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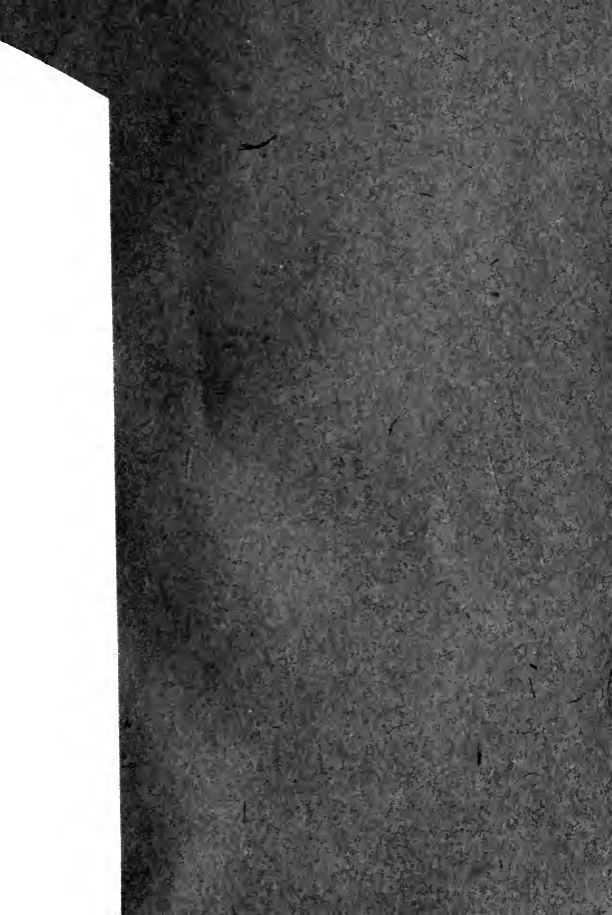
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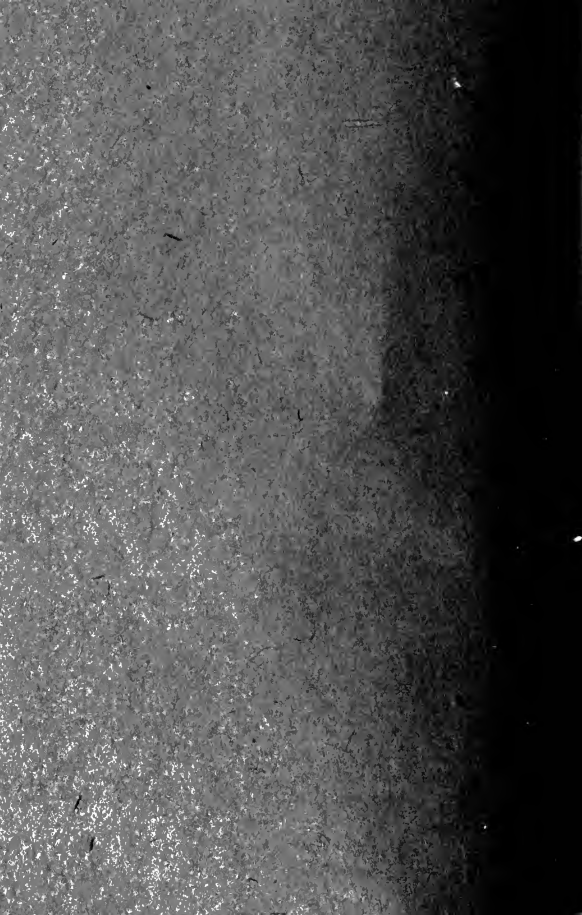


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LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 134
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

The Misanthrope

MOLIERE

HALDEMAN-JULIUS COMPANY
GIRARD, KANSAS



TEN CENT POCKET SERIES NO. 134

Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

The Misanthrope

Comedy in Five Acts

Moliere, Jean Baptiste
Poquelin, 1622-1673.

HALDEMAN-JULIUS COMPANY
GIRARD, KANSAS

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PERSONAGES

Alceste, Lover of Celimene.

Philinte, Friend of Alceste.

Oronte, Lover of Celimene.

Celimene, a young widow.

Eliante, Cousin of Celimene.

Arsinoe, friend of Celimene.

Acaste

Clitrandre } Marquises.

Basque, footman to Celimene.

Soldier, of the Marshals' Guard.

Dubois, valet to Alceste.

THE SCENE IS IN PARIS AT THE HOUSE OF CELIMENE

THE MISANTHROPE

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Philinte. What is the matter? What troubles you, Alceste?

Alceste (seated). Leave me, I beg of you.

Philinte. But still, tell me, what whim—

Alceste. Leave me, I say; take yourself out of sight.

Philinte. But at least you might listen to a man without being angry.

Alceste. I choose to be angry, and I do not choose to listen.

Philinte. I cannot understand you when your temper is hot; and though we are friends, I—

Alceste. Friends! I your friend? Strike my name off your list. Till now, I have professed to be your friend; but after what I have just seen of you, I tell you bluntly I am no longer. I will hold no place in a corrupted heart.

Philinte. Then, am I guilty in your eyes, Alceste?

Alceste. You ought to die of shame; such conduct cannot be excused; all men of honor must feel humiliated by it. I see you overwhelming a stranger with attentions; testifying the utmost ardor for him; making protestations, offers of service, vows; and when I ask you afterward who he is, you can hardly tell me the man's name! Your ardor for him sinks the moment

that you leave him, and you inform me he is nothing to you. Good God! it is a shameful thing, base, infamous, thus to degrade your soul by treachery; if I, through some misfortune, had done as much I would go hang myself in sheer remorse.

Philinte. I cannot see, for my part, that mine's a hanging case; so I make bold to appeal against your sentence and beg you not to hang me, if it please you.

Alceste. Jesting is most unseemly.

Philinte. Seriously, then, what would you have me do?

Alceste. I would have you be sincere, and, as a man of honor, say no word that is not from your heart.

Philinte. But when a man comes up to you and salutes you joyfully, surely you must pay him in the self-same coin, make some response to his civilities, return him offer for offer and vow for vow.

Alceste. No,—I cannot endure that abject custom which the majority of your worldly friends affect. I hate nothing so much as the bowing and scraping of those great makers of protestations, those affable givers of trumpery kisses, those obliging praters of empty words, who strive to outdo each other with civilities, and treat an honest man and a scoundrel with the same air and manner. What advantage is it to you if a man courts you, swears friendship, faith, zeal, honor, tenderness, makes you some fulsome compliment, and then turns round to the first rascal whom he meets, and does the same? No, no, a well-conditioned soul wants no esteem so prostituted; the finest hospitalities are valueless when we find ourselves rated with the crowd. Esteem is based on pref-

erence; to esteem the whole world alike is to feel no esteem for any one. And because you addict yourself to these vices of the time, *morbleu!* you are not of my kind. I refuse the vast complaisance of a heart that sees no shades of merit; I choose that mine shall be distinguished, and—to cut the matter short—the friend of the whole human race is not to my liking.

Philinte. But so long as we live in social life, we must pay the outward civilities that custom demands.

Alceste. No, I tell you, no; we ought to chastise, pitilessly, this shameful interchange of make-believe friendship. I want a man to be a man, and let the bottom of his heart be seen in all he says, and in all he does. Let it be himself who speaks,—not masking his real feelings behind false compliments.

Philinte. There are many situations in which plain frankness would become ridiculous, and is not permissible; and sometimes—if it please your lofty honor—it may be well to hide what is in our hearts. Would it be fitting, would it be decent to tell all men what we think of them? And if there be any one whom we dislike or think unpleasant ought we to let him know it?

Alceste. Yes. *Philinte.* What! would you tell old Emilie that 't is unbecoming at her age to play the pretty girl; or that the paint she wears shocks every one?

Alceste. Undoubtedly. *Philinte.* Would you tell Dorilas that he is tiresome; that there is not an ear at court he does not weary with tales of his own bravery and the glory of his race?

Alceste. I should. *Philinte.* You are joking.

Alceste. I am not joking. In future I will spare none. My eyes are too offended. Court and society both show me nought but things that stir my bile. When I see men living together as they do a black spleen seizes me, a bitter grief. Everywhere I find base flattery, injustice, self-interest, treachery, deceit. I cannot bear it longer; I am enraged; and my intention is to tell the truth henceforth, to all the human race.

Philinte. Your philosophic wrath is somewhat savage; I laugh at that black spleen I see has gripped you. You and I are like the brothers in the "School for Husbands," brought up as one, and yet—

Alceste. Good God! give up those dull comparisons.

Philinte. Give up yourself this churlish virulence. Your teachings cannot change the world. Since frankness charms you, I will tell you bluntly this disease of yours is laughed at everywhere you go. Such wrath against the ways of the world makes you ridiculous in the eyes of many."

Alceste. So much the better; good heavens! so much the better; that is what I want; to me 't is the best of signs and a great satisfaction. Men have become so odious to me that I'd be grieved indeed to be well thought of by them.

Philinte. Then you attribute nought but evil to human nature?

Alceste. I do; I hate it with a dreadful hatred.

