

The Love-Tiff

Moliere

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Title: The Love-Tiff

Author: Moliere

Release Date: September, 2004 [EBook #6564]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on December 28, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE LOVE-TIFF *****

Produced by David Moynihan, D Garcia, Charles Franks
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LE DEPIT AMOUREUX.

COMEDIE.

THE LOVE-TIFF.

A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

(_THE ORIGINAL IN VERSE_)

1656.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

The Love-tiff (Le Depit-amoureux) is composed of two pieces joined together. The first and longest is a comparatively modest imitation of a very coarse and indecent Italian comedy, L'Interesse, by Signer Nicolo Secchi; its intrigue depends chiefly on the substitution of a female for a male child, a change which forms the groundwork of many plays and novels, and of which Shakespeare has also made use. The second and best part of the Love-tiff belongs to Moliere alone, and is composed chiefly of the whole of the first act, the first six verses of the third scene, and the whole of the fourth scene of the second act; these, with a few alterations and a few lines added, form the comedy which the Theatre Francaise plays at the present time. It was first represented at Beziers towards the end of 1656, when the States General of Languedoc were assembled in that town, and met with great success; a success which continued when it was played in Paris at the Theatre du Petit-Bourbon in 1658. Why in some of the former English translations of Moliere the servant Gros-Rene is called "Gros-Renard" we are unable to understand, for both names are thoroughly French. Mr. Ozell, in his translation, gives him the unmistakably English, but not very euphonious name of "punch-gutted Ben, alias Renier," whilst Foote calls him "Hugh." The incidents of the Love-tiff are arranged artistically, though in the Spanish taste; the plot is too complicated, and the ending very unnatural. But the characters are well delineated, and fathers, lovers, mistresses, and servants all move about amidst a complication of errors from which there is no visible disentangling. The conversation between Valere and Ascanio in man's clothes, the mutual begging pardon of Albert and Polydore, the natural astonishment of Lucile, accused in the presence of her father, and the stratagem of Eraste to get the truth from his servants, are all described in a masterly manner, whilst the tiff between Eraste and Lucile, which gives the title to the piece, as well as their reconciliation, are considered among the best scenes of this play.

Nearly all actors in France who play either the valets or the soubrettes have attempted the parts of Gros-Rene and Marinette, and even the great tragedienne Madlle. Rachel ventured, on the 1st of July, 1844, to act Marinette, but not with much success.

Dryden has imitated, in the fourth act of An Evening's Love, a small part of the scene between Marinette and Eraste, the quarrelling scene between Lucile, Eraste, Marinette, and Gros-Rene, as well as in the third act of the same play, the scene between Albert and Metaphrastus. Vanbrugh has very closely followed Moliere's play in the

Mistake, but has laid the scene in Spain. This is the principal difference I can perceive. He has paraphrased the French with a spirit and ease which a mere translation can hardly ever acquire. The epilogue to his play, written by M. Motteux, a Frenchman, whom the revocation of the Edict of Nantes brought into England, is filthy in the extreme. Mr. J. King has curtailed Vanbrugh's play into an interlude, in one act, called _Lover's Quarrels_, or _Like Master Like Man_.

Another imitator of Moliere was Edward Ravenscroft, of whom Baker says in his *Biographia Dramatica*, that he was "a writer or compiler of plays, who lived in the reigns of Charles II. and his two successors." He was descended from the family of the Ravenscrofts, in Flintshire; a family, as he himself, in a dedication asserts, so ancient that when William the Conqueror came into England, one of his nobles married into it.

He was some time a member of the Middle Temple; but, looking on the dry study of the law as greatly beneath the attention of a man of genius, quitted it. He was an arrant plagiarist. Dryden attacked one of his plays, *The Citizen turned Gentleman*, an imitation of Moliere's *Bourgeois-Gentilhomme*, in the Prologue to *The Assignation*.

Ravenscroft wrote "*The Wrangling Lovers, or the Invisible Mistress*." Acted at the Duke's Theatre, 1677. London, Printed for William Crook, at the sign of the *Green Dragon*, without *Temple-Bar*, 1677." Though the plot was partly taken from a Spanish novel, the author has been inspired by Moliere's *Depit amoureux*. The scene is in Toledo: Eraste is called Don Diego de Stuniga, Valere Don Gusman de Haro, "a well-bred cavalier," Lucile is Octavia de Pimentell, and Ascanio is Elvira; Gros-Rene's name is Sanco, "vallet to Gusman, a simple pleasant fellow," and Mascarille is Ordgano, "a cunning knave;" Marinette is called Beatrice and Frosine Isabella. The English play is rather too long. Don Gusman courts Elvira veiled, whilst in the French play Ascanio, her counterpart, is believed to be a young man. There is also a brother of Donna Elvira, Don Ruis de Moncade, who is a rival of Don Diego, whilst in *le Depit-amoureux*. Valere is not the brother but the husband of Ascanio and the rival of Eraste (Don Diego) as well. The arrangement of the English comedy differs greatly from the French. Though the plot in both plays is nearly identical, yet the words and scenes in *The Wrangling Lovers* are totally different, and not so amusing. Mascarille and Gros-Rene are but faintly attempted; Marinette and Frosine only sketched in outline; and in the fifth act the ladies appear to have nothing else to do but to pop in and out of closets. The scenes of the French play between Albert and Metaphrastus (ii. 7); the very comical scene between Albert and Polydore (iii. 4) and the reconciliation scene between Lucile and Eraste (iv. 3), are also not rendered in the English comedy. There are very few scenes which can be compared with those of *le Depit amoureux*.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

ERASTE, *in love with Lucile*.

