

The Countess of Escarbagnas (La Comtesse D'Escarbagnas)

Moliere (Poquelin)

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THE COUNTESS OF ESCARBAGNAS.

(LA COMTESSE D'ESCARBAGNAS.)

BY

MOLIERE

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH PROSE.

WITH SHORT INTRODUCTIONS AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

BY

CHARLES HERON WALL

'La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas' was acted before the Court at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, on December 2, 1671, and in the theatre of the Palais Royal on July 8, 1672. It was never printed during Moliere's lifetime, but for the first time only in 1682. It gives us a good picture of the provincial thoughts, manners, and habits of those days.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

THE COUNT, _son to the_ COUNTESS.

THE VISCOUNT, _in love with_ JULIA.

MR. THIBAUDIER, _councillor, in love with the_ COUNTESS.

MR. HARPIN, _receiver of taxes, also in love with the_ COUNTESS.

MR. BOBINET, _tutor to the_ COUNT.

JEANNOT, _servant to_ MR. THIBAUDIER.

CRICQUET, _servant to the_ COUNTESS.

THE COUNTESS OF ESCARBAGNAS.

JULIA, _in love with the_ VISCOUNT.

ANDRÉE, _maid to the_ COUNTESS.

The scene is at Angouleme.

SCENE I.--JULIA, THE VISCOUNT.

VISC. What! you are here already?

JU. Yes, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Cleante; it is not right for a lover to be the last to come to the rendezvous.

VISC. I should have been here long ago if there were no importunate people in the world. I was stopped on my way by an old bore of rank, who asked me news of the court, merely to be able himself to detail to me the most absurd things that can well be imagined about it. You know that those great newsmongers are the curse of provincial towns, and that they have no greater anxiety than to spread, everywhere abroad all the tittle-tattle they pick up. This one showed me, to begin with, two large sheets of paper full to the very brim with the greatest

imaginable amount of rubbish, which, he says, comes from the safest quarters. Then, as if it were a wonderful thing, he read full length and with great mystery all the stupid jokes in the Dutch Gazette, which he takes for gospel. [Footnote: After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1668, this newspaper never ceased to attack Louis XIV. and the French nation. In 1672 Louis XIV. attempted the conquest of Holland.] He thinks that France is being brought to ruin by the pen of that writer, whose fine wit, according to him, is sufficient to defeat armies. After that he raved about the ministry, spoke of all its faults, and I thought he would never have done. If one is to believe him, he knows the secrets of the cabinet better than those who compose it. The policy of the state is an open book to him, and no step is taken without his seeing through it. He shows you the secret machinations of all that takes place, whither the wisdom of our neighbours tends, and controls at his will and pleasure all the affairs of Europe. His knowledge of what goes on extends as far as Africa and Asia, and he is informed of all that; is discussed in the privy council of Prester John [Footnote: The name given in the middle ages to a supposed Christian sovereign and priest (presbyter) in the interior of Asia.] and the Great Mogul.

JU. You make the best excuse you can, and so arrange it that it may pass off well and be easily received.

VISC. I assure you, dear Julia, that this is the real reason of my being late. But if I wanted to say anything gallant, I could tell you that the rendezvous to which you bring me here might well excuse the sluggishness of which you complain. To compel me to pay my addresses to the lady of this house is certainly reason enough for me to fear being here the first. I ought not to have to bear the misery of it, except when she whom it amuses is present. I avoid finding myself alone with that ridiculous countess with whom you shackle me. In short, as I come only for your sake, I have every reason to stay away until you are here.

JU. Oh! you will never lack the power of giving a bright colour to your faults. However, if you had come half an hour sooner, we should have enjoyed those few moments. For when I came, I found that the countess was out, and I have no doubt that she is gone all over the town to claim for herself the honour of the comedy you gave me under her name.

VISC. But, pray, when will you put an end to this, and make me buy less dearly the happiness of seeing you?

JU. When our parents agree, which I scarcely dare hope for. You know as well as I do that the dissensions which exist between our two families deprive us of the possibility of seeing each other anywhere else, and that neither my brothers nor my father are likely to approve of our engagement.

VISC. Yes; but why not profit better by the opportunity which their enmity gives us, and why oblige me to waste, under a ridiculous deception, the moments I pass near you?

