on the artifice of a plot, which, as compared to the former, was held by him as of secondary importance. He distinguished between the comedy of plot and the comedy of character, and imposed the latter on the former, which he held the easier of the two. His mode was in direct contrast to that of the Spanish dramatists, then held in great vogue, who were masters at spinning plots, but whose characters were usually mere conventional types. In Goldoni, action results in most part as a consequence of the individuality of the personages depicted, and his intrigue is directed and led with the purpose that this may develop itself, more especially in the protagonist. Herein consists his great claim to being a theatrical reformer. What is to-day a commonplace was then a novelty. We moderns study character almost to exaggeration. In earlier drama it was ignored, and complicated plot absorbed its place. It was on this that Goldoni prided himself, and justly. It was he who first invented the Commedia del Carattere. Yet another of Goldoni's merits was his rare skill in handling many personages at the same time, without sacrificing their individuality or hindering the clear and rapid progress of the scene. This gift is specially manifest in "The Fan."

Roughly speaking, we may perhaps divide Goldoni's plays into three classes: Those that deal with Italian personages, and which are written in pure Italian, among which may be comprised those written in Martellian verse; those, including the largest number, which are written partly in Italian and partly in dialect; and finally, those written entirely in Venetian dialect, which are the fewest, eleven in all. From this it will be seen how unjust is the criticism of those who would look on Goldoni as merely a writer of comedies in a local dialect. It is this admixture of dialect, however, – and a racy, good-humoured, and amiable dialect it is, that Venetian, – which renders Goldoni's works so difficult, indeed impossible, to translate, especially into English, where dialects such as the Italian, which form quite distinct languages, are unknown. Happily, for we are thus saved much confusion of tongues, and we hence know no such schism between written and spoken language such as exists in Italy. Even in translation, however, much as Goldoni's plays suffer, their life and movement, their excellent dramatic

action, and their marvellous play of character, are not lost. To understand, however, how eminently they are fitted for the boards, it is needful to see them acted. Those who have witnessed either Ristori, or her younger and more modern rival, Eleonora Duse, in "Pamela" or "La Locandiera," will not easily forget the dramatic treat. Goethe in his Italian journey, while at Venice relates how he witnessed a performance of "Le Barufe Chiozote," and how immensely he was struck with the stage knowledge possessed by Goldoni, and with his marvellous truth to the life that surged around him. "This author," writes Goethe, "merits great praise, who out of nothing at all has constructed an agreeable pastime." It has been objected by foreign critics that Goldoni's dialogue is sometimes a little dull and tame. Charles Lever, for example, could never be brought to find Goldoni amusing. It is, however, more than probable that a very accurate acquaintance with Italian is required to appreciate to the full the manner in which the plays are written, the way in which each person's conversation is made to fit his or her character. "La Donna di Garbo" (the title may be rendered as "A Woman of Tact") is a case in point. This young person seizes on the peculiar hobby or weakness of the people around her, and plays on it in her talk. Desirous, for weighty reasons, of becoming the wife of the young son of a great family, this "woman of tact" gets herself hired as a chambermaid in the household, and so pleases every member of it that all are in the end glad to assist her in gaining her cause. The extreme simplicity of Goldoni's plots is truly astonishing. None but a true adept in human nature and stage artifice could hold audiences, as he does, spell-bound with interest over such everyday occurrences as he selects. His comedies recall one of Louis Chardon's articles in Balzac's "Grand Homme de Province à Paris," beginning, "*On entre, on sort, on se promène.*" People go and come, talk and laugh, get up and sit down, and the story grows meanwhile so intensely interesting, that for the moment there seems nothing else in the world worthy of attention. And the secret of this? It lies in one word: Sympathy. Goldoni himself felt with his personages, and therefore his hearers must do the same.

Goldoni in his Memoirs gives no account of the production of "The Fan." It was written and first brought out in Paris, and soon became universally popular, especially in Venice. "The Curious Mishap" was founded on an episode of real life which happened in Holland, and was communicated to Goldoni as a good subject for a play. The *dénouement* is the same as in the real story, the details only are slightly altered. The intrigue is amusing, plausible, and happily conceived. The scene in which Monsieur Philibert endeavours to overcome the scruples of De la Cotterie and gives him his purse, is inimitable. Indeed, it is worthy of Molière; for if it has not his drollery and peculiar turn of expression, neither has it his exaggeration. There is no farce, nothing beyond what the situation of the parties renders natural. "The Beneficent Bear" was first written in French, and brought out at the time of the *fêtes* in honour of the marriage of Marie Antoinette and the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XVI. Played first in the city, and then before the court at Fontainebleau, it was immensely successful in both cases. For this play the writer received one hundred and fifty louis d'or. The published edition also brought him much money.

It was certainly a rare honour for a foreigner to have a play represented with such success in the fastidious French capital and in the language of Molière. He followed it with "L'Avaro Fastoso" ("The Ostentatious Miser"), also written in French. The fate of this drama was less happy, owing, however, to a mere accident, for which Goldoni was in no wise responsible. Nevertheless, he would not allow it to be represented a second time. He seems to have been discontented with it as a dramatic work, though it has qualities which bring it nearer to the modern French *comédie de société* than perhaps any other play he has left behind him. "It was born under an evil constellation," writes Goldoni, "and every one knows how fatal a sentence that is, especially in theatrical affairs." "The Father of the Family" is, according to Goldoni's own opinion, one of his best comedies; but, as he considers himself obliged to abide by the decision of the public, he can, he says, only place it in the second rank. It is intended to show the superiority of a domestic training for girls over a conventual one. "The aunt, to whom one of the daughters is consigned, figures allegorically as the convent," says the author, "that word being forbidden to be pronounced on the Italian stage." "Action and reaction are equal," says the axiom;

and much, if not all, of the present irreverent attitude of Italians towards religious matters must be attributed to the excessive rigour, petty and despicable detail, of the regulations in vogue under their former priestly and priest-ridden rulers in these respects.