Philinte. All poor mortals, then, without exception, are included in this deep aversion? Surely there may be, in our present age—

Alceste. No, it is universal; I hate all men: some because they are wicked and evil-doers;

others because they fawn upon the wicked, and dare not show that vigorous hatred which virtuous souls should feel to vice. From such compliance comes immunity for the bare-faced villain whom I now am suing. Behind his mask the knave is seen, wherever he is known, for what he is; the rolling of his eye, his bated voice, impose on none but those who do not live here. All others know about the sneaking fellow, fit only to be shunned, has by the foulest actions foisted himself upon society, where his career, by their connivance clothed in splendor, makes merit groan and virtue blush. No cries of "shame" can make his miserable honor hear them. Call him a knave, a scoundrel, a damned villain, all the world agrees, and no man contradicts you; *but*—he is welcomed everywhere; wherever he may worm himself he's greeted; men smile upon him; and if there's a canvass to be made, a place to be intrigued for, you will see him get the better of honest men. Great God! it is to me a mortal wound to see how vice is thus condoned and trafficked with. At times the impulse seizes me to flee to a desert and renounce my kind.

Philinte. Good heavens! why take the customs of our time so hard; why be so little merciful to human nature? Examine it less sternly, and see its failures with some gentleness. In social life we need a pliant virtue; severe integrity is often blamable; sound reason shuns extremes, and teaches wisdom with sobriety. The rigid virtue of the olden time jars with our age and with our modern customs: We must yield somewhat to our time, and not reluctantly. It is a folly, second to no other, to meddle with the world and try to

mend it. I see, as you do, fifty things a day which might be better, or take other courses. At every step I'm tempted to break forth, like you, but no one sees me do it. I take men gently just for what they are; I've trained my soul to tolerate what they do. At court and in society I think my phlegm, Alceste, is, to the full, as philosophic as your bile.

Alceste. But that phlegm, Philinte, which reasons well, is it incapable of indignation? Suppose, perchance, a friend betrayed you, or frauds were planned to steal your property, or wicked rumors spread to injure you,—could you endure all that and not be angry?

Philinte. Yes. I regard those evils, that your soul resents, as vices consequent to human nature; my soul is not more shocked by seeing men unjust, dishonest, selfish, than by the sight of vultures hungering after carnage, or thieving monkeys or infuriate wolves.

Alceste. I'll see myself betrayed, hacked into pieces, robbed, before I'll— Good God! why talk? such reasoning is sheer sophistry.

Philinte. Faith! I advise you to keep silence; don't rage against your kind so much, and give more care to the lawsuit which you have upon your hands.

Alceste. I shall give none; that I'm determined on.

Philinte. Then who do you expect will plead your case?

Alceste. Plead it? why, reason, my good right, and equity.

Philinte. Do you mean you will not go to see a single judge?

Alceste. Not one. My cause is neither doubtful nor unjust.

Philinte. Agreed; but underhand intrigues are most disastrous, and—

Alceste. No; I'm resolved to take no steps. Either I am wrong, or I am right.

Philinte. Don't trust to that.

Alceste. I shall not stir a finger.

Philinte. Your enemy is strong, and may, by making a cabal, bear off—

Alceste. I care nought for that.

Philinte. Then you are wrong.

Alceste. So be it. I wish to see him win the case.

Philinte. But—

Alceste. I shall have pleasure if I lose my suit.

Philinte. But surely—

Alceste. I shall see in court if men will have the effrontery—will be wicked, scoundrelly, perverse enough—to do me injustice openly before the world.

Philinte. Oh, what a man!

Alceste. I would gladly lose my cause, did it cost me half my fortune, to prove that fact.

Philinte. The world would laugh at you in bitter earnest if it could hear you talk in this way.

Alceste. So much the worse for him who laughs.

Philinte. But this integrity you ask from every one, this honest and straightforward dealing in which you hug yourself, do you find it here in her you love? It does surprise me that having quarrelled with the human race so bitterly, you have been caught, in spite of much you might indeed think odious, but that which charms the eye. But what surprises me still more, is the strange choice to which your heart is pledged. Eliante, sincere and truthful, has

a liking for you; Arsinoe, the prude, looks softly at you with a melting eye; and yet your soul rejects their love and makes itself a toy for Selimene, whose coquetry and treacherous wit symbol the morals of the present day. How comes it that, hating as you do our social foibles, you can endure the ways of that fair lady? Does all you hate cease to be evil in so sweet a form? or—do you choose excuse it?

Alceste. No; the love I feel for that young widow in no way blinds me to her great defects. I am, in spite of the passion she inspires in me, the first to see them and the first to blame. But with it all, in spite, too, of my will, she has—I own my weakness—the art of pleasing me. In vain I see her faults; in vain I blame her; in spite of all, she makes me love her. Her grace, her charm, are stronger than all else. Doubtless, my love will purge her soul of worldly vices in the course of time.

Philinte. If you do that you will have done great things. Then you think she loves you?

Alceste. Yes, by heaven! I could not love her did she not love me.

Philinte. But if her love for you is so apparent why do you fret yourself about your rivals?

Alceste. Because a heart which deeply loves needs that the object of that love be all its own; and I have come here now to tell her, as to that, all that my passion urges me to say.

Philinte. For my part, if 't were granted me to form a wish, her cousin Eliante would have my longings. Eliante's heart, which cares for yours, is steadfast and sincere; had your choice fallen there it would have been in keeping with your needs.

Alceste. True; my reason daily tells me so; but 't is not reason that rules love.

Philinte. I greatly fear your passion and your hopes may—

SCENE II.

ORONTE, PHILINTE, ALCESTE.

Oronte, to Alceste. They told me below that Celimene and Eliante had gone out shopping; but as they also said that you were here, I have come up to tell you from an honest heart how great an admiration I've conceived for you, and that I long have had an ardent wish to be among your friends. Yes, my heart revels in doing justice to great merit; and I eagerly desire some bond of friendship to unite us. A warm friend of my quality is not, I think, to be rejected. [*During Oronte's harangue Alceste is dreamy and seems not to notice he is being spoken to. He does not come out of his reverie till Oronte says:*] It is to you, if you please, that my words are addressed.

Alceste. To me, monsieur?

Oronte. To you. Do you find them displeasing?

Alceste. Not at all. But my surprise is great, for I did not expect the honor I receive.

Oronte. You need feel no surprise at the esteem in which I hold you, since that of the whole universe is yours.

Alceste. Monsieur—

Oronte. The State has no reward that is not far beneath the dazzling merit all men see in you.

Alceste. Monsieur—

Oronte. Yes; for my part, I hold you preferable to all I see that is most eminent.

Alceste. Monsieur—

Oronte. May the heavens crush me if my words are false. To prove my feelings, suffer me to embrace you with an open heart—asking, as I do so, a place in your regard. Give me your hand, if it please you. You promise me, do you not, your friendship?

Alceste. Monsieur—

Oronte. What! you refuse?

Alceste. Monsieur, the honor you propose to me is great. But friendship asks more mystery; and it is, assuredly, a profanation of that name to seek to use it upon all occasions. Such union is born of knowledge and of choice; we should know each other better before we bind ourselves; for each might have such dispositions that both would soon repent of our rash bargain.

Oronte. Ah! there indeed you speak with judgment, and my esteem for you is all the greater. Let us leave time to knot these gentle bonds. Meantime, I place myself at your disposal. If you have any overtures to make at court, command me; for it is known I have some favor with the king; he listens to me; and, upon my word, in every way he treats me most considerately. In short, I am yours, to use as you may wish; and, as your mind is known to be so brilliant, I have come—in order to begin the tie between us—to read to you a sonnet I have lately written, and ask you if 't were well to offer it to the public.

Alceste. Monsieur, I am most unfit to settle such a question. I beg you to excuse me.

Oronte. Excuse you! why?

Alceste. I have the defect of being more sincere than persons wish.

Oronte. But that is what I want. I should have reason to complain if, trusting to your

sincerity to speak without disguise, you should deceive me.

Alceste. If that is how you take it, monsieur, I am willing.

Oronte. Sonnet— It is a sonnet, monsieur. *To Hope*—in fact, to a lady who has granted some hope to my passion. *To Hope*— The lines are not grand, pompous poesy, but simple verses, tender, sweet and languishing.

Alceste. We shall see, monsieur.

Oronte. To Hope— I know not whether the style will seem to you sufficiently clear and easy, and whether my choice of words will satisfy you.

Alceste. We shall see, monsieur.

Oronte. I ought, perhaps, to tell you that I was only a quarter of an hour in writing them.

Alceste. Go on, monsieur; the time has nothing to do with it.

Oronte, reading.

'T is true that hope doth comfort bring,
And it rocks a time our sorrow;
But, Phillis, 't is a sadder thing
If we leave not on the morrow.

Philinte. I am charmed already with the little poem.

Alceste (low to Philinte). What! have you the face to call that fine?

Oronte, reading.

Your complaisance methinks is lost;
You ought to keep your favors low,
And not yourself put to such cost,
If hope is all you deign bestow.

Philinte. Ah! with what gallantry that phrase is turned.

Alceste (low to Philinte). Good heavens! vile flatterer, you are praising nonsense.

Oronte, reading.

If hope eternally delayed,
 Quenches my ardor thus betrayed,
 Death can alone my succor be.