ALBERT, *father to Lucile*.

[Footnote: This part was played by Moliere himself]

GROS-RENE, _servant to Eraste_.

VALERE, _son to Polydore_.

POLYDORE, _father to Valere_.

MASCARILLE, _servant to Valere_.

METAPHRASTUS, _a pedant_.

LA RAPIERE, _a bully_.

LUCILE, _daughter to Albert_.

ASCANIO, _Albert's daughter, in man's clothes_.

FROSINE, _confidant to Ascanio_.

MARINETTE, _maid to Lucile_.

THE LOVE-TIFF.

(LE DEPIT AMOUREUX.)

* * * * *

ACT I.

SCENE I.--ERASTE, GROS-RENE.

ERAS. Shall I declare it to you? A certain secret anxiety never leaves my mind quite at rest. Yes, whatever remarks you make about my love, to tell you the truth, I am afraid of being deceived; or that you may be bribed in order to favour a rival; or, at least, that you may be imposed upon as well as myself.

GR.-RE. As for me, if you suspect me of any knavish trick, I will say, and I trust I give no offence to your honour's love, that you wound my honesty very unjustly, and that you show but small skill in physiognomy. People of my bulk are not accused, thank Heaven! of being either rogues or plotters. I scarcely need protest against the honour paid to us, but am straightforward in every thing.

[Footnote: Du Parc, the actor who played this part, was very stout; hence the allusion in the original, "_et suis homme fort rond de toutes les manieres_" I have, of course, used in the translation the word "straightforward" ironically, and with an eye to the rotundity of stomach of the actor. Moliere was rather fond of making allusions in his

plays to the infirmities or peculiarities of some of his actors. Thus, in the Miser (*l'Avare*) Act I, Scene 3, he alludes to the lameness of the actor Bejart, "*Je ne me plais point a voir ce chien de boiteux-la.*" "I do not like to see that lame dog;" in the Citizen who apes the Nobleman (*le Bourgeois gentilhomme*), Act iii. sc. 9, he even gives a portrait of his wife.]

As for my being deceived that may be; there is a better foundation for that idea; nevertheless, I do not believe it can be easily done. I may be a fool, but I do not see yet why you vex yourself thus. Lucile, to my thinking, shows sufficient love for you; she sees you and talks to you, at all times; and Valere, after all, who is the cause of your fear, seems only to be allowed to approach her because she is compelled so to act.

ERAS. A lover is often buoyed up by false hope. He who is best received is not always the most beloved. The affection a woman displays is often but a veil to cover her passion for another. Valere has lately shown too much tranquillity for a slighted lover; and the joy or indifference he displays at those favours, which you suppose bestowed upon me, embitters continually their greatest charms, causes this grief, which you cannot understand, holds my happiness in suspense, and makes it difficult for me to trust completely anything Lucile says to me. I should feel delighted if I saw Valere animated by a little more jealousy; his anxiety and impatience would then reassure my heart. Do you as yourself think it possible for any one to see a rival caressed and be as satisfied as he is; if you do not believe it, tell me, I conjure you, if I have not a cause to be perplexed?

GR.-RE. Perhaps he has changed his inclination, upon finding that he sighed in vain.

ERAS. When love has been frequently repelled it frees itself, and wishes to flee from the object it was charmed with; nor does it break its chain so quietly as to be able to continue at peace. When once we have been fond of anyone who influenced our destiny we are never afterwards indifferent in her presence; if our dislike does not increase when we behold her our love is upon the point of returning again. Believe me, however much a passion may be extinguished, a little jealousy still dwells in our breast; no one can see, without feeling some pang, the heart he has lost possessed by another.

GR.-RE. For my part, I do not understand so much philosophy. I candidly believe what my eyes see, and am not such a mortal enemy to myself as to become melancholy without any cause. Why should I try to split hairs, and labour hard to find out reasons to be miserable? Shall I alarm myself about castles in the air? Let Lent come before we keep it! I think grief an uncomfortable thing; and, for my part, I never foster it without good and just cause. I might frequently find a hundred opportunities to become sad, but I do not want to see them. I run the same risk in love as you do; I share in your bad or good luck. The mistress cannot deceive you but the maid will do the same by me; yet I carefully avoid thinking about it. I like to believe people when they say "I love you." In order to be happy, I do not try to find out whether Mascarille tears the hair out of his head or not. Let Marinette allow herself to be kissed and caressed by Gros-Rene as much as he likes, and let my charming rival laugh at it like a fool, I will laugh too as much as I like, and follow his example; we shall then see who will laugh the heartiest.

[Footnote: In several editions of Moliere we f

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