Goldoni, during his residence in Paris, had an amusing colloquy with Diderot, who was furious at an accusation made that he had plagiarised from Goldoni in his own play, "Le Père de Famille," – an absurd idea, as there is no resemblance, save in name, between the two. It was from the *Larmoyant* plays of Diderot and his school, which reflected the false sentimental tone of the day both in France and Germany, that Goldoni had liberated his countrymen, quite as much as from the pseudo-classical plays to which their own land had given birth. Diderot did not perceive this, and in his fury wrote a slashing criticism of all the Italian's plays, stigmatising them as "Farces in three Acts." Goldoni, who, with all his sweetness of temper, was perfectly fearless, simply called on Diderot, and asked him what cause for spite he had against him and his works. Diderot replied that some of his compositions had done him much harm. Duni, an Italian musician, who had introduced them to each other, at this point interposed, saying that they should follow the advice of Tasso, —

"Ogni trista memoria ormai si taccia
E pognansi in oblio le andate cose,"

which may be freely rendered as "Let bygones be bygones." Diderot, who understood Italian well, accepted the suggestion, and the two parted friends. It is an anecdote creditable to all parties, and not least to the two Italians.

It is a pity that Goldoni's Memoirs, from which the above sketch of his life is derived, were written in French instead of Italian, and with regard to a French rather than an Italian public. Had he written in his own language and for his own people, he might have produced a work worthy to rank beside the wondrous tale of Cellini, though of course of a very opposite character. As it is, the narrative is little known, though it has been translated into Italian and issued in cheap form.

Such, briefly, the Italian dramatist, whose best works in substance are the continuation of the ancient plays of Menander and Terence, imitated by the Italians in the sixteenth century, but allowed to degenerate, and then again renovated and carried to perfection by Molière in France and by himself in Italy.

A CURIOUS MISHAP

(UN CURIOSO ACCIDENTE)

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Philibert, *a rich Dutch merchant*.
Giannina, *his daughter*.
Riccardo, *a broker*.
Costanza, *his daughter*.
De la Cotterie, *a French lieutenant*.
Marianna, *Mademoiselle Giannina's servant*.
Gascoigne, *De la Cotterie's servant*.

The Scene is at the Hague, in the house of **Philibert**

ACT I

Scene I. – Gascoigne, *packing his master's trunk*

Enter Marianna

Mar. May I wish good-morning to Monsieur Gascoigne?

Gas. Yes, my sweet Marianna, I thank you for your good-morning, but good-night would be more agreeable to me from your lips.

Mar. From what I see, I should rather wish you a pleasant journey.

Gas. Oh, my precious jewel, such a melancholy departure must be followed by a most doleful journey!

Mar. Then you are sorry to go?

Gas. How can you doubt it? After having enjoyed your delightful society for six months, can I leave you without the deepest sorrow?

Mar. And who forces you to do what is so disagreeable?

Gas. Do you not know? My master.

Mar. Masters are not wanting at the Hague, and you can easily find one who will give you better wages than a poor French officer, a prisoner of war, and a man in every way roughly used by fortune.

Gas. Pardon me, such language does not become so good a girl as you are. I have for many years had the honour of serving my excellent master; his father, I may say, recommended me to him; I have attended him in the war, and have not shunned danger to show my fidelity. He is poor, but never man had a better heart. Were he promoted, I am sure I should share his good fortune. Would you desire me to abandon him, and let him return to France without me?

Mar. You speak like the worthy fellow you are; but I cannot conceal my affection for you.

Gas. Dear Marianna, I am as much distressed as you are, but I hope to see you again, and then to be able to say, Here I am, I can support you, and, if you wish it, I am yours.

Mar. Heaven grant it! But why is the Lieutenant in such haste to depart? My master is fond of his company, and I think the daughter not less so than the father.

Gas. Too true; and that is his reason for going.

Mar. What! does he dislike people to be fond of him?

Gas. Ah, my Marianna, my poor master is desperately in love with your young mistress; he leads the most wretched life in the world; he knows their love for each other is increasing every day, and, as they can no longer hide it, he fears for himself, and for Mademoiselle Giannina. Your master is rich, and mine is poor. Monsieur Philibert has this only daughter, and will not give her to a younger son, a soldier; one, in short, who would have to live on her means. The Lieutenant, though poor, is a man of honour; he respects the obligations of hospitality, of friendship, of good faith; he fears he may be overcome and seduced by love, and that he in turn may seduce his mistress from her duty. This being the case, he does violence to his feelings, sacrifices love to principle, and is resolved to go.

Mar. I admire his heroic conduct, but could not imitate it.

Gas. We must exert self-control.

Mar. You can do so more easily than I.

Gas. Indeed, a man's resolution is stronger than a woman's.

Mar. Say rather his affections are weaker.

Gas. So far as regards me, you are wrong.

Mar. I look at acts, not words.
Gas. What can I do to convince you of my love?
Mar. Monsieur Gascoigne does not need me for a teacher.
Gas. Do you wish me to marry you before I go?
Mar. That would, indeed, remove all doubt.
Gas. But then I should have to leave you.
Mar. And could you have the heart to abandon me?
Gas. Oh, you might go with me!
Mar. That would be much better.
Gas. To encounter so many hardships?
Mar. In truth, that would not suit me so well.
Gas. Should I remain here with you, would that satisfy you?
Mar. Perfectly.
Gas. For how long?
Mar. A year at least.
Gas. And after a year, would you let me go?
Mar. Yes, a year after our marriage, if you found it easy to do so.
Gas. I daresay you would let me go after a month.
Mar. I know better.
Gas. I am sure of it.
Mar. Let us try.
Gas. My master is coming; another time we will talk it over.
Mar. Ah, Monsieur Gascoigne, this conversation has unnerved me; do what you please, I trust to you. – [*Aside.*] Indeed, I know not what I say.

[Exit.

Gas. If I had not more sense than she, the folly would have been committed before now.

Enter De la Cotterie

De la Cot. [*To himself.*] Oh, Heaven! how wretched I am! how unfortunate!
Gas. The trunk, sir, is packed.
De la Cot. Ah, Gascoigne! I am in despair.
Gas. Alas! what misfortune has happened?
De la Cot. The worst that could befall me.
Gas. Our troubles seldom come alone.
De la Cot. Mine is alone, but so great that I cannot support it.
Gas. I suppose you allude to your love?
De la Cot. Yes; but it has increased to such a degree that I have no longer firmness enough to resist it.
Gas. What if the lady is unconcerned at your departure, and does not love you as you imagine she does?
De la Cot. On the contrary, she is more affectionate, and more devoted to me than ever. Oh, God! what will my despair drive me to? I saw her weep.
Gas. Well, this is bad enough, but I thought it was something much worse.
De la Cot. Inhuman! unfeeling! vile plebeian soul! can you imagine anything worse in the world than the tears of a tender-hearted, distressed lady, who accuses me of cruelty, who makes my resolution waver, and puts to a severe trial my honour, my reputation, and my friendship?