Your smiles can nothing then repair,
 Fair Phillis, it is all despair
 When we must hope eternally.

Philinte. The cadence of that last line is charming, amorous, admirable.

Alceste (*aside*). Damn his cadence! The devil! 't is poisonous; I would the words might choke him.

Philinte. I have never heard verses better turned.

Alceste (*aside*). Good God!

Oronte (*to Philinte*). You flatter me; perhaps you think—

Philinte. I never flatter.

Alceste (*aside*). Ah, traitor! what are you doing now?

Oronte (*to Alceste*). But you? Remember the terms of our treaty; speak to me, I entreat you in all sincerity.

Alceste. Monsieur, this matter is always delicate. We like to be flattered on our wit and wisdom. I said one day to a man whose name I will not mention, on hearing certain verses he had written, that it behooved a gallant man to restrain the lust of scribbling which seizes on us all, and put a curb upon his passion for notoriety through such amusements; and I also told him that by his eagerness to show his work to others he laid himself open to the jeers of malice.

Oronte. Do you mean by that to tell me I am wrong in wishing—

Alceste. I do not say so. I warned him that cold criticism crushed; that for this weak-

ness men were much decried; that they might have a hundred noble qualities, but the world would judge them only by their foibles.

Oronte. You think, that, that my sonnet is amiss?

Alceste. I do not say so. I showed him, to stop his writing, how, in our day, this lust of scribbling has spoiled most worthy men.

Oronte. Do I write badly, and resemble them?

Alceste. I do not say so. Finally I said: "What pressing need have you to make these rhymes? What devil drives you into print? If the issue of a wretched book is ever pardonable it is when some poor luckless fellow has written it for bread. Believe me, resist your temptations; deprive the public of your labors. Don't sacrifice—no matter who may urge it—the name you bear at court as a most worthy man to take from grasping printers the repute of a ridiculous and miserable author." That is what I endeavored to make him understand.

Oronte. This is all very well, and I think I understand you. But may I not know what there is in my sonnet—

Alceste. Frankly, it is good for nothing but to put in the fire. You have modelled yourself on the worst examples. None of your expressions are natural. "Rocks a time"—what is that? "We leave not on the morrow"—who leave? "And not yourself put to such test"—what a phrase! And what may this mean: "Phyllis, it is all despair when we must hope eternally?" This figurative style, of which our present writers are so proud, is out of keeping with sincerity and sound writing. 'Tis a mere trick of words, pure affectation. That is not the way in which nature speaks. The shocking

taste of the present century alarms me; coarse as our fathers were, their taste was better. As for me, I care far less for the finest things of the day than for this old song I'll now repeat to you:—

“If the king had given to me
 His great town, his *belle Paris*,
 Would I but leave my sweet, my dear,
 My dear I love so well;
 I should say to the King Henri,
 Take back, take back your *belle Paris*,
 I love my love,
 O gay!
 I love my love too well.”

The rhyme is not rich, and the style is old-fashioned; but do you not see how much better it is than all that affectation at which good sense groans? That's what the heart says when it really loves [*To Philinte, who is laughing.*] Yes, you may scoff; but in spite of your *beaux esprits*, I think more of that song than of all the flowery pomposity and false brilliancy which they cry up.

Orcnte. For my part, I insist that my verses are good.

Alceste. You have your reasons for thinking so, and you must allow me to have my reasons, which decline to submit to yours.

Orcnte. 'Tis sufficient for me to know that others think well of them.

Alceste. Others have the art of feigning; I have not.

Orcnte. Did nature allot you a monopoly of brains?

Alceste. Should I have more if I praised your verses?

Orcnte. I can do very well without your approval.

Alceste. You must, if you please, do without it.

Oronte. I would like to see you compose, in your style, a sonnet on that subject.

Alceste. I might, by ill luck, make sonnets as bad; but I should take good care that no one ever saw them.

Oronte. You speak very curtly; and all this assumption——

Alceste. Go, seek elsewhere the incense that you want.

Oronte. Be pleased, my little monsieur, to lower your tone.

Alceste. Faith! my grand monsieur, I speak as I choose.

Philinte (*placing himself between them*). Messieurs, hey! messieurs; this is going too far. Let the matter drop, I beg of you.

Oronte. Yes, I am wrong, I own it, and I leave the house. I am your valet, monsieur, and with all my heart.

Alceste. And I your humble servant.

ACT II.

SCENE II.

ALCESTE, CELIMENE.

Alceste. Madame, will you allow me to speak frankly? I am not contented with your ways of action; they stir such bitterness within my breast I feel 't were better we should break apart. Yes, to speak otherwise would be deceiving you. Sooner or later, inevitably, the break must come. Were I to pledge you to the contrary a thousand times, I should be unable to keep my promise.

Celimene. Is it to quarrel with me that you have wished to bring me home?

Alceste. Quarrel, no. But your disposition is, madame, to give to each new-comer access to your soul; you allow too many lovers to beset you, and my heart cannot adapt itself to that.

Celimene. Then, do you hold me guilty because men love me? How can I help it if they think me lovable? And when they take such pleasant pains to see me, am I to take a stick and drive them forth?

Alceste. No, it is not a stick you need, madame, but a heart less facile and less tender to their wishes. I know your charms attend you wheresoe'er you go; but your welcome holds in bonds the admirers whom your eyes attract; its sweetness, offered to all who pay you homage, completes the work your charms began. The smiling hope you grant them fastens their assiduities upon you; but if you made your kindness less inclusive this mob of lovers would be put to flight. Tell me, at least, why Clitandre has the luck to please you? On what foundation of worth or splendid virtue do you base the regard with which you honor him? Is it the inordinate length of his little-finger nail that wins him the esteem you are seen to give him? Have you succumbed, with all the fashionable world, to the dazzling merit of that blond periwig? Are the fine ruffles at his knees the reasons that you like him? those knots of ribbon, have they charmed you? Is it the allurements of his mighty breeches which wins your soul to making him your slave? Or his manner of laughing, his falsetto voice, have they discovered the secret power of touching you?

Celimene. How unjustly you take umbrage at Clitandre! You know the reason why I treat him kindly; he has promised to interest all his friends in this lawsuit I have upon my hands.

Alceste. Lose your suit bravely, madame, and curry no favor with a rival I dislike.

Celimene. But you are growing jealous of the universe!

Alceste. Because you welcome the whole universe too well.

Celimene. That very thing should soothe your nettled soul; my favors, as you see, are shed on all; if one alone received them you would have far more cause to take offence.

Alceste. But I whom you reproach for too much jealousy, what favors have I more than they, if I may ask?

Celimene. The happiness of knowing you are loved.

Alceste. How can my tortured heart believe it?

Celimene. I think that having taken pains to tell you so, such an admission ought to satisfy you.

Alceste. But what assurance have I that you are not, even now, saying the same to others?

Celimene. Certainly, for a lover, your gallant speeches are too pretty; you treat me with such graceful courtesy! Well, to remove that anxious question from your mind, I here unsay all that I said; make yourself easy; nothing can now deceive you but yourself.

Alceste. Good God! why must I love you? If I could snatch my heart out of your hands I would bless heaven for such rare luck! I do not deny that I have striven with all my strength to tear this terrible attachment from

my soul; but every effort fails; it must be for my sins I love you so!

Celimene. Your passion for me is indeed unequalled!

Alceste. Yes, in that I can defy the world. My love is not to be conceived of; and no one, madame, has ever loved as I do.

Celimene. Your method of doing so is truly novel; it seems you love a woman that you may quarrel with her; your ardor blazes forth in angry words; and sure no love was ever yet so scolding.

Alceste. It rests with you to make that anger pass. For God's sake, madame, let us cut short these bickerings, speak heart to heart and put a stop—

SCENE II.

CELIMENE, ALCESTE, BASQUE.

Celimene. What is it?

Basque. Acaste is here.

Celimene. Well, show him up.

SCENE III.

CELIMENE, ALCESTE.

Alceste. What! am I never to have you to myself? Why are you so ready to receive the world? Can you not endure for a single moment of your day to deny yourself to visitors?

Celimene. Do you wish him to quarrel with me?

Alceste. You show him a deference that I do not like.

Celimene. He is a man who would never forgive me if he saw that I considered him intrusive.

Alceste. Is that a reason for disturbing yourself?

Celimene. Heavens, yes! good-will is of value among our fellows. He belongs to a set who, I scarcely know why, have acquired at court a right to be heard. They manage to obtain an entrance everywhere; and though, 't is true, they may not serve us, they are able to do us a vast deal of harm. Therefore, no matter what support one has elsewhere, we ought never to quarrel with such babbling persons.

Alceste. In short, whatever happens and whoever comes, you find good reasons to see all the world; and these precautions about your lawsuit——

SCENE IV.

ALCESTE, CELIMENE, BASQUE.

Basque. Clitandre is also here, madame.

Alceste. Precisely! (*Moves as if to go.*)

Celimene. Where are you going?

Alceste. To leave you.

Celimene. Very good, go; leave the house; you may do as you choose.

SCENE V.

ELIANTE, PHILINTE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE, CELIMENE,
BASQUE.