JU. It is the better to hide our love; and, besides, to tell you the truth, this deception you speak of is to me a very amusing comedy, and I hardly think that the one you give me to-day will amuse me as much. Our Countess of Escarbagnas, with her perpetual infatuation for

"quality," is as good a personage as can be put on the stage. The short journey she has made to Paris has brought her back to Angouleme more crazy than ever. The air of the court has given a new charm to her extravagance, and her folly grows and increases every day.

VISC. Yes; but you do not take into consideration that what amuses you drives me to despair; and that one cannot dissimulate long when one is under the sway of love as true as that which I feel for you. It is cruel to think, dear Julia, that this amusement of yours should deprive me of the few moments during which I could speak to you of my love, and last night I wrote on the subject some verses that I cannot help repeating to you, so true is it that the mania of reciting one's verses is inseparable from the title of a poet:

"Iris, too long thou keepst on torture's rack
One who obeys thy laws, yet whisp'ring chides
In that thou bidst me boast a joy I lack,
And hush the sorrow that my bosom hides.

Must thy dear eyes, to which I yield my arms,
From my sad sighs draw wanton pleasure still?
Is't not enough to suffer for thy charms
That I must grieve at thy capricious will?

This double martyrdom a pain affords
Too keen to bear at once; thy deeds, thy words,
Work on my wasting heart a cruel doom,

Love bids it burn; constraint its life doth chill.
If pity soften not thy wayward will,
Love, feigned and real, will lead me to the tomb."

JU. I see that you make yourself out much more ill--used than you need; but it is the way with you poets to tell falsehoods in cold blood, and to pretend that those you love are much more cruel than they are, in order to make them correspond to the fancies you may take into your heads. Yet, I should like you, if you will, to give me those verses in writing.

VISC. No, it is enough that I have repeated them to you, and I ought to stop there. A man may be foolish enough to make verses, but that is different from giving them to others.

JU. It is in vain for you to affect a false modesty; your wit is well known, and I do not see why you should hide what you write.

VISC. Ah! we must tread here with the greatest circumspection. It is a dangerous thing to set up for a wit. There is inherent to it a certain touch of absurdity which is catching, and we should be warned by the example of some of our friends.

JU. Nonsense, Cleante; I see that, in spite of all you say, you are longing to give me your verses; and I feel sure that you would be very unhappy if I pretended not to care for them.

VISC. I unhappy? Oh! dear no, I am not so much of a poet for you to think that I ... but here is the Countess of Escarbagnas; I'll go by this door, so as not to meet her, and will see that everything is got ready for the play I have promised you.

SCENE II.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA; ANDREE and CRIQUET _in the background_.

COUN. What, Madam, are you alone? Ah! what a shame! All alone! I thought my people had told me that the Viscount was here.

JU. It is true that he came, but it was sufficient for him to know that you were not at home; he would not stop after that.

COUN. What! did he see you?

JU. Yes.

COUN. And did he not stop to talk with you?

JU. No, Madam; he wished to show you how very much he is struck by your charms.

COUN. Still, I shall call him to account for that. However much any one may be in love with me, I wish them to pay to our sex the homage that is due to it. I am not one of those unjust women who approve of the rudeness their lovers display towards other fair ones.

JU. You must in no way be surprised at his conduct. The love he has for you shows itself in all his actions, and prevents him from caring for anybody but you.

COUN. I know that I can give rise to a strong passion; I have for that enough of beauty, youth, and rank, thank Heaven; but it is no reason why those who love me should not keep within the bounds of propriety towards others. (_ Seeing_ CRIQUET.) What are you doing there, little page? is there not an ante-room for you to be in until you are called? It is a strange thing that in the provinces we cannot meet with a servant who knows his place! To whom do you think I am speaking? Why do you not move? Will you go outside, little knave that you are!

SCENE III.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, ANDREE.

COUN. Come hither, girl.

AND. What do you wish me to do, Ma'am?

COUN. To take off my head-dress. Gently, you awkward girl: how roughly you touch my head with your heavy hands!

AND. I do it as gently as I can, Ma'am.

COUN. No doubt; but what you call gently is very rough treatment for my head. You have almost put my neck out of joint. Now, take also this muff; go and put it with the rest into the closet; don't leave anything about. Well! where is she going to now? What is the stupid girl doing?

AND. I am going to take this into the closet, as you told me, Ma'am.

COUN. Ah! heavens! (_To_ JULIA) Pray, excuse her rudeness, Madam. (_To_ ANDREE) I told you my closet, great ass; that is the place where I keep my dresses.