Gas. I am not conscious of deserving so harsh a reproof; this is a just recompense for ten years' service.

De la Cot. Ah! put yourself in my place, and then, if you can, condemn my transports. My wounds, my blood, my being a prisoner of war, which prevents my promotion, the narrowness of my fortune, all appear nothing in comparison with the love which inflames my soul. The excellent principles of the young lady prevented her from assuring me that I possessed her heart, and in consequence I resolved to leave her. Ah! at the moment of taking leave, tears and sobs prevented her from speaking, and they proved her love was equal to mine. My wretchedness is extreme; my resolution seems barbarous; and now, frantic with love, reason appears to desert me.

Gas. Take time, sir; remain here. Monsieur Philibert is the best man in the world; in Holland they pride themselves on their hospitality, and our host takes the greatest interest in you, and in your health. You are not perfectly cured, and this is a good reason for not going.

De la Cot. I will think over what you say; very little would change my determination.

Gas. With your leave I will at once unpack the trunk. [*Unpacking.*]

De la Cot. [*Apart.*] What will they say if I remain after having taken my leave?

Gas. [*Apart.*] Marianna will not be sorry for this.

De la Cot. [*Apart.*] If I allege I am unwell, my sadness will make it appear so.

Gas. [*Apart.*] Nor indeed am I.

De la Cot. But the longer I remain, the more my love increases; and what remedy can there be for it? what hope is there for my desperate passion?

Gas. Time accomplishes wonders. [*Still unpacking.*]

De la Cot. How much better to meet death at once than to live in such torture!

Gas. My master will be obliged to me.

De la Cot. What shall I do?

Gas. The trunk is unpacked, sir.

De la Cot. Who told you to unpack it?

Gas. I said I was going to do it, and you did not forbid me.

De la Cot. Blockhead! put up the clothes. I shall go.

Gas. Well, whatever happens, let them remain now.

De la Cot. Do not make me angry.

Gas. I will put them up this evening.

De la Cot. Do it at once, and order the post-horses at twelve o'clock.

Gas. And the tears of Mademoiselle?

De la Cot. Wretch! have you the heart to torment me?

Gas. My poor master!

De la Cot. Indeed, I am an object of compassion.

Gas. Let us stay.

De la Cot. No.

Gas. Shall I pack up the things, then?

De la Cot. Yes.

Gas. How I pity him! [*Putting the clothes in the trunk.*]

De la Cot. Can I leave this house without seeing her again?

Gas. While he continues in this state of mind, we shall never be done.

De la Cot. By leaving her, I fear my love will not leave me.

Gas. Alas, poor master! [*Looking out.*] What do I see?

De la Cot. What is the matter? Why do you stop?

Gas. I am going on, sir.

De la Cot. You are confused?

Gas. A little.

De la Cot. What are you looking at?

Gas. Nothing.

De la Cot. Oh, Heaven! Mademoiselle Giannina! What an encounter! What do you advise me to do?

Gas. I do not know; any course is dangerous.

De la Cot. Do not leave me.

Gas. I will not.

De la Cot. I will go away.

Gas. As you please.

De la Cot. I cannot.

Gas. I pity you.

De la Cot. Why does she stop? Why does she not come in?

Gas. She is afraid of disturbing you.

De la Cot. No; it is because you are here.

Gas. Then I will go. [*Going.*]

De la Cot. Stay.

Gas. I will remain, then.

De la Cot. Have you the snuff-box? bring it.

Gas. I will go for it.

[Exit.

De la Cot. Hear me! where are you going? Poor me! Gascoigne! [*Calls.*]

Enter Giannina

Gian. Are you in want of anything?

De la Cot. Excuse me, I want my servant.

Gian. If yours is not here, there are others. Do you want any one?

De la Cot. No, I thank you; my trunk must be packed up.

Gian. And are you disturbed in this manner about so trifling an affair? do you fear there will not be time? Perhaps you are already expecting horses? If the air of this country is not favourable to your health, or rather if you are tired of us, I will myself hasten forward your departure.

De la Cot. Mademoiselle, have compassion on me; do not add to my suffering.

Gian. If I knew the cause of your suffering, instead of increasing, I would endeavour to diminish it.

De la Cot. Seek the cause in yourself; there is no need for me to tell you.

Gian. Then you go away on my account?

De la Cot. Yes, it is on your account that I am compelled to hasten my departure.

Gian. Have I become so odious in your sight?

De la Cot. Oh, Heaven! you never appeared to me so lovely; your eyes never beamed with so much tenderness.

Gian. Ah, were this true, you would not be so anxious to go.

De la Cot. If I loved only the beauty of your person, I should yield to the strength of my attachment, which bids me stay with you; but I love you for your virtues; I see your peace of mind is in danger, and in return for the kindness you have shown me, I mean to sacrifice the dearest hopes of my life.

Gian. I do not believe you have so little resolution as not to be able to control your passion, and you do me injustice if you think I cannot resist the inclinations of my heart. I own my love for you without a blush: this virtuous love, I feel, will never leave me, and I cannot persuade myself a

man is less able than I am to sustain with glory the conflict of his passions. I can love you without danger; it is happiness enough for me to see you. You, on the contrary, by determining to depart, go in quest of more easy enjoyment, and show that your obstinacy prevails over your love. It is said hope always comforts the lover. He who will not use the means proves he cares but little for the end, and, if you go, you will still suffer the tortures of disappointed desire; you will act either with culpable weakness, or unfeeling indifference. Whatever cause hurries you away, go, proud of your resolution, but be at least ashamed of your cruelty.

De la Cot. Ah, no, Mademoiselle! do not tax me with ingratitude, do not accuse me of cruelty. I thought, by my departure, to do you an act of kindness. If I am wrong, pardon me. If you command it, I will remain.

Gian. No; my commands shall never control your inclination; follow the dictates of your own heart.

De la Cot. My heart tells me to remain.

Gian. Then obey it without fear, and, if your courage does not fail, rely on my constancy.

De la Cot. What will your father say to my change of mind?

Gian. He is almost as much grieved at your departure as I am; he is not satisfied about your recovery; and whether it is the consequence of your wound, or of mental affliction, the surgeons do not believe your health is re-established, and my father thinks it too soon for you to undertake the journey. He loves and esteems you, and would be much pleased at your remaining.