Eliante to Celimene. The two marquises are coming up. Has anyone announced them?

Celimene. Yes. (*To Basque*) Place chairs for all. (*To Alceste*) What! you did not go?

Alceste. No; for I wish, madame, to make you speak your mind, either for them or else for me.

Celimene. Hush, be silent.

Alceste. Today you shall explain yourself.

Celimene. You have lost your senses.

Alceste. Not at all. You shall declare yourself—

Clitandre. Ah! madame, I am just from the Louvre, where Cleonte, at the levee, was supremely absurd. Has he no friend who would with charitable advice enlighten him as to his manners?

Celimene. He is indeed a bungler in society; he makes himself conspicuous wherever he may be; and when one sees him after a slight interval he seems to be more ridiculous than ever.

Acaste. Talk of ridiculous people! i' faith, I've just been undergoing one of the most tiresome,—Damon, the moralizer, who, if you'll believe me, kept me one whole hour out of my chair, standing in the hot sun.

Celimene. Yes he 's a wonderful talker, who has the art of telling you nothing in a great harangue. There 's never any point to what he says; 't is only noise to which we listen.

Eliante, to Philinte. This beginning is cheerful; the conversation is starting at good speed against our neighbors.

Clitandre. But there 's Timante, madame; he is rather a good fellow.

Celimene. Ah! he 's a man of mystery from head to foot; he flings you, as he passes, a haggard glance, because, without a thing to do, he is always busy. His speeches are too full of flourishes; he pesters one to death by dint of mannerism. He always has some secret to whisper in one's ear, breaking up a conversation,—and the secret is invariably nothing. Out of the mérest trifle he makes a mystery; and even his good-byes, he whispers them.

Acaste. And Geralde, madame?

Celimene. Oh! that wearisome chatterer! when will he cease to play the *grand seigneur*? He mingles only with the shining lights, and quotes his dukes, his princes and princesses. The quality infatuates him; and all his talk is now of horses, equipages, dogs. He calls the personages of highest rank by their first names; the plain word "monsieur" is forgotten by him.

Clitandre. They say he is on the closest terms with the Bleise.

Celimene. That poor stupid woman! oh, what dry intercourse!—I suffer martyrdom when she comes to see me; I perspire with the effort to find something to say; the obtuseness of her expression kills the words on my lips. In vain I assault her stupid silence with all the common-places I can call to my assistance,—fine weather. rain, heat, cold. But those are topics that are soon exhausted, and then her visit, always intolerable, drags its fearful length along. In vain I look to see what time it is; I yawn a score of times; she does not budge more than a log of wood.

Acaste. What do you think ofAdraste?

Celimene. Ah! what excessive pride! He is a man puffed up with admiration of himself. His sense of his deserts is never satisfied at court, and so he rails against the court, and proceedings daily. There's never an office, post, or privilege given but what he thinks he's treated with injustice.

Clitandre. But that young Cleon, at whose house all our best people now are visiting; what do you say of him?

Celimene. Why, that he makes his cook his merit, and that the world visits his dinners and not him.

Eliante. But he takes care that all the choicest things are served there.

Celimene. Yes; but I wish he would not serve himself; his silly person is a horrid dish which spoils, to my taste, all the feasts he gives.

Philinte. The world at any rate thinks highly of his uncle, Damis; what do you say of him, madame?

Celimene. He is a friend of mine.

Philinte. I think him an honest man, and he looks a wise one.

Celimene. Yes, but he pretends to too much mind; it irritates me. He is always straining; in what he says you see him in travail to produce *bons mots*. Since he took it into his head to be so clever, nothing pleases his taste, he is too fastidious. He sees defects in everything that's written; he thinks a wit should never praise; he counts it learned to find fault; fools only can admire his laugh. By approving nothing in the works of the day, he fancies he exalts himself above his fellows. Even in conversation he finds something to reprove; the topics are so low he will not condescend to them. He stands, arms folded, and, from the pinnacle of his mind, looks down in pity upon what we say.

Acaste. God bless me! that's his veritable portrait.

Clitandre, to Celimene. For painting people to the life, you are incomparable.

Alceste. On, on, set on each other, my good friends at court! Spare none, let each man have his turn. And yet, if one of them appears in sight you haste to meet him, give him your hand, offer him flattering kisses, and swear by all the oaths to be his servant.

Clitandre. Why find fault with us? If what was said displeases you, address your reproaches to madame.

Alceste. No, by heaven! it is to you I make them; your compliant laughter incites her wit to these ill-natured speeches. Her satire feeds upon the wicked incense of your flattery; and if she did not see herself applauded her heart would be less prone to ridicule. 'Tis thus that flatterers are guilty of the vices which corrupt society.

Philinte. But why do you take such interest in the persons thus condemned, since you yourself would blame in them the selfsame faults.

Celimene. Is it not monsieur's nature to contradict? Why expect him to agree with the general voice, or to refrain from exhibiting, wherever he may be, the cavilling spirit he received from heaven? The opinion of others is never agreeable to him. He sets up his own, believing he would be thought a common man if it were seen to agree with that of the world. The pleasure of contradicting has such charms for his soul that he sometimes, and not seldom, takes arms against himself, and wages war upon his own real feelings when he hears them uttered by the lips of others.

Alceste. The laugh is on your side, madame, and there's nothing to be said. You can wing your shafts of satire on me as you please.

Philinte. But is it not true that your mind antagonizes whatever is said, and is unable, from a bitterness you avow yourself, to endure that others should either blame or praise?

Alceste. Yes; for the reason that men are never right. My bitterness is just; I find them, wherever they may be, offensive flatterers or rash censors.

Celimene. But——

Alceste. No, madame, no; if I die for it, I must say that you find pleasure in things I cannot bear; and these friends here do wrong to foster in your soul this great indulgence of defects that injure it.

Clitandre. For myself I shall say nothing; but as for madame, I must openly declare that I have hitherto believed her faultless.

Acaste. I see the graces and the attractions that heaven has granted her; but her defects have never, I must say, struck my eye.

Alceste. They all strike mine; and far from overlooking them, I take pains, as she well knows, to bring them to her knowledge. The more we love our friends, the less we flatter them; it is by excusing nothing that pure love shows itself. For my part, I would banish those unworthy lovers who slavishly submit to all my sentiments, and by their weak compliance swing incense to my follies.

Celimene. In short, if hearts should look at things in your way, they must, in order to love truly, renounce all sweetness, and find the crown of perfect love in heaping insults on the object of it.

Eliante. Love, as a rule, is little ruled by laws. All lovers, as we know, boast of their choice. True passion does not see that which is blamable; the one beloved is always lovable. Defects love thinks perfections, and gives them pleasant names. The pallid one is comparable to the jasmine in her whiteness; the swarthy skin becomes a rich brunette; thinness gives freedom of motion and a slender waist; the portly dame is full of majesty; she who neglects her person and takes no pains to charm is called a careless beauty; the giantess becomes a goddess; the dwarf, an epitome of all heaven's marvels; the haughty spirit deserves a crown;

the tricky mind has wit; the fool is kind; the chatterer, good-humored; the silent one maintains her virtuous modesty. 'Tis thus a lover whose passion is supreme loves even the defects of her he worships.

Alceste. And I maintain, yes I——

Celimene. Come, let us end this talk, and take a turn or two about the gallery. What! are you going, gentlemen?

Clitandre and Acaste. Oh, no madame.

Alceste. The fear of their departure weighs on your soul. Gentlemen, leave when you please; but I warn you, I shall not go till you are gone.

Acaste. Unless my presence importunes madame, I can stay here all day, for nothing calls me hence.

Clitandre. As for me, provided I return for the king's *coucher*, I have no other matters to attend to.

Celimene, to Alceste. You are joking, I am sure.

Alceste. No, not in any sense. We shall see now if it is I of whom you are anxious to be rid.

SCENE VI.

ALCESTE, CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE,
PHILINTE, BASQUE.

Basque to Alceste. Monsieur, a man is below who wishes to see you, he says, on business which cannot be delayed.

Alceste. Tell him I know of no such urgent business.

Basque. He wears a jacket with great pleated basques, and gold upon it.

Celimene, to Alceste. Go, see who it is; or else, have him shown up.

SCENE VII.

ALCESTE, CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE,
PHILINTE, A SOLDIER OF THE MARSHALS' GUARD.

Alceste, advancing to meet him. Come in, monsieur. What do you want with me?

Soldier. Monsieur, I have two words to say to you.

Alceste. You can speak out; I am prepared to hear you.

Soldier. The Marshals, whom I serve, monsieur, bid you come to them at once.¹

Alceste. Me? bid me, monsieur?

Soldier. Yes, you.

Alceste. Buy why?

Philinte, to Alceste. Because of that ridiculous affair between yourself and Oronte.

Celimene, to Philinte. What affair?

Philinte. Oronte and he had words about some verses he would not admire; and the Marshals wish to nip the matter in the bud.

Alceste. I will not have the base compliance—

Philinte. But you must obey the order; come, let us go.

Alceste. What sort of terms do they desire to make between us? Will the Marshals order me to think the verses that caused our quarrel good? I shall not unsay what I have said,—I think them bad.