AND. Please, Ma'am, is a cupboard called a closet at court?

COUN. Yes, dunce; it is thus that a place where clothes are kept is called.

AND. I will remember it, Ma'am, as well as the word furniture warehouse for your attic.

SCENE IV.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA.

COUN. What trouble it gives me to have to teach such simpletons.

JU. I think them very fortunate to be under your discipline, Madam.

COUN. She is my nurse's daughter, whom I have made lady's-maid; the post is quite new to her, as yet.

JU. It shows a generous soul, Madam, and it is glorious thus to form people.

COUN. Come, some seats, I say! Here, little page! little page! little page-boy! Truly, this is too bad not to have a page to give us chairs! My maids! my page! my page! my maids! Ho! somebody! I really think that they must be all dead, and that we shall have to find seats for ourselves.

SCENE V.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, ANDREE.

AND. What is it you want, Ma'am?

COUN. You do make people scream after you, you servants!

AND. I was putting your muff and head-dress away in the cup ... in the closet, I mean.

COUN. Call in that rascal of a page.

AND. I say, Criquet!

COUN. Cease that "Criquet" of yours, stupid, and call out "Page."

AND. Page then, and not Criquet, come and speak to missis. I think he must be deaf. Criq ... Page! page!

SCENE VI.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, ANDREE, CRIQUET.

CRI. What is it you want?

COUN. Where were you, you rascal?

CRI. In the street, Ma'am.

COUN. Why in the street?

CRI. You told me to go outside.

COUN. You are a rude little fellow, and you ought to know that outside among people of quality, means the ante-room. Andree, mind you ask my equerry to flog this little rogue. He is an incorrigible little wretch.

AND. Whom do you mean by your equerry, Ma'am? Is it Mr. Charles you call by that name?

COUN. Be silent, impertinent girl! You can hardly open your month without making some rude remark. (_To_ CRIQUET) Quick, some seats; (_to_ ANDREE) and you, light two wax candles in my silver candlesticks; it is getting late. What is it now? why do you look so scared?

AND. Ma'am.

COUN. Well--Ma'am--what is the matter?

AND. It is that....

COUN. What?

AND. I have no wax candles, but only dips.

COUN. The simpleton! And where are the wax candles I bought a few days ago?

AND. I have seen none since I have been here.

COUN. Get out from my presence, rude girl. I will send you back to your home again. Bring me a glass of water.

SCENE VII.--THE COUNTESS and JULIA (_making much ceremony before they sit down_).

COUN. Madam

JU. Madam!

COUN. Ah! Madam!

JU. Ah! Madam!

COUN. Madam, I beg of you!

JU. Madam, I beg of you!

COUN. Oh! Madam!

JU. Oh! Madam!

COUN. Pray, Madam!

JU. Pray, Madam!

COUN. Now really, Madam!

JU. Now really, Madam!

COUN. I am in my own house, Madam! We are agreed as to that. Do you take me for a provincial, Madam?

JU. Oh! Heaven forbid, Madam!

SCENE VIII.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, ANDREE (_who brings a glass of water_), CRIQUET.

COUN. (_to_ ANDREE). Get along with you, you hussy. I drink with a salver. I tell you that you must go and fetch me a salver.

AND. Criquet, what's a salver?

CRI. A salver?

AND. Yes.

CRI. I don't know.

COUN. (_to_ ANDREE). Will you move, or will you not?

AND. We don't either of us know what a salver is.

COUN. Know, then, that it is a plate on which you put the glass.

SCENE IX.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA.

COUN. Long live Paris! It is only there that one is well waited upon; there a glance is enough.

SCENE X.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, ANDREE (_who brings a glass of water, with a plate on the top of it_), CRIQUET.

COUN. Is that what I asked you for, dunderhead? It is under that you must put the plate.

AND. That is easy to do. (_She breaks the glass in trying to put it on the plate_.)

COUN. You stupid girl! You shall really pay for the glass; you shall, I promise you!

AND. Very well, Ma'am, I will pay you for it.

COUN. But did you ever see such an awkward loutish girl? such a....

AND. I say, Ma'am, if I am to pay for the glass, I won't be scolded into the bargain.

COUN. Get out of my sight.

SCENE XI.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA.

COUN. Really, Madam, small towns are strange places. In them there is no respect of persons, and I have just been making a few calls at houses where they drove me almost to despair; so little regard did they pay to my rank.

JU. Where could you expect them to have learnt manners? They have never been to Paris.