De la Cot. Has he any suspicion of my love for you? and that it is mutual?

Gian. Our conduct has given him no cause for suspicion.

De la Cot. Can it be possible it has never passed through his mind that I, an open, frank man, and a soldier, might be captivated by the beauty and merit of his daughter?

Gian. A man like my father is not inclined to suspicion; the cordiality with which he received you as a guest in his family, assures him he may rely on the correct conduct of an officer of honour; and his knowledge of my disposition makes him perfectly easy: he does not deceive himself in regard to either of us. A tender passion has arisen in our hearts, but we will neither depart from the laws of virtue, nor violate his confidence.

De la Cot. Is there no hope his goodness may make him agree to our marriage?

Gian. My hope is that in time it will; the obstacles do not arise from motives of interest, but from the customs of our nation. Were you a merchant of Holland, poor, with only moderate expectations, you would immediately obtain my hand, and a hundred thousand florins for an establishment; but an officer, who is a younger son, is considered among us as a wretched match, and were my father inclined to give his consent, he would incur the severe censure of his relations, his friends, and indeed of the public.

De la Cot. But I cannot flatter myself with the prospect of being in a better condition.

Gian. In the course of time circumstances may occur that may prove favourable to our union.

De la Cot. Do you reckon among these the death of your father?

Gian. Heaven grant that the day may be distant! but then I should be my own mistress.

De la Cot. And do you wish me to remain in your house as long as he lives?

Gian. No, Lieutenant; stay here as long as your convenience permits, but do not appear so anxious to go while there are good reasons for your remaining. Our hopes do not depend on the death of my father, but I have reasons to flatter myself our attachment in the end may be rewarded. Our love we must not relinquish, but avail ourselves of every advantage that occasion may offer.

De la Cot. Adorable Giannina, how much am I indebted to your kindness! Dispose of me as you please; I am entirely yours; I will not go unless you order me to do so. Persuade your father to bear with my presence, and be certain that no place on earth is so agreeable to me as this.

Gian. I have only one request to make.

De la Cot. May you not command?

Gian. Have regard for one defect which is common to lovers; – do not, I entreat you, give me any cause for jealousy.

De la Cot. Am I capable of doing so?

Gian. I will tell you. Mademoiselle Costanza, in the last few days, has visited our house more frequently than usual; her eyes look tenderly on you, and she manifests rather too much sympathy for your misfortunes. You are of a gentle disposition, and, to own the truth, I sometimes feel uneasy.

De la Cot. Henceforth I will use the greatest caution, that she may indulge no hopes, and that you may be at ease.

Gian. But so conduct yourself, that neither my jealousy nor your love for me shall be remarked.

De la Cot. Ah, would to Heaven, Mademoiselle, our troubles were at an end!

Gian. We must bear them, to deserve good fortune.

De la Cot. Yes, dearest, I bear all with this delightful hope. Permit me now to inquire for my servant, to get him to countermand the horses.

Gian. Were they ordered?

De la Cot. Yes, indeed.

Gian. Unkind one!

De la Cot. Pardon me.

Gian. Let the order be countermanded before my father knows it.

De la Cot. My hope and my comfort! may Heaven be propitious to our wishes, and reward true love and virtuous constancy.

[Exit.

Gian. I never could have believed it possible for me to be brought to such a step; that I should, of my own accord, use language and contrive means to detain him. But unless I had done so, in a moment he would have been gone, and I should have died immediately afterwards. But here comes my father; I am sorry he finds me in our visitor's room. Thank Heaven, the Lieutenant is gone out! All appearance of sorrow must vanish from my face.

Enter Philibert

Phil. My daughter, what are you doing in this room?

Gian. Curiosity, sir, brought me here.

Phil. And what excites your curiosity?

Gian. To see a master who understands nothing of such things, and an awkward servant endeavouring to pack up a trunk.

Phil. Do you know when he goes away?

Gian. He intended going this morning, but, in walking across the room, his legs trembled so, that I fear he will not stand the journey.

Phil. I think his present disease has deeper roots than his wound.

Gian. Yet only one hurt has been discovered by the surgeons.

Phil. Oh, there are wounds which they know nothing of.

Gian. Every wound, however slight, makes its mark.

Phil. Eh! there are weapons that give an inward wound.

Gian. Without breaking the skin?

Phil. Certainly.

Gian. How do these wounds enter?

Phil. By the eyes, the ears, the touch.

Gian. You must mean by the percussion of the air.

Phil. Air! no, I mean flame.

Gian. Indeed, sir, I do not comprehend you.

Phil. You do not choose to comprehend me.

Gian. Do you think I have any mischievous design in my head?

Phil. No; I think you a good girl, wise, prudent, who knows what the officer suffers from, and who, from a sense of propriety, appears not to know it.

Gian. [*Aside.*] Poor me! his manner of talking alarms me.

Phil. Giannina, you seem to me to blush.

Gian. What you say, sir, of necessity makes me blush. I now begin to understand something of the mysterious wound of which you speak; but, be it as it may, I know neither his disease nor the remedy.

Phil. My daughter, let us speak plainly. Monsieur de la Cotterie was perfectly cured a month after he arrived here; he was apparently in health, ate heartily, and began to recover his strength; he had a good complexion, and was the delight of our table and our circle. By degrees he grew sad, lost his appetite, became thin, and his gaiety was changed to sighs. I am something of a philosopher, and suspect his disease is more of the mind than of the body, and, to speak still more plainly, I believe he is in love.

Gian. It may be as you say; but I think, were he in love, he would not be leaving.

Phil. Here again my philosophy explains everything. Suppose, by chance, the young lady of whom he is enamoured were rich, dependent on her father, and could not encourage his hopes; would it be strange if despair counselled him to leave her?

Gian. [*Aside.*] He seems to know all.

Phil. And this tremor of the limbs, occurring just as he is to set out, must, I should say, viewed philosophically, arise from the conflict of two opposing passions.

Gian. [*Aside.*] I could imprecate his philosophy!

Phil. In short, the benevolence of my character, hospitality, to which my heart is much inclined, humanity itself, which causes me to desire the good of my neighbours, all cause me to interest myself in him; but I would not wish my daughter to have any share in this disease.

Gian. Ah, you make me laugh! Do I look thin and pale? am I melancholy? What says your philosophy to the external signs of my countenance and of my cheerfulness.