Philinte. But a gentler tone——

Alceste. I shall not yield one inch; the lines are execrable.

¹The court of the Marshals of France took cognizance of quarrels and affairs of honor among gentlemen.

Celimene. Come, come, make haste and go where you are summoned.

Alceste. I go, madame; but I shall soon return to settle, in this room, the matter we have been discussing.

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

CLITANDRE, ACASTE.

Clitandre. I observe, my dear marquis, that your soul is contented; all things make you cheerful, and nothing frets. Now, tell me in good faith, do you really believe, without self-deception, that you have any sound reason for being so happy?

Acaste. *Parbleu!* I don't see, when I look myself over, any ground whatever for discontent. I have property, I am young, I belong to a house which has certain good reasons to call itself noble; and I think, through the rank to which my blood entitles me, there are very few stations in life that I cannot fill. As to courage, of which, of course, we ought to think first, I know, without vanity, that I am not lacking there; I have been seen by the world to carry on an affair in a sufficiently vigorous and dashing manner. As for wit, there's no question but what I have that, and with it enough good taste to judge without study, and to talk about everything. At the theatre, of which I am truly an idolator, I can wear a wise face, decide the fortunes of a play, and lead the applause at all the fine speeches which merit hurrahs. I'm sufficiently active; I've a good air and good looks, above all fine teeth, and my figure is slim. As to my style of dressing, I think, without vanity.

that any one would be foolish to rival me there. My position in the world is as good as can be; the fair sex adore me; I stand well with the king; and, therefore, my dear marquis, I see, on all sides, every reason to be satisfied with myself.

Clitandre. Yet. But finding everywhere so many easy conquests, why do you persist in offering useless homage here?

Acaste. Useless? *Parbleu!* I'm not of a kind nor of a temper to stand cold treatment from any beauty. 'Tis only common minds and ill-bred persons who burn persistently for frigid dames, or languish at their feet, endure their rigor, seek help from tears and sighs, and strive, by the painstaking of a long-drawn suit, to win the smiles their lack of merit forfeits. Men of my presence, marquis, are not made to love on credit and pay all the costs. However choice may be the lady's favors, I think, thank God, my value equals hers; and to do honor to a heart like mine is sure no reason it should cost her nothing. To put the thing on equitable grounds, she must at least meet my advance half-way.

Clitandre. So you think, marquis, you stand well with Celimene?

Acaste. Marquis, I have some ground to think so.

Clitandre. Take my advice; get rid of that idea; it is an error. You flatter yourself, my friend, you blind yourself—

Acaste. Quite true; I flatter and I blind myself.

Clitandre. Why call your happiness so perfect, then?

Acaste. I flatter myself.

Clitandre. On what do you found your hopes?

Acaste. I blind myself.

Clitandre. Then you have proofs to give you certainty?

Acaste. I tell you, I deceive myself.

Clitandre. Can it be that Celimene has made you secret promises?

Acaste. No, she rebuffs me.

Clitandre. Oh! cease this jesting, and let me know what hopes you really have.

Acaste. I am the luckless, you the lucky one. She has so deep an aversion to me that one of these days I'll surely hang myself.

Clitandre. *Ah ca!* marquis, are you willing to settle our fates by agreeing that, if either of us can show some certain sign of having won her heart, the other shall make way for the fortunate lover and relieve him of a rival?

Acaste. *Parbleu!* I like that sort of talk, and will, with all my heart, agree to it. But hush, here she comes.

SCENE II.

CELIMENE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE.

Celimene. What! still here?

Clitandre. Love stayed our feet.

Celimene. I have just heard a carriage entering the courtyard. Do you know whose it is?

Clitandre. No.

SCENE III.

CELIMENE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE.

Basque. Arsinoe, madame, is coming up to see you.

Celimene. What can that woman want with me?

Basque. Eliante is below, and is talking with her.

Celimene. Something is in her mind, or why should she come here?

Acaste. She is thought to be a most consummate prude, and in the ardor of her zeal—

Climene. Yes, yes, pure cant! At heart she's of the world; and all her efforts aim at hooking on to others—in which, however, she has small success. She cannot see without an envious eye a woman followed by a train of suitors; and her sour virtue, overlooked by all, is ever grumbling that the age is blind. She tries to cover with a veil of prudery the frightful solitude in which she lives; and, to save the honor of her scanty charms, she attributes sin to powers that they have not. And yet a lover would be most pleasant to my lady. She even shows some tenderness for Alceste; the attentions that he pays to me offend her; she tries to make it seem that I have stolen them; and her jealous spite, which she can scarce conceal, is felt in underhanded ways on every side. I have never seen anything, I think, so foolish; and with it all she is impertinent to the last degree. Therefore—

SCENE IV.

ARSINOE, CELIMENE, CLITANDRE, ACASTE.

Celimene. Ah! what fortunate fate brings me this visit? Madame, in all sincerity, I was beginning to feel most anxious for your welfare.

Arsinoe. I have come, madame, to offer you some advice, which I feel I owe to you.

Celimene. Ah! how good of you, and how glad I am to see you!

Clitandre and Acaste go out laughing.

SCENE V.

ARSINOE, CELIMENE.

Arsinoe. The departure of those gentlemen is timely.

Celimene. Shall we sit down?

Arsinoe. It is not necessary. Madame, friendship should, above all, be shown in things that most affect our fellows; and as there are none more vitally important than those of honor and decorum, I have come to prove the friendship my heart feels for you by offering counsel which concerns your honor. Yesterday I visited some friends, of sterling virtue. There the conversation turned on you; unfortunately, your conduct and its notoriety were not approved. The crowd of men you suffer to approach you, your coquetry, and the rumors it excites, received more consure and far harsher blame than I could wish. You will readily conceive the course I took. I said all that I could in your defence; excused you, firmly, as to your intentions, offering to vouch for your good soul. But—as you know—there are things in life that cannot be excused, however much we wish to do so, and I found myself, at last, constrained to admit that your manner of living does certainly seem wrong, and has—to the world—an injurious appearance; also that mischievous tales are being told of it, and that your conduct might, if you were only willing, give far less ground for condemnation. Not that I think your virtue really injured—God forbid that I should think so! But the world believes in the mere shadow of sin; and it is not enough to satisfy our conscience only. Madame, I think your mind too reasonable to take amiss this useful counsel, or to attribute it to other motives than the hearty zeal which binds me to your interests.

Celimene. Madame, I have many thanks to render you; such counsel can but gratify me; and, far from taking it amiss, I wish to recognize the favor you have done me by instantly returning it with other counsel which concerns your honor. As you have shown yourself so heartily my friend by telling me the rumors people spread about me, I wish to follow, in my turn, so kind an example by telling you what people say of you. The other day, at a house where I was visiting, I met some persons of high character, who, speaking of a soul's true kindness, turned their remarks, madame, on you. Unfortunately, your prudery and your bursts of pious zeal were not regarded by them as a good example. This affection of a grave demeanor; your endless talks of virtue and of honor; your frowns and outcries at the shadow of indecency which one ambiguous word can cast upon yourself; the pitying glances you bestow on others; your frequent lectures, your sour censure of things that in themselves are pure and innocent,—all this, if I may speak to you quite frankly, madame, was blamed with one consent. What is the good, they said, of all this modesty, this virtuous exterior, if it belies the rest? 'Tis true she says her prayers with rigid punctuality, but then she beats her servants and she does not pay them; in pious places she displays her zeal, but she paints her face in order to seem handsome; she covers up the nakedness of pictures, but has a liking for realities. As for me, madame, I took up firmly your defence with each and all; assuring them that what they said was slanderous. But their views clashed with mine; and their conclusion was that you would do well to meddle less with others' actions and look more closely to your own. They said we ought to look at home a good long time before we think of judging other

people; that an exemplary life alone gives weight to our correction of the lives of others; moreover, that in any case, 't is better to remit that duty to those whom heaven has selected for it. Madame, I think you are too reasonable to take amiss this useful counsel, or to attribute it to other motives than the hearty zeal which binds me to your interests.

Arsinoe. I know that in reproving we subject ourselves to much; but I did not expect this sharp retort, madame; and I see plainly, by its very bitterness, that my sincere advice has cut you to the heart.

Celimene. Quite the contrary, madame; and if the world were wise these mutual counsels would be made the custom. Given in good faith, they would dispel the utter blindness each has for himself. It rests with you to carry on this faithful office with your past zeal. Let us take pains to tell ourselves, between ourselves, just what you hear of me, and I of you.

Arsinoe. Ah, madame, I shall hear nought of you; it is of me the most reproving things are said.

Celimene. Madame, I think that all things may be praised and blamed; and each award is just, according to age or fancy. There is a season for coquettish gallantry; there is another, still more suitable, for prudery. 'Tis wise, from policy, to choose that style when time has deadened the glow of youth; it serves to cover a mortifying downfall. I don't deny that some day I may follow on your traces, for age brings everything. But it is still too early, madame, as everybody knows, to be a prude at twenty.

Arsinoe. You plume yourself on very slight advantages, and ring your age with wonderful effect! But an advantage that you share with many is not so much to boast of, after all. I

know not why your temper drives you, madame, thus to provoke me in so strange a way.