COUN. Still, they might learn, if they would only listen to one; but what I think too bad is that they will persist in saying that they know as much as I do--I who have spent two months in Paris, and have seen the whole court.

JU. What absurd people!

COUN. They are unbearable in the impertinent equality with which they treat people. For, in short, there ought to be a certain subordination in things; and what puts me out of all patience is that a town upstart, whether with two days' gentility to boast of or with two hundred years', should have impudence enough to say that he is as much of a gentleman as my late husband, who lived in the country, kept a pack of hounds, and took the title of Count in all the deeds that he signed.

JU. They know better how to live in Paris, in those large hotels you must remember with such pleasure! That Hotel of Mouchy, Madam; that Hotel of Lyons, that Hotel of Holland, what charming places to live in!
[Footnote: Instead of naming the hotels (= mansions) of the great noblemen, Julia names the hotels (= inns) of the time. She thus shows where the countess had studied the aristocracy.]

COUN. It is true that those places are very different from what we have here. You see there people of quality who do not hesitate to show you all the respect and consideration which you look for. One is not under the obligation of rising from one's seat, and if one wants to see a review or the great ballet of Psyche, your wishes are at once attended to.

JU. I should think, Madam, that during your stay in Paris you made many a conquest among the people of quality.

COUN. You can readily believe, Madam, that of all the famous court gallants not one failed to come to my door and pay his respects to me. I keep in my casket some of the letters sent me, and can prove by them what offers I have refused. There is no need for me to tell you their names; you know what is meant by court gallants.

JU. I wonder, Madam, how, after all those great names, which I can easily guess, you can descend to Mr. Thibaudier, a councillor, and Mr. Harpin, a collector of taxes? The fall is great, I must say. For your viscount, although nothing but a country viscount, is still a viscount, and can take a journey to Paris if he has not been there already. But a councillor and a tax-gatherer are but poor lovers for a great countess like you.

COUN. They are men whom one treats kindly in the country, in order to make use of when the need arises. They serve to fill up the gaps of gallantry, and to swell the ranks of one's lovers. It is a good thing not to leave a lover the sole master of one's heart, lest, for want of rivals, his love go to sleep through over-confidence.

JU. I confess, Madam, that no one can help profiting wonderfully by all you say. Your conversation is a school, to which I do not fail to come every day in order to learn something new.

SCENE XII.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, ANDREE, CRIQUET.

CRI. (_to the_ COUNTESS). Here is Jeannot, Mr. Thibaudier's man, who wants to see you, Ma'am.

COUN. Ah! you little wretch, this is another of your stupidities. A well-bred lackey would have spoken in a whisper to the gentlewoman in attendance; the latter would have come to her mistress and have whispered in her ear: "Here is the footman of Mr. So-and-so, who wants to speak to you, Madam." To which the mistress would have answered, "Show him in."

SCENE XIII.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, ANDREE, CRIQUET, JEANNOT.

CRI. Come along in, Jeannot.

COUN. Another blunder. (_To_ JEANNOT) What do you want, page? What have you there?

JEAN. It is Mr. Thibaudier, Ma'am, who wishes you good morning, and, before he comes, sends you some pears out of his garden, with this small note.

SCENE XIV.--THE COUNTESS, CRIQUET, JEANNOT.

COUN. (_giving some money to_ JEANNOT). Here, my boy; here is something for your trouble.

JEAN. Oh no, thank you, Ma'am.

COUN. Take it, I say.

JEAN. My master told me not take anything from you Ma'am.

COUN. Never mind, take it all the same.

JEAN. Excuse me, Ma'am.

CRI. Take it, Jeannot. If you don't want it, you can give it me.

COUN. Tell your master that I thank him.

CRI. (to_ JEANNOT, _who is going_). Give it to me, Jeannot.

JEA. Yes, you catch me.

CRI. It was I who made you take it.

JEA. I should have taken it without your help.

COUN. What pleases me in this Mr. Thibaudier is that he knows how to behave with people of my quality, and that he is very respectful.

SCENE XV.--THE VISCOUNT, THE COUNTESS, JULIA, CRIQUET.

VISC. I come to tell you, Madam, that the theatricals will soon be ready, and that we can go into the hall in a quarter of an hour.

COUN. Mind, I will have no crowd after me. (To_ CRIQUET) Tell the porter not to let anybody come in.