Phil. I am suspended between two opinions: you have either the power of self-control, or are practising deception.

Gian. Have you ever found me capable of deception?

Phil. Never, and for that reason I cannot believe it now.

Gian. You have determined in your own mind that the officer is in love, which is very likely; but I am not the only person he may be suspected of loving.

Phil. As the Lieutenant leaves our house so seldom, it is fair to infer his disease had its origin here.

Gian. There are many handsome young ladies who visit us, and one of them may be his choice.

Phil. Very true; and, as you are with them, and do not want wit and observation, you ought to know exactly how it is, and to relieve me from all suspicion.

Gian. But if I have promised not to speak of it?

Phil. A father should be excepted from such a promise.

Gian. Yes, certainly, especially if silence can cause him any pain.

Phil. Come, then, my good girl, let us hear. – [*Aside.*] I am sorry I suspected her.

Gian. [*Aside.*] I find myself obliged to deceive him. – Do you know, sir, that poor Monsieur de la Cotterie loves to madness Mademoiselle Costanza?

Phil. What! the daughter of Monsieur Riccardo?

Gian. The same.

Phil. And does the girl return his affection?

Gian. With the greatest possible ardour.

Phil. And what obstacle prevents the accomplishment of their wishes?

Gian. Why, the father of the girl will hardly consent to give her to an officer who is not in a condition to maintain her reputably.

Phil. A curious obstacle, truly. And who is this Monsieur Riccardo, that he has such rigorous maxims? He is nothing but a broker, sprung from the mud, grown rich amid the execrations of the people. Does he think to rank himself among the merchants of Holland? A marriage with an officer would be an honour to his daughter, and he could not better dispose of his ill-got wealth.

Gian. It seems, then, if you were a broker, you would not refuse him your daughter?

Phil. Assuredly not.

Gian. But, being a Dutch merchant, the match does not suit you?

Phil. No, certainly not; not at all – you know it very well.

Gian. So I thought.

Phil. I must interest myself in behalf of Monsieur de la Cotterie.

Gian. In what manner, sir?

Phil. By persuading Monsieur Riccardo to give him his daughter.

Gian. I would not advise you to meddle in the affair.

Phil. Let us hear what the Lieutenant will say.

Gian. Yes, you should hear him first. – [*Aside.*] I must give him warning beforehand.

Phil. Do you think he will set out on his journey immediately?

Gian. I know he has already ordered his horses.

Phil. I will send directly to see.

Gian. I will go myself, sir. – [*Aside.*] I must take care not to make matters worse.

[Exit.

Phil. [*Alone.*] I feel I have done injustice to my daughter in distrusting her; it is a happiness to me to be again certain of her sincerity. There may be some concealed deception in her words, but I will not believe her so artful; she is the daughter of a man who loves truth, and never departs from it, even in jest. Everything she tells me is quite reasonable: the officer may be in love with Mademoiselle Costanza; the absurd pride of the father considers the match as far below what his daughter is entitled to. I will, if possible, bring about the marriage by my mediation. On the one hand, we have nobility reduced in circumstances; on the other, a little accidental wealth; these fairly balance one another, and each party will find the alliance advantageous.

Enter Marianna

Mar. Isn't my mistress here, sir?

Phil. She is just gone.

Mar. By your leave. [*Going.*]

Phil. Why are you in such haste?

Mar. I am going to find my mistress.

Phil. Have you anything of consequence to say to her?

Mar. A lady has asked for her.

Phil. Who is she?

Mar. Mademoiselle Costanza.

Phil. Oh! is Mademoiselle Costanza here?

Mar. Yes; and I suspect, by her coming at this unusual hour, that it is something extraordinary that brings her here.

Phil. I know what this extraordinary something is. [*Smiling.*] Say to Mademoiselle Costanza, that, before going to my daughter's room, I will thank her to let me see her here.

Mar. You shall be obeyed, sir.

Phil. Is the officer in?

Mar. No, sir, he is gone out.

Phil. As soon as he returns, ask him to come to me in this room.

Mar. Yes, sir. Do you think he will go away to-day?

Phil. I am sure he will not.

Mar. Indeed, his health is so bad, that it would be dangerous for him to proceed on his journey.

Phil. He shall remain with us, and he shall get well.

Mar. My dear master, you alone have the power of restoring him to health.

Phil. I? How! do you know what is the Lieutenant's disease?

Mar. I know it; but do you, sir?

Phil. I know everything.

Mar. Who told you?

Phil. My daughter.

Mar. Indeed! [*With an expression of surprise.*]

Phil. Why are you surprised? Would not my daughter be wrong to conceal the truth from her father?

Mar. Certainly; she has acted most wisely.

Phil. Now we can find the remedy.

Mar. In truth, it is an honourable love.

Phil. Most honourable.

Mar. The Lieutenant is an excellent young man.

Phil. Most excellent.

Mar. It is his only misfortune that he is not rich.

Phil. A handsome fortune with his wife would indeed make his situation more comfortable.

Mar. If the father is satisfied, no one has a right to complain.

Phil. A father with an only child, when he finds an opportunity of marrying her respectably, ought to be pleased to avail himself of it.

Mar. May God bless you! these are sentiments worthy of so good a man. I am delighted both for the officer and the young lady. – [*Aside.*] And not less so for myself, as my beloved Gascoigne may now remain with me.

[Exit.

Enter Mademoiselle Costanza

Phil. [*To himself.*] Good actions deserve praise, and every person of sense will approve of what I am doing.

Cost. Here I am, sir, at your commands.

Phil. Ah, Mademoiselle Costanza! it gives me great pleasure to see you.

Cost. You are very kind.

Phil. I am gratified at your friendship for my daughter.

Cost. She deserves it, and I love her with all my heart.

Phil. Ah, do not say with all your heart!

Cost. Why not? are you not convinced I love her sincerely?

Phil. Sincerely, I believe, but not with all your heart.

Cost. Why should you doubt it?

Phil. Because, if you loved my daughter with all your heart, there would be none of it left for any one else.

Cost. You make me laugh; and who should have a part of it?

Phil. Ah, Mademoiselle, we understand!

Cost. Indeed, I do not understand.

Phil. Now let us dismiss Lady Modesty, and introduce Lady Sincerity.

Cost. [*Aside.*] I cannot discover what he is aiming at.

Phil. Tell me, have you come on purpose to visit my daughter?