Celimene. And I, madame, I really know not why you constantly declaim against me everywhere. Must I be punished for your disappointments? Is it my fault that no one courts you? What can I do if men will love me, and will persist in offering vows your heart may wish to take away from me? The field is open to you. I do not hinder any of your charms from winning lovers.

Arsinoe. Alas! and do you really think the number of your lovers, of which you seem so vain, can trouble others; or that we do not find it easy to appraise the price at which you gain them? Do you think to persuade us—who see how things are going—that your good qualities alone attract your followers; or that they burn for you with honest love, and court you solely for your virtue? The world is not a dupe; it is not blind by such vain pretences. Many a woman fitted to inspire the tenderest sentiments does not have lovers; from that the argument is plain: their hearts cannot be won without great effort, for none may woo us for our beauty only, but all must buy the right of courting us. Therefore you need not swell with pride for such poor sparkles of a trivial victory. Correct the self-conceit of your attractions, and cease to treat us superciliously. If our eyes envied the conquests you obtain, methinks we all could do as you do,—cease to conduct ourselves with self-respect, and let you see that others can have suitors when they please.

Celimene. Then have them, madame; let me see it done; with this rare secret make the effort to please, and——

Arsinoe. Madame, let us end this conference; it irritates too much your soul and mine.

I should already have taken leave of you, were I not forced to wait here for my carriage.

Celimene. Pray stay as long as suits you, madame; nothing need hasten your departure. But, not to weary you with my presence, I'll give you better company; and monsieur here, whom chance has brought so opportunely, shall fill my place and entertain you better.

SCENE VI.

ALCESTE, CELIMENE, ARSINOE.

Celimene. Alceste, I have a letter I must write; it cannot be delayed without some blame to me. Stay with madame; she will have the kindness, I am sure, to excuse my incivility.

SCENE VII.

ALCESTE, ARSINOE.

Arsinoe. You see she wishes me to entertain you until my carriage comes; and her civility could provide me with nothing more truly charming than this interview. Persons of lofty merit draw forth the esteem and love of every one; and yours, undoubtedly, has secret charms which lead my heart to enter all your interests. I wish the court, with more propitious eyes, would do full justice to your claims. You have much cause for indignation. I am angry almost daily to see that nothing has been done for you.

Alceste. For me, madame? On what pretensions should I base a claim? What service to the State have I been known to render? What have I done, if you please, so brilliant in itself that I have cause to grumble because the court does nothing in return for it?

Arsinoe. It is not every one on whom our court casts a propitious eye who has done good

service to the State. Opportunity is needed as well as power. The great deserts that all men see in you ought——

Alceste. For heaven's sake, madame, say nothing of my deserts. Why do you wish the court to trouble itself about them? Its cares would be too many and its hands too full if it unearthed the merits of everybody.

Arsinoe. A dazzling merit will unearth itself; and yours is thought extreme on every side. I must tell you now that yesterday, in two distinguished houses, you were much praised by persons of great weight.

Alceste. Hey! madame, 't is nowadays the fashion to laud every one. That is the way by which the present century levels everything. All are of equal merit; it is no longer an honor to be praised. Why! praises are stuffed down your throat, flung at your head; and there's my valet's name in the gazette!

Arsinoe. For my part, I have wished you to obtain some place at court in which to show your merit to the world. If only you consented, we would intrigue a little, and, to oblige you, start a few machines. I myself have men in hand whom I could use, and they would make the way quite smooth for you.

Alceste. Madame, what would you have me do at court? The disposition that I feel within me requires rather that I keep away from it. Heaven did not make me, when it gave me breath, with a soul congenial to the courtly atmosphere. I am conscious that I do not possess the necessary virtues to succeed there and do my duty. Frankness and sincerity are my chief talents; and he who does not have the gift of hiding what he thinks, had better make short stay in courtly regions. Outside the court, of course we cannot have the strong support or the titles of honor it gives nowadays.

But, in losing those advantages, we are spared the vexations trifling of silly persons; we need not suffer merciless rebuffs, nor be compelled to praise the verse of Monsieur Such-a-one, nor shower incense on Madame This-or-that, nor undergo the brains of seedling marquises.

Arsinoe. Then we will drop, since you desire it, this matter of the court; but my heart is forced to pity you in your love; and, if I may disclose my thoughts upon it, I wish with all my soul 't were better placed. Indeed you have deserved a gentler fate, for she who charms you is unworthy of you.

Alceste. In saying that, I beg you to remember, madame, this lady is your friend.

Arsinoe. Yes. But my conscience is too wounded to bear a moment longer the wrong she does you. The state in which I see you grieves my soul too much; I am forced to warn you she betrays your love.

Alceste. You show me thus, madame, a tender impulse; such warnings would oblige a lover.

Arsinoe. Yes, though she be my friend, she is, and I dare say it, unworthy to enthrall a good man's heart; hers has for you a counterfeited tenderness.

Alceste. It may be so, madame; we cannot see the hearts of others. But your charity might well have paused before you cast this painful thought in mine.

Arsinoe. Oh! if you do not wish to be undeceived, there is no need to tell you anything; that, indeed, is easy.

Alceste. No, it can not end so. This is a subject on which, no matter what is learned, doubts are more cruel than the worst of truths. For my part, I would rather nothing were told me unless it could be shown with certainty.

Arsinoe. That is enough. Upon this subject

you shall have full light. Yes, I will let you trust your own eyes only. Give me your hand to take me home. There I will show you positive proof of the unfaithful heart of her you love. And, if for other eyes your own could long, it may be you would find some there to comfort you.

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

ELIANTE, PHILINTE.

Philinte. No, a soul so hard to manage was never seen; no reconciliation was ever yet so troublesome to bring about. In vain they tried in every way to move him; out of his fixed opinion he would not be dragged. Never did a more fantastic quarrel, I am sure, engage the wisdom of the Marshals. "No, gentlemen," he said, "I shall not retract. On every other matter I will agree with him, but not on this. Why is he affronted? Of what does he complain? Is his fame injured because he cannot write poems? What does my opinion, which he takes so ill, signify to him? A man can be a gentleman and make bad verses. Such matters do not touch his honor, and I told him to be a gallant man in every other way; a man of quality, of courage, deserving of anything you please, but—a bad writer. I will praise, if you wish it, his way of living, of spending money, his skill on horse-back, in fencing, dancing; but as for praising his verses, I beg to be excused! When a man has not the happiness to be able to write better than that, he ought to repress, under pain of death, his desire to make rhymes." Finally, all the grace and concession to which, with great effort, his feelings were brought could only induce him to say—thinking that

he softened his style exceedingly: "Monsieur, I am sorry to be so critical, and I heartily wish, out of good-will to you, that I could have thought your sonnet better." After which an embrace was hastily brought about in order to conclude the proceedings as fast as possible.

Eliante. He certainly is very singular in his manner of acting; but, I must confess, I esteem him highly. The sincerity on which his soul so prides itself has something noble and heroic in it. 'Tis a virtue rare indeed in these days; and I wish I could see it in others as in him.

Philinte. As for me, the more I see of him the more amazed I am at this passion to which he yields his heart. With the nature it has pleased God to give him, I cannot see how it is that he loves as he does; and still less do I see why your cousin should be the woman to whom his heart inclines.

Eliante. It only shows that love is not invariably produced in hearts by harmony of disposition; and all those theories of gentle sympathy are in this case belied.

Philinte. But do you think, from what you see, that he is loved?

Eliante. That is a point it is not easy to make out. How can we judge how truly she may love him? Her heart is never really sure itself; sometimes she loves and does not know it; at other times she thinks she loves and there is nothing in it.

Philinte. I think our friend will find more grief than he imagines with your cousin. To tell the truth, if he possessed my heart, he would have turned his homage elsewhere, and by a wiser choice have shown, madame, that he profits by the kindness you have shown him.

Eliante. For myself, I stand on no punctilio, for I think that in such matters we should show good faith. I do not oppose his tenderness for

Celimene; on the contrary, my heart is interested for her, and if the thing depended upon me I should myself unite him to the one he loves. But if in such a choice (as well may happen) his love should meet some unpropitious fate, and it so chanced another's suit were crowned, I could resolve to accept his homage then; for the refusal suffered by him in such a case would cause me no repugnance.

Philinte. Neither do I oppose, madame, the kindness which your charming soul bestows upon him; and he himself can tell you, if he will, what I have taken pains to say to him about it. But if, by the marriage which he now desires, you should be unable to receive his vows, I shall then seek the transcendent favor which your soul with so much generosity now gives to him,—happy when his heart turns elsewhere, if yours, madame, falls back on mine.

Eliante. You are making merry, Philinte.

Philinte. No, madame; I am speaking now of my soul's best; and I await the occasion to offer myself openly; trusting, with all my heart, the moment soon may come.

SCENE II.

ALCESTE, ELIANTE, PHILINTE.

Alceste. Ah! avenge me, madame, for an affront which has, at last, conquered my constancy.

Eliante. What is it? What can have moved you thus?

Alceste. That which I can't conceive of without dying. And the upheaval of all the natural world could not unhinge me more than this disaster. 'Tis done, 'tis over! My love—I cannot speak of it!

Eliante. Try to control your mind.