VISC. If so, Madam, I give up our theatricals. I could take no interest in them unless the spectators are numerous. Believe me, if you want to enjoy it thoroughly, tell your people to let the whole town in.

COUN. Page, a seat. (To the_ VISCOUNT, _after he is seated_) You have come just in time to accept a self-sacrifice I am willing to make to you. Look, I have here a note from Mr. Thibaudier, who sends me some pears. I give you leave to read it aloud; I have not opened it yet.

VISC. (after he has read the note to himself_). This note is written in the most fashionable style, Madam, and is worthy of all your attention. (Reads aloud_) "Madam, I could not have made you the present I send you if my garden did not bring me more fruit than my love...."

COUN. You see clearly by this that nothing has taken place between us.

VISC. "The pears are not quite ripe yet, but they will all the better match the hardness of your heart, the continued disdain of which promises me nothing soft and sweet. Allow me, Madam, without risking an enumeration of your charms, which would be endless, to conclude with begging you to consider that I am as good a Christian as the pears which I send you, [Footnote: They were pears 'de bon chretien.' 'Choke-pears' renders rather weakly the poires d'angoisse_ of Mr. Thibaudier.] for I render good for evil; which is to say, to explain myself more plainly, that I present you with good Christian pears in return for the choke-pears which your cruelty makes me swallow every day.

Your unworthy slave,
THIBAUDIER."

Madam, this letter is worth keeping.

COUN. There may be a few words in it that are not of the Academy, but I observe in it a certain respect which pleases me greatly.

JU. You are right, Madam, and even if the viscount were to take it amiss, I should love a man who would write so to me.

SCENE XVI.--MR. THIBAUDIER, THE VISCOUNT, THE COUNTESS, JULIA, CRIQUET.

COUN. Come here, Mr. Thibaudier; do not be afraid of coming in. Your note was well received, and so were your pears; and there is a lady here who takes your part against your rival.

THI. I am much obliged to her, Madam, and if ever she has a lawsuit in our court, she may be sure that I shall not forget the honour she does me in making herself the advocate of my flame near your beauty.

JU. You have no need of an advocate, Sir, and your cause has justice on its side.

THI. This, nevertheless. Madam, the right has need of help, and I have reason to apprehend the being supplanted by such a rival, and the beguiling of the lady by the rank of the viscount.

VISC. I had hopes before your note came, Sir, but now, I confess fears for my love.

THI. Here are likewise a few little couplets which I have composed to your honour and glory, Madam.

VISC. Ah! I had no idea that Mr. Thibaudier was a poet; these few little couplets will be my ruin.

COUN. He means two strophes. (To CRIQUET) Page, give a seat to Mr. Thibaudier. (Aside to CRIQUET, who brings a chair) A folding-chair, little animal! [Footnote: Compare 'Tartuffe,' act ii. scene iii.] Mr. Thibaudier, sit down there, and read your strophes to us.

THI. (reads).

"A person of quality
Is my fair dame;
She has got beauty,
Fierce is my flame;
Yet I must blame
Her pride and cruelty."

VISC. I am lost after that.

COUN. The first line is excellent: "A person of quality."

JU. I think it is a little too long; but a liberty may be taken to express a noble thought.

COUN. (_to_ MR. THIBAUDIER). Let us have the other.

THI. (_reads_).

"I know not if you doubt that my love be sincere,
Yet this I know, that my heart every moment
Longs to leave its sorry apartment
To visit yours, with fond respect and fear.
After all this, having my love in hand,
And my honour, of superfine brand,
You ought, in turn, I say,
Content to be a countess gay,
To cast that tigress' skin away,
Which hides your charms both night and day."

VISC. I am undone by Mr. Thibaudier.

COUN. Do not make fun of it; for the verses are good although they are country verses.

VISC. I, Madam, make fun of it! Though he is my rival, I think his verses admirable. I do not call them, like you, two strophes merely; but two epigrams, as good as any of Martial's.

COUN. What! Does Martial make verses? I thought he only made gloves.

THI. It is not that Martial, Madam, but an author who lived thirty or forty years ago.[Footnote: The Martial who _did not write verses_, sold perfumery, and was valet-de-chambre to the king's brother. Martial, the Roman epigrammatist, lived in the first century after Christ.]

VISC. Mr. Thibaudier has read the authors, as you see. But, Madam, we shall see if my comedy, with its interludes and dances, will counteract in your mind the progress which the two strophes have made.