Cost. Yes, sir.

Phil. No, Mademoiselle.

Cost. For what, then?

Phil. Know I am an astrologer. I am visited by a certain spirit that tells me everything, and hence I have learnt this: Mademoiselle Costanza has come not to visit those who stay, but those who go away.

Cost. [*Aside.*] I suspect there is some truth in what the spirit says.

Phil. What! are you puzzled how to answer?

Cost. I will answer you frankly: if I have come to show civility to your guest, I do not perceive I deserve reproof.

Phil. Reproof! on the contrary, praise; acts of civility ought not to be omitted – especially when dictated by a more tender feeling.

Cost. You seem to be in a humour for jesting this morning.

Phil. And you seem to be out of spirits; but I lay a wager I can cheer you up.

Cost. Indeed?

Phil. Without fail.

Cost. And how?

Phil. With two words.

Cost. And what are those fine words?

Phil. You shall hear them. Come this way – a little nearer. The Lieutenant is not going away. Does not your heart leap at this unexpected news?

Cost. For mercy's sake! Monsieur Philibert, do you believe me in love?

Phil. Say no, if you can.

Cost. No; I can say it.

Phil. Swear to it.

Cost. Oh, I will not swear for such a trifle.

Phil. You wish to hide the truth from me, as if I had not the power of serving you, or was unwilling to do so, and of serving the poor young man too, who is so unhappy.

Cost. Unhappy, for what?

Phil. On account of you.

Cost. On account of me?

Phil. Yes, you; we are in the dark, so that his love for you is in a manner hidden, and every one does not know that his despair sends him away.

Cost. Despair for what?

Phil. Because your father, from pride and avarice, will not consent to give you to him: this, my girl, is the whole affair.

Cost. It appears that you know more of it than I do.

Phil. You know, and do not choose to know. I make allowance for your modesty; but when a gentleman speaks to you, when a man of my character exerts himself in your behalf, you ought to lay aside modesty and open your heart freely.

Cost. You take me so by surprise, I am embarrassed what answer to make.

Phil. Let us end this conversation. Tell me, like an honest girl as you are, do you not love Monsieur de la Cotterie?

Cost. You force me to own it.

Phil. [*Aside.*] Thank Heaven! so my daughter spoke the truth. – And he loves you with an equal affection.

Cost. Of that, sir, I know nothing.

Phil. If you do not know it, I tell you so; he loves you to perdition.

Cost. [*Aside.*] Can it be possible? and he has never declared it to me!

Phil. And I have undertaken to persuade your father.

Cost. But does my father know I am in love with the officer?

Phil. He certainly ought to know.

Cost. He has never mentioned it to me.

Phil. Oh, your father will soon come and talk with you on the subject.

Cost. He has never objected to my coming here, where I meet the officer.

Phil. He knows that you are visiting in an honourable house; no greater liberty would be allowed you here than is proper for a modest young lady. In a word, are you willing that I should manage the affair?

Cost. Entirely willing.

Phil. Bravo! this is enough; and what would it avail you to deny with your lips what your looks proclaim? the flame that burns in your heart sparkles in your eyes.

Cost. You have a most penetrating glance.

Phil. Ah, here comes the officer.

Cost. By your leave, sir.

Phil. Where are you going?

Cost. To Mademoiselle Giannina.

Phil. Remain here, if you will.

Cost. Oh no, sir, excuse me – your servant. – [*Aside.*] I am overjoyed! I know not in what world I am!

[Exit.

Philibert, *alone*

Phil. How amusing these girls are! Boldness and modesty are mingled in so strange a manner, that it is a pleasure to observe them. Here is an instance of love to devotion, and if it succeeds it will be owing to my daughter's intervention.

Enter De la Cotterie

De la Cot. They told me, sir, that you asked for me.

Phil. Have you seen Mademoiselle Giannina?

De la Cot. No, sir, I have not seen her.

Phil. I am sorry that you appear so melancholy.

De la Cot. One whose health is bad cannot be expected to look cheerful.

Phil. Do you not know I am a physician, and have the skill to cure you?

De la Cot. I did not know that you were skilled in the medical art.

Phil. Well, my friend, capacities often exist where they are not suspected.

De la Cot. Why, then, have you not prescribed for me before now?

Phil. Because I did not sooner know the nature of your disease.

De la Cot. Do you think you know it now?

Phil. Yes, certainly – indubitably.

De la Cot. If you are learned in the medical art, sir, you know much better than I do how fallacious and how little to be relied on are all the symptoms that seem to indicate the causes of disease.

Phil. The indications of your disease are so infallible, that I am confident there is no mistake, and on condition that you trust to my friendship, you shall soon have reason to be content.

De la Cot. And by what process do you propose to cure me?

Phil. My first prescription shall be for you to abandon all intention of going away, and to take the benefit of this air, which will speedily restore you to health.

De la Cot. On the contrary, I fear this air is most injurious to me.

Phil. Do you not know that even from hemlock a most salutary medicine is extracted?

De la Cot. I am not ignorant of the late discoveries, but your allusion covers some mystery.

Phil. No, my friend; so far as mystery is concerned, each of us is now acting his part; but let us speak without metaphor. Your disease arises from love, and you think to find a remedy by going away, whereas it is an act of mere desperation. You carry the arrow in your heart, and hope to be relieved; but the same hand which placed it there must draw it out.

De la Cot. Your discourse, sir, is altogether new to me.

Phil. Why pretend not to understand me! Speak to me as a friend who loves you, and takes the same interest in you as if you were his son. Consider: by dissembling you may destroy your happiness for ever. My attachment to you arises from a knowledge of your merit, and from your having spent several months with me; besides, I should be mortified for you to have contracted in my house an unhappy passion; and therefore I most zealously interfere in your favour, and am anxious to find a remedy for you.

De la Cot. My dear friend, how have you discovered the origin of my unhappiness?

Phil. Shall I say the truth? – my daughter revealed it to me.

De la Cot. Heavens! had she the courage to disclose it?

Phil. Yes, after a little persuasion she told me everything.

De la Cot. Oh, by the friendship you possess for me, have pity on my love!

Phil. I have pity on you; I know what human frailty is at your age, and the violence of passion.

De la Cot. I confess I ought not to have encouraged my affection, and concealed it from such a friend.

Phil. This is the only complaint I have to make. You have not treated me with that unreserved confidence which I think I was entitled to.