Alceste. Oh, just Heaven! why were such charms joined to the vices of the basest souls?

Eliante. But still, what have——

Alceste. Ah! all is ruined; I am—I am betrayed, I am destroyed. Celimene—who could believe it?—Celimene deceives me; she is unfaithful.

Eliante. Have you just grounds for that belief?

Philinte. Perhaps it is mere suspicion, lightly kindled. Your jealous mind invents, at times, chimeras.

Alceste. Ha! *morbleu!* monsieur, mind your own affairs. [*To Eliante*] I am, alas! too certain of her treachery; for here, in my pocket, written by her own hand, is a letter to Oronte which proves to my very eyes her shame and my disgrace—Oronte! whose homage I believed she fled; the one of all my rivals whom I feared the least.

Philinte. A letter easily misleads at sight, and is often not so guilty as we think it.

Alceste. Monsieur, once more, let me alone, I beg; and keep your interest for your own concerns.

Eliante. You ought to moderate your anger. And this outrage——

Alceste. Madame, it rests with you to avenge it. It is to you I have recourse to free my heart from poignant anguish. Avenge me on your cousin, your ungrateful and perfidious cousin, who basely has betrayed a faithful love. Avenge me for a wrong which you must hold in horror.

Eliante. I avenge you! how?

Alceste. Accept my heart—accept it, madame, and take the place of that unfaithful woman. In that way only can I have revenge; I wish to punish her by the honest vows, the

deep affection, the respectful suit, the assiduous service, and the fervent duty my heart henceforth will offer on your altar.

Eliante. I pity what you suffer, certainly, and I do not reject the heart you offer me; but the wrong is not, perhaps, so great as you imagine, and you may still give up these thoughts of vengeance. When we are hurt by some one who has a deep attraction we are apt to make rash plans we do not execute. We may see powerful reasons to break our chain, and yet a guilty dear one soon is innocent; and then the revenge we wish to take is easily dispelled, and we see 't is but a lovers' quarrel after all.

Alceste. No, no, madame, I assure you, no. The offence is mortal. I break my bonds, and there is no return. Nothing can change my firm intention, for I should punish myself were I to love her still. Here she is; my anger is redoubled by her presence. I will denounce her treacherous actions to her face, and so confound her. After which, freed once for all from her deceitful charm, I'll bring to you a heart at liberty.

SCENE III.

CELIMENE, ALCESTE.

Alceste, aside. Oh, heaven! can I be master of my emotions?

Celimene, aside. Heyday! (*To Alceste*) What troubles you thus? Why these sighs, these gloomy looks? Are they meant for me?

Alceste. Of all the wrongs of which the soul is capable, nothing compares with your disloyalty. Fate, devils, and the anger of high Heaven have never yet produced a thing so evil.

Celimene. Here 's sweetness truly, and I like it much.

Alceste. Do not jest; this is no time to laugh; blush rather, for there is ample reason; I have sure proofs of your betrayal. This was the meaning of my troubled soul; 'twas not in vain my love became alarmed; those frequent doubts you thought so odious were warnings of the calamity before me. In spite of all your care and cleverness in deception, my star was telling me of that I had to fear. But do not think that I will suffer the sting of such an outrage and not take vengeance. I know we have no power over desire; that love is, everywhere, born independent; no force can thrust it on the heart, and every soul is free to choose its conqueror. Therefore I should have had no reason to complain had your lips spoken truly, and refused my suit when first I pressed it. My heart would then have had no right to quarrel with its fate. But to find my love accepted with false vows—that is betrayal, that is perfidy, which cannot be too sternly punished, and I will give the reins to my resentment. Yes, yes, fear all after such infamy; I am no more myself, I am all anger! Stabbed by the mortal blow your hand has struck, my senses are no longer ruled by reason; I yield to the promptings of a just resentment, and I will not answer for what I now may do.

Celimene. But what has caused, if I may ask, this violent fit of anger? Have you lost your reason?

Alceste. Yes, yes, I have lost it! I lost it when from the sight of you I took, for my sorrow, the poison that is killing me, and when I trusted the sincerity of all those traitorous charms which so enthralled me.

Celimene. What is this treachery of which you thus complain?

Alceste. Ah! double-heart, that knows so well the art of feigning! But I have the means

at hand all ready to confound it. Cast your eyes here, and recognize your writing. This discovered letter suffices to convict you; against this witness there is no reply.

Celimene. Is this the matter that has so disturbed you?

Alceste. You do not blush to see that letter?

Celimene. And why, pray, should I blush to see it?

Alceste. What! do you add audacity to treachery? Will you disavow that note because it does not bear your seal?

Celimene. Why should I disavow a letter written by me?

Alceste. Can you see it without shame for the crime toward me of which it proves you guilty?

Celimene. You are, upon my word, a most unreasonable man.

Alceste. What! do you dare defy that ocular proof, and say that in its tenderness to Oronte there is nothing to outrage me and make you blush?

Celimene. Oronte! who says the letter was to him?

Alceste. The persons who placed it in my hands this day. But I'll agree it might be for another—if so, would my heart have less reason to complain of yours? would you be guiltless toward me?

Celimene. But if it be a woman to whom I wrote that letter, why should it wound you? where's the crime of that?

Alceste. Ha! the shift is good, the evasion admirable! I did not expect, I must admit, this trick, but it convinces me completely. How dare you have recourse to vulgar subterfuge? Do you think me blind? Go on, and let me see the crooked ways, the shifty air by which you will maintain so clear a

falsehood; I'd like to know how you can twist to suit a woman the words of that letter which is full of passion. Explain, to hide your lack of truth, the words I now will read to you—

Celimene. I do not choose it. I think you are ridiculous enough, to use your power as you do, and dare to tell me to my face all this.

Alceste. No, no; be not so angry; take some pains to justify these words of yours—

Celimene. No, I refuse to hear them; what it may please you to believe in this affair is of the smallest consequence to me.

Alceste. I beg of you, tell me the truth; I will be satisfied—if I can be—that the letter is to a woman.

Celimene. No, the letter is to Oronte; I wish it to be believed. I receive his attentions with great pleasure; I admire what he says, I value what he is. I am ready to agree to all you say. Now, do as you please, take your own course; but do not wear me out with such scenes any longer.

Alceste, aside. Heavens! was ever my fate more cruel? Was ever heart so treated? What! when a just displeasure forces me to speak, 't is I who am complained of, I who make the quarrel! My grief and my suspicions are goaded on, and I am told I may believe the worst—in which she glories! And yet my heart is still so cowardly as not to break the chain that binds me to her, or arm itself with laudable contempt for the ungrateful object it has loved too well. (*To Celimene*) Ah! you know well, perfidious woman, how to make my weakness serve your ends in spite of myself, and how to use the fatal love, born of your eyes, to carry out your purposes. Defend yourself, at least, from a crime that overwhelms me; cease this affectation of being guilty. Prove to me, if you

can, the innocence of that letter; my tenderness consents to come to your assistance—strive to seem faithful, and I, in turn, will strive to think you so.

Celimene. Oh! you are mad with all your jealous transports; you don't deserve the love I feel for you. I should like much to know what could induce me to stoop so low as to deceive you; and why, if my heart leaned another way, I should not say so with sincerity. How is it that the kind assurance I gave you of my feelings was not enough to save me from your suspicions? Has such a pledge no power against them? and is it not insulting me to listen to their voice? Because a woman's heart makes a strong effort when it owns its love; because the honor of our sex—that enemy to ardor—firmly opposes such avowals, should the lover for whose sake we overcome those obstacles, should he be the one to doubt our truth? Is he not guilty in suffering others to say these things—at least without a combat? Go! such foul suspicions deserve my anger; you are not worth the esteem in which I held you. How foolish I have been! I am vexed with my simplicity in keeping any kindness in my heart for you. I ought to turn my love elsewhere, and give you thus a subject of legitimate complaint.

Alceste. Ah! traitress, my weakness is indeed a mystery. Doubtless you are deceiving me with those soft words. What of it? I must follow my destiny; my soul is given over to your worship. I wish to see the end of this, and know what is your heart,—and whether it is black enough to still betray me.

Celimene. No, for you do not love me as I must be loved.

Alceste. Ah! my love is far beyond compare; and in its ardor to show itself for what it is

to all the world, it even forms desires against you. Yes, I would fain that no one thought you lovable; I would you were reduced to misery; that Heaven denied you everything; that you had nor rank, nor birth, nor wealth, so that my love might make some startling sacrifice to heal the injustice destiny had done you, and that my heart might have the joy and glory of seeing you hold all things through my love.

Celimene. That's a strange fashion of wishing well to me; heaven grant you may not have the chance of it. But here's your valet, seemingly excited.

SCENE IV.

CELIMENE, ALCESTE, DUBOIS.

Alceste. What is all this? and why this frightened air?

Dubois. Strange things have happened. Matters are going wrong in our affairs——

Alceste. How?

Dubois. Monsieur, we must get away at once. We must slip off silently.

Alceste. But your reason, say? Why do you use such language?

Dubois. The reason is we must be packing.

Alceste. Ha! I'll break your head assuredly if you don't answer differently.