COUN. My son the Count must be one of the spectators, for he came this morning from my country-seat, with his tutor, whom I see here.

SCENE XVII.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, THE VISCOUNT, MR. THIBAUDIER, MR. BOBINET, CRIQUET.

COUN. Mr. Bobinet, I say, Mr. Bobinet, come forward.

BOB. I give the good evening to all this honourable company. What does Madam the Countess of Escarbagnas want of her humble servant Bobinet?

COUN. At what time, Mr. Bobinet, did you leave Escarbagnas with the Count my son?

BOB. At a quarter to nine, my lady, according to your orders.

COUN. How are my two other sons, the Marquis and the Commander?

BOB. They are, Heaven be thanked, in perfect health.

COUN. Where is the Count?

BOB. In your beautiful room, with a recess in it, Madam.

COUN. What is he doing, Mr. Bobinet?

BOB. Madam, he is composing an essay upon one of the epistles of Cicero, which I have just given him as a subject.

COUN. Call him in, Mr. Bobinet.

BOB. Be it according to your command, Madam. (_Exit_)

SCENE XVIII.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, THE VISCOUNT, MR. THIBAUDIER.

THI. (_to the COUNTESS_). That Mr. Bobinet, Madam, looks very wise, and I think that he is a man of _esprit_.

SCENE XIX.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, THE VISCOUNT, THE COUNT, MR. BOBINET, MR. THIBAUDIER.

BOB. Come, my Lord, show what progress you make under the good precepts that are given you. Bow to the honourable company.

COUN. (_showing_ JULIA). Come, Count, salute this lady; bow low to the viscount; salute the councillor.

THI. I am delighted, Madam, that you should grant me the favour of embracing his lordship. One cannot love the trunk without loving the branches.

COUN. Goodness gracious, Mr. Thibaudier, what a comparison to use!

JU. Really, Madam, his lordship the count has perfect manners.

VISC. This is a young gentleman who is thriving well.

JU. Who could have believed that your ladyship had so big a child.

COUN. Alas! when he was born, I was so young that I still played with dolls.

JU. He is your brother and not your son.

COUN. Be very careful of his education, Mr. Bobinet.

BOB. I shall never, Madam, neglect anything towards the cultivation of the young plant which your goodness has entrusted to my care, and I will try to inculcate in him the seeds of all the virtues.

COUN. Mr. Bobinet, just make him recite some choice piece from what you teach him.

BOB. Will your lordship repeat your lesson of yesterday morning?

COUNT.

_Omne viro soli quod convenit esto virile,
Omne viri_....

COUN. Fie! Mr. Bobinet; what silly stuff is that you teach him?

BOB. It is Latin, Madam, and the first rule of Jean Despautere.

COUN. Truly, that Jean Despautere is an impudent fellow, and I beg you to teach my son more honest Latin than this is in future.

BOB. If you will allow him to say it all through, Madam, the gloss will explain the meaning.

COUN. There is no need; it explains itself sufficiently.

SCENE XX.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, THE VISCOUNT, MR THIBAUDIER, THE COUNT, MR. BOBINET, CRIQUET.

CRI. The actors send me to tell you that they are ready.

COUN. Let us take our seats. (_Showing_ JULIA.) Mr. Thibaudier, take this lady under your care.

CRIQUET _places all the chairs on one side of the stage. The_ COUNTESS, JULIA, _and the_ VISCOUNT _sit down, and_ MR. THIBAUDIER _sits down at the_ COUNTESS'S _feet_.

VISC. It is important for you to observe that this comedy was made only to unite the different pieces of music and dancing which compose the entertainment, and that....

COUN. Ah! never mind, let us see it; we have enough good sense to understand things.

VISC. Begin then at once, and see that no troublesome intruder comes to disturb our pleasure.

(_The violins begin an overture._)

SCENE XXI.--THE COUNTESS, JULIA, THE VISCOUNT, THE COUNT, MR. HARPIN, MR. THIBAUDIER, MR. BOBINET, CRIQUET.

HAR. By George! This is fine, and I rejoice to see what I see.

COUN. How! Mr. Receiver, what do you mean by this behaviour? Is it right to come and interrupt a comedy in that fashion?

HAR. By Jove, Madam, I am delighted at this adventure, and it shows me what I ought to think of you, and what I ought to believe of the assurances you gave me of the gift of your heart, and likewise of all

your oaths of fidelity.

COUN. But, really, one should not come thus in the middle of a play and disturb an actor who is speaking.