De la Cot. I had not the courage.

Phil. Well, Heaven be praised! There is yet time. I know the girl loves you, for she told me so herself.

De la Cot. And what do you say to it, sir?

Phil. I approve of the marriage.

De la Cot. You overwhelm me with joy.

Phil. You see I am the good physician who understands the disease and knows the remedy.

De la Cot. I can hardly feel assured of this great happiness.

Phil. Why not?

De la Cot. I thought the narrowness of my fortune an insuperable obstacle.

Phil. Family and merit on your side are equal to a rich dower on the other.

De la Cot. Your kindness to me is unequalled.

Phil. But my kindness has yet done nothing; now it shall be my endeavour to provide for your happiness.

De la Cot. This will depend entirely on your own good heart.

Phil. We must exert ourselves to overcome the difficulties.

De la Cot. And what are the difficulties?

Phil. The consent of the father of the girl.

De la Cot. My friend, it seems you are making game of me; from the way you spoke just now, I thought all obstacles were removed.

Phil. But I have not mentioned it to him yet.

De la Cot. To whom have you not mentioned it?

Phil. To the father of the girl.

De la Cot. Oh, Heavens! and who is the father of the girl?

Phil. Good! You do not know him? you do not know the father of Mademoiselle Costanza, that horrid savage, Monsieur Riccardo, who has grown rich by usury, and has no idol but his money?

De la Cot. [*Aside.*] I shall go mad! Thus end all my hopes.

Phil. Riccardo does not visit at my house, you never go out, so it is not surprising you do not know him.

De la Cot. [*Aside.*] Ah! I am obliged to dissemble, not to disclose my love at a moment so unpropitious.

Phil. But how did you know the father would not give you his daughter if you did not know him?

De la Cot. I had reasons for thinking so, and for my despair there is no remedy.

Phil. Am I not your physician?

De la Cot. All your attention will be unavailing.

Phil. Leave it to me; I will go immediately to find Monsieur Riccardo, and I flatter myself —

De la Cot. No, sir, do not.

Phil. It seems the prospect of success turns your head; just now you were all joy. Whence arises this sudden change?

De la Cot. I am certain it will end unfortunately.

Phil. Such despondency is unworthy of you, and unjust to me.

De la Cot. Do not add to my unhappiness by your interference.

Phil. Are you afraid the father will be obstinate? let me try.

De la Cot. By no means; I am altogether opposed to it.

Phil. And I am altogether for it, and will speak to him.

De la Cot. I shall leave the Hague; I shall go in a few minutes.

Phil. You will not treat me with so much incivility.

Enter Giannina

Gian. What, sirs, is the cause of this altercation?

Phil. Monsieur de la Cotterie acts towards me with a degree of ingratitude that is anything but agreeable.

Gian. Is it possible he can be capable of this?

De la Cot. Ah, Mademoiselle, I am a most unfortunate man!

Phil. I may say he does not know his own mind. He confessed his passion, and, when I offered to assist him, fell into transports; and then, when I promised to obtain the hand of Mademoiselle Costanza for him, he got furious, and threatened to go away.

Gian. I am surprised the Lieutenant should still speak of leaving us.

De la Cot. Would you have me stay and entertain such hopes? [*Ironically.*]

Gian. I would have you stay, and entertain a mistress who loves you. With my father's permission, you shall hear what Mademoiselle Costanza has just said of you.

Phil. May I not hear it?

Gian. Impossible; my friend directed me to tell it to him alone.

Phil. [*Aside.*] I shall hear all from my daughter when we are by ourselves.

Gian. [*Apart to* De la Cotterie.] I have contrived to make my father believe you were in love with Mademoiselle Costanza. As you love me, say it is so, and talk no more of going away.

De la Cot. [*Aside.*] Oh, the stratagems of love!

Phil. Will you still persist in your obstinacy?

De la Cot. Ah, no, sir; I rely on your kindness.

Phil. Do you desire me to speak to Monsieur Riccardo?

De la Cot. Do what you please.

Phil. Are you still anxious to go?

De la Cot. I promise you to remain here.

Phil. [*Aside.*] What magic words have wrought this change? I am curious to hear them.

De la Cot. Pardon, I pray you, my strange conduct.

Phil. Willingly; the actions of lovers are often extravagant. Tell me, Giannina, is Mademoiselle Costanza gone?

Gian. No, sir; she is waiting in my room.

Phil. Go, Lieutenant, and keep her company for a little while.

De la Cot. I would rather not, sir.

Gian. Go, go. – [*Aside to* De la Cotterie.] Listen! Wait for me in the antechamber; I will be there presently.

De la Cot. I shall obey you, sir.

[Exit.

Phil. [*Aside.*] The power of words! – Well, what did you say to him?

Gian. I told him to go to his mistress; that she expected him.

Phil. But the first time you spoke to him?

Gian. I said that Mademoiselle Costanza had hope she could persuade her father.

Phil. Why did you not tell him so openly, before me?

Gian. Things said in private often make the greatest impression.

Phil. Perhaps so.

Gian. By your leave.[*Going.*]

Phil. Where are you going?

Gian. To encourage this timid gentleman.

Phil. Yes, by all means; I recommend him to you.

Gian. Doubt not I shall take good care of him.

[Exit.

Phil. My girl has a good heart, and mine is like hers.

END OF THE FIRST ACT

ACT II

Scene I. —*The chamber of* Mademoiselle Giannina

Mademoiselle Costanza, *alone, seated*

Cost. Who would ever have thought Monsieur de la Cotterie had such a liking for me? It is true he has always treated me with politeness, and been ready to converse with me; but I cannot say I have observed any great signs of love. Now I have always loved him, but have not had courage enough to show it. I flatter myself he too loves me, and for the same reason conceals it; in truth a modest officer is a strange animal, and it is hard to believe in its existence. Monsieur Philibert must have reasons for what he says, and I am well pleased to think him not mistaken, especially as I have no evidence that he is so. Here comes my handsome soldier – but Mademoiselle Giannina is with him; she never permits us to be alone together for a moment. I have some suspicion she is my rival.

Enter Mademoiselle Giannina *and* De la Cotterie

Gian. Keep your seat, Mademoiselle; excuse me for having left you alone for a little while. I know you will be kind enough to forgive me, and I bring some one with me, who, I am sure, will secure your pardon.