HAR. Hah! zounds, the real comedy here is the one you are playing, and I care little if I disturb you.

COUN. Really, you do not know what you are saying.

HAR. Yes, d--- it, I know perfectly well; and....

MR. BOBINET, *frightened*, takes up the_ COUNT, *and runs away*; CRIQUET *follows him*.

COUN. Fie, Sir! How wrong it is to swear in that fashion!

HAR. Ah! 'sdeath! If there is anything bad here, it is not my swearing, but your actions; and it would be much better for you to swear by heaven and hell than to do what you do with the viscount.

VISC. I don't know, Sir, of what you have to complain; and if....

HAR. (*to the_ VISCOUNT*). I have nothing to say to you, Sir; you do right to push your fortune; that is quite natural; I see nothing strange in it, and I beg your pardon for interrupting your play. But neither can you find it strange that I complain of her proceedings; and we both have a right to do what we are doing.

VISC. I have nothing to say to that, and I do not know what cause of complaint you can have against her ladyship the Countess of Escarbagnas.

COUN. When one suffers from jealousy, one does not give way to such outbursts, but one comes peaceably to complain to the person beloved.

HAR. I complain peaceably!

COUN. Yes; one does not come and shout on the stage what should be said in private.

HAR. I came purposely to complain on the stage. 'Sdeath! it is the place that suits me best, and I should be glad if this were a real theatre so that I might expose you more publicly.

COUN. Is there need for such an uproar because the viscount gives a play in my honour? Just look at Mr. Thibaudier, who loves me; he acts more respectfully than you do.

HAR. Mr. Thibaudier does as he pleases; I don't know how far Mr. Thibaudier has got with you, but Mr. Thibaudier is no example for me. I don't like to pay the piper for other people to dance.

COUN. But, Mr. Receiver, you don't consider what you are saying. Women of rank are not treated thus, and those who hear you might believe that something strange had taken place between us.

HAR. Confound it all, Madam; let us cast aside all this foolery.

COUN. What do you mean by foolery?

HAR. I mean that I do not think it strange that you should yield to the viscount's merit; you are not the first woman in the world who plays such a part, and who has a receiver of taxes of whom the love and purse are betrayed for the first new comer who takes her fancy. But do not think it extraordinary that I do not care to be the dupe of an infidelity so common to coquettes of the period, and that I come before good company to say that I break with you, and that I, the receiver of taxes, will no more be taxed on your account.

COUN. It is really wonderful how angry lovers have become the fashion! We see nothing else anywhere. Come, come, Mr. Receiver, cast aside your anger, and come and take a seat to see the play.

HAR. I sit down? s'death! not !! (_Showing_ MR. THIBAUDIER.) Look for a fool at your feet, my lady Countess; I give you up to my lord the viscount, and it is to him that I will send the letters I have received from you. My scene is ended, my part is played. Good night to all!

THI. We shall meet somewhere else, and I will show you that I am a man of the sword as well as of the pen.

HAR. Right, my good Mr. Thibaudier. (_Exit_.)

COUN. Such insolence confounds me!

VISC. The jealous, Madam, are like those who lose their cause; they have leave to say anything. Let us listen to the play now.

SCENE XXII.--THE COUNTESS, THE VISCOUNT, JULIA, MR. THIBAUDIER, JEANNOT.

JEAN. (_to the_ VISCOUNT). Sir, here is a note which I have been asked to give to you immediately.

VISC. (_reads_). "As you may have some measures to take, I send you notice at once that the quarrel between your family and that of Julia's has just been settled, and that the condition of this agreement is your marriage with Julia. Good night!" (_To_ JULIA) Truly, Madam, our part is also played.

The VISCOUNT, _the_ COUNTESS, _and_ MR. THIBAUDIER, _all rise_.

JU. Ah! Cleante, what happiness is this! Our love could scarcely hope for such a happy end.

COUN. What is it you mean?

VISC. It means, Madam, that I marry Julia; and if you will believe me, in order to make the play complete at all points, you will marry Mr. Thibaudier, and give Andree to his footman, whom he will make his valet-de-chambre.

COUN. What! you deceive thus a person of my rank!

VISC. No offence to you, Madam, but plays require such things.

COUN. Yes, Mr. Thibaudier, I will marry you to vex everybody.

THI. You do me too much honour, Madam.

VISC. Allow us, Madam, in spite of our vexation, to see the end of the play.

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