Cost. Though surely in your own house and with a real friend such ceremony is needless, your company is always agreeable. I desire you will put yourself to no inconvenience.

Gian. Do you hear, Lieutenant? You see we Dutch are not without wit.

De la Cot. This is not the first time I have observed it.

Cost. Monsieur de la Cotterie is in a house that does honour to our country, and if he admires ladies of wit, he need not go out of it.

Gian. You are too polite, Mademoiselle.

Cost. I simply do justice to merit.

Gian. Let us not dispute about our merits, but rather leave it to the Lieutenant to decide.

De la Cot. If you wish a decision, you must choose a better judge.

Gian. A partial one, indeed, cannot be a good judge.

Cost. And to say nothing of partiality, he feels under obligations to you as the mistress of the house.

Gian. Oh, in France, the preference is always given to the guest: is it not so, Lieutenant?

De la Cot. It is no less the custom in Holland, than in my own country.

Cost. That is to say, the greater the merit, the greater the distinction with which they are treated.

Gian. On that principle you would be treated with the most distinction.

De la Cot. [*Aside.*] I shall get into trouble if this conversation continues.

Cost. By your leave, Mademoiselle.

Gian. Why do you leave us so soon?

Cost. I am engaged to my aunt; I promised to dine with her to-day, and it is not amiss to go early.

Gian. Oh, it is too early; your aunt is old, and you will perhaps still find her in bed.

De la Cot. [*Aside.*] Do not prevent her from going.

Gian. He begs me to detain you.

Cost. I am overpowered by your politeness. [*Curtseying.*] – [*Aside.*] Her amusement is to torment me.

Gian. [*To* Costanza.] What say you, my friend, have I not a good heart?

Cost. I must praise your kindness to me.

Gian. [*To* De la Cotterie.] And do you, too, own you are under obligations to me?

De la Cot. Yes, certainly, I have reason to be grateful to you; you, who know my feelings, must be conscious of the great favour you do me. [*Ironically.*]

Gian. [*To* Costanza.] You hear him? he is delighted.

Cost. My dear friend, as you have such a regard for me, and take so much interest in him, allow me to speak freely to you. Your worthy father has told me a piece of news that overwhelms me with joy and surprise. If all he has told me be true, I pray you, Monsieur De la Cotterie, to confirm it.

Gian. This is just what I anticipated; but as your conversation cannot be brief, and your aunt expects you, had you not better defer it to another opportunity?

De la Cot. [*Aside.*] Heaven grant I may not be still more involved!

Cost. A few words are all I ask.

Gian. Come, Lieutenant, take courage, and say all in a few words.

De la Cot. Indeed, I have not the courage.

Gian. No, my dear, it is impossible to express in a few words the infinite things he has to say to you.

Cost. It will be enough if he says but one word.

Gian. And what is that?

Cost. That he really loves me.

Gian. Pardon me; the Lieutenant is too polite to speak of love to one young lady in the presence of another; but I can, by going away, give you an opportunity of conversing together, and so remove all obstacles to an explanation. [*Going.*]

De la Cot. Stay, Mademoiselle!

Cost. Yes, and mortify me no more. Be assured I should never have spoken with the boldness I have done, had you not led me to do so. I do not comprehend your meaning; there is an inconsistency in your conduct; but, be it as it may, time will bring the truth to light. And now permit me to take leave.

Gian. My dear friend, pardon my inattention to you on first coming. You are mistress to go or remain as you please.

Enter Philibert

Phil. What delightful company! But why are you on your feet? why do you not sit down?

Gian. Costanza is just going.

Phil. [*To* Costanza.] Why so soon?

Gian. Her aunt expects her.

Phil. No, my dear young lady, do me the favour to remain; we may want you, and in affairs of this kind moments are often precious. I have sent to your father, to say I desire to have a conversation with him; I am certain he will come. We will have a private interview, and, however little he may be inclined to give his consent, I shall press him so as not to leave him time to repent; if we agree, I will call you both immediately into my room.

De la Cot. [*Aside.*] Our situation is becoming more critical every moment.

Phil. [*To* De la Cotterie.] You seem to me to be agitated.

Gian. It is the excess of joy.

Phil. [*To* Costanza.] And what effect has hope on you?

Cost. I have more fear than hope.

Phil. Rely on me. For the present, be content to remain here; and, as we do not know exactly when your father will come, stay to dinner with us.

Gian. She cannot stay, sir.

Phil. Why not?

Gian. Because she promised her aunt to dine with her to-day.

Cost. [*Aside.*] I see she does not wish me to remain.

Phil. The aunt who expects you is your father's sister?

Cost. Yes, sir.

Phil. I know her; she is my particular friend. Leave it to me. I will get you released from the engagement, and, as soon as Monsieur Riccardo comes here, I will send word to her where you are, and she will be satisfied.

Cost. I am grateful, Monsieur Philibert, for your great kindness; permit me for a moment to see my aunt, who is not well. I will soon return, and avail myself of your politeness.

Phil. Very well; come back quickly.

Cost. Good morning to you; you will soon see me again.

Gian. Good-bye. – [*Aside.*] If she does not come back I shall not break my heart.

Phil. Adieu, my dear. – One moment. Lieutenant, for a man who has been in the wars, you do not seem quite as much at your ease as you should be.

Cost. Why do you say so, sir?

Phil. Because you are letting Mademoiselle go away without taking notice of her – without one word of civility.

Cost. Indeed, he has said but few.

De la Cot. [*To* Philibert.] I ought not to abuse the privilege you have given me.

Phil. [*Aside.*] I understand. – Giannina, a word with you.

Gian. Yes, sir?

Phil. [*Aside to* Giannina.] It is not right for a young lady to thrust herself between two lovers in this manner; on account of you, they cannot speak two words to each other.

Gian. [*To* Philibert.] They spoke in whispers together.

Phil. [*To* De la Cotterie.] Well, if you have anything to say to her —

De la Cot. There will be time enough, sir.

Phil. [*To* Giannina.] Attend to me.

Cost. [*Aside to* De la Cotterie.] At least assure me of your affection.

De la Cot. [*Aside to* Costanza.] Excuse me, Mademoiselle. [Giannina *coughs aloud*.] [*Aside.*] I am exceedingly embarrassed.

Cost. [*Loud enough for all to hear.*] Is it possible you will not say once that you love me?

Gian. [*To* Costanza, *with asperity*.] How many times do you want him to tell you so? Did he not say so before me?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.