Dubois. Monsieur, a man all black in face and clothes came to the house, and even to the kitchen; where he left a paper, scribbled in such a way that one had need to be worse than any devil to read it. It concerns, no doubt, your lawsuit, but all the fiends in hell, I think, could never make it out.

Alceste. Well, what of it? What has that paper to do, you fool, with the departure that you talked about?

Dubois. Monsieur, an hour later a gentleman who visits you came hurrying to see you in much excitement. Not finding you, he charged me, civilly (knowing with what zeal I serve you), to tell you— Stay, I wish I could recall his name.

Alceste. No matter for his name; what did he tell you?

Dubois. Well, he was one of your friends, that must suffice. He told me you were in danger of arrest, and must get off at once.

Alceste. But why? Did he not specify the reason?

Dubois. No; he asked for pen and ink and wrote a line by which you can, I think, get to the bottom of this mystery.

Alceste. Give it me, then.

Celimene. What can all this mean?

Alceste. I do not know; but I will clear it up. Come, you impertinent devil, give me the note.

Dubois (after searching long in his pocket). Faith! monsieur—I believe—I've left it on your table.

Alceste. I don't know what prevents me from—

Celimene. Do not be angry; but go at once and see what all this means.

Alceste. It seems that fate, whatever pains I take, has sworn to hinder all our interviews. But to defeat it, promise, my love, madame, that you will let me speak with you again this evening.

END OF ACT FOUR.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ALCESTE, PHILINTE.

Alceste. My resolution is taken, I tell you.

Philinte. But, however hard the blow, must it compel you—

Alceste. Useless to say a word, useless to reason with me; nothing that you can do will turn me from my purpose. The age in which we live is too perverted; I desire to withdraw from intercourse with men. Honor, uprightness, decency and the laws were openly arrayed against my adversary; on all sides was the equity of my cause proclaimed; and on the faith of my just rights I rested tranquilly. And now behold, I am defrauded of success; justice is with me, but I lose my case! A traitor, whose scandalous history is well known to all, comes off victorious by the blackest falsehood! Those who were on my side yield to his treachery! He cuts my throat and makes them think it is right. The weight of his canting artifice—all jugglery!—has overthrown the Right and baffled Justice: he wins a verdict which has crowned a crime. And not content with the great wrong he has already done me, he is spreading everywhere a villainous book, the very reading of which is most condemnable,—a book that merits the rigor of the law; and the lying rascal has the effrontery to say I wrote it! And Oronte mutters low and tries maliciously to circulate the calumny,—he, who holds the rank of an honest man at court; to whom I have been sincere and frank; he, who came to me, with an eager ardor which I did not seek, and asked for my

opinion on his verses. And because I treated him with honesty, refusing to be false to him or truth, he helps to crush me with an imaginary crime, and now becomes my greatest enemy! Never will his soul forgive me because, forsooth! I could not say his verse was good. And all men, damn them! have become like that. These are the actions to which glory leads them! Here's the good faith, the virtuous zeal, the justice, and the honor we expect of them! No, no, it is too much to bear such suffering. I will escape this nest of villains, and since with human beings we must live like wolves, traitors! you shall not have my life among you.

Philinte. I think you are too hasty in forming that design; the harm is not so great as you would make it. The deal this man has dared impute to you has not obtained enough belief to make the authorities arrest you. That false report is dying of itself; it is an action that will injure only him who did it.

Alceste. Injure him, indeed! He does not fear the scandal of such tricks. He has the world's permission to be a scoundrel; and so far from his credit being injured by this deed you'll see him in some honored place tomorrow.

Philinte. Nevertheless 't is certain no one has given much belief to the tale his malice spreads about you. On that score you have nothing at all to fear. As for the verdict on your lawsuit, of which indeed you may complain, justice may yet be won; you can appeal against this judgment—

Alceste. No, I shall hold to it. However great the wrong that verdict does me, I will not have it quashed; it shows too plainly how the Right is wronged. I wish it to remain for all posterity,—a signal mark, a noted testimony to the wickedness of this age. 'T will

cost me twenty thousand francs, but with that sum I buy the right to curse the iniquity of human nature and to keep alive my everlasting hatred to it.

Philinte. In short—

Alceste. In short, your efforts are superfluous. What can you find to say upon this matter, monsieur? Will you have the effrontery to bid me to my face excuse the infamy of what has happened?

Philinte. No, I am one with you in what you say. In these days all things go by base intrigue and selfish interests; craft carries all before it. Men ought indeed to be made of other metal; but is their lack of probity a reason to withdraw yourself from social life? All human frailty is a means of exercising our philosophy. That is the finest work of virtue. If every one were clothed with integrity, if every heart were just, frank, kindly, the other virtues would be well-nigh useless, since their chief purpose is to make us bear with patience the injustice of our fellows. And so, a heart of honest virtue—

Alceste. I know your words are of the best, monsieur, your excellent arguments are most abundant; but you waste your time in making those fine speeches. Reason demands for my soul's good that I retire. I have not enough control over my tongue; I cannot answer for what I might be led to say; I should have twenty duels on my hands at once. Leave me, without further argument, to wait for Celimene. She must consent to my design. 'T is that which brings me here to speak with her. I am about to see whether her heart does truly love me; this coming hour will prove it to me once for all.

Philinte. Let us go up to Eliante while awaiting Celimene.

Alceste. No, my soul is full of care; do you go up, and leave me in this gloomy corner with my black misery.

Philinte. 'T is cruel company. I will find Eliante and bring her down.

SCENE II.

CELIMENE, ORONTE, ALCESTE.

Oronte. Yes, it is for you to say, madame, whether you will bind me wholly to you by these tender ties. I must have full assurance from your soul to mine; a lover cannot bear these hesitations. If the ardor of my passion has power to move you, you should not feign unwillingness to let me know it. The proof I ask of you is, plainly, no longer to admit Alceste among your suitors; to sacrifice him, madame, to my love; and banish him from your house this very day.

Celimene. But why are you so angry with him now, you whom I have often known to speak of him with favor?

Oronte. Madame, there is no need of explanations. The question is, What are your sentiments? Choose, if you please, between us; keep one or else the other; my resolution waits upon your will.

Alceste (*advancing from his corner*). Yes, monsieur is right. Madame, you must choose. In this his wishes accord with mine; the self-same passion prompts me, the same intention brings me hither. My love must have some certain proof of yours. Things cannot thus drag on another day; this is the moment to reveal your heart.

Oronte. Monsieur, if your suit succeeds, I do not mean that my importunate love shall trouble it.

Alceste. Monsieur, I shall not seek, jealous or not, to share her heart with you.

Oronte. If she prefers your love to mine—

Alceste. If she is capable of any leaning toward you—

Oronte. I swear I will no longer court her.

Alceste. I swear I will no longer see her.

Oronte. Madame, it is for you to speak without constraint.

Alceste. Madame, you can explain yourself without anxiety.

Oronte. You have but to say on whom your wishes fall.

Alceste. You have but to speak the truth and choose between us.

Oronte. What! at making such a choice you seem to be distressed!

Alceste. What! your soul hesitates and seems uncertain!

Celimene. Good heavens! this demand is most ill-timed; how little sense or reason either of you show! I know myself the preference I feel; my heart is not upon the scales, suspended doubtfully between you. Nothing could be more quickly made than the choice you ask for; but I should feel, to tell the truth, too much embarrassment in making this avowal to your face. A choice like this must seem unkind to one; it should not, therefore, openly be made in presence of both. A heart will always show its leanings plainly enough without compelling it to bare itself; some gentler means can surely be found to show a lover that his attentions are unwelcome.

Oronte. No, no, I do not fear a frank avowal, and I consent for my part—

Alceste. And I demand it. It is this very publishing I dare exact. I will not have you shirk the truth in any way. To keep on terms with all the world is what you study. But no more dallying, no more indecision now; you must explain yourself decisively; or else I take

refusal for decision, and I shall know, for my part, how to explain your silence; I shall consider said the wrong that I expect of you.

Oronte. Monsieur, I thank you for your indignation, and I say to madame, here, the same as you.

Celimene. How you annoy me with your whims! What justice is there in what you ask? Have I not told you the motive that restrains me? Here is Eliante, she shall judge this matter.

SCENE III.

ELIANTE, PHILINTE, CELIMENE, ORONTE, ALCESTE.

Celimene. Cousin, I am persecuted by these two men, whose scheme appears to have been concerted. They each demand, with equal heat, that I shall here proclaim, in presence of both, the choice my heart has made; and that, in giving this decision openly, I shall forbid one or the other from paying me attentions. Tell me if things are ever done in that way.

Eliante. Do not consult me; you may find that you appeal to the wrong person. Frankly, I am for those who speak their thoughts.

Oronte. Madame, it is in vain that you seek to evade us.

Alceste. All your evasions are ill-seconded.

Oronte. You must, you shall speak out, and end this vacillation.

Alceste. It is enough if you persist in silence.

Oronte. I ask but a single word to end the matter.

Alceste. And I shall comprehend you if you say no word.

SCENE IV.

ARSINOE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE, CELIMENE, ORONTE,
ALCESTE, ELIANTE, PHILINTE.

Acaste (to CELIMENE). Madame, we have come, Clitandre and I, to clear up, if you please without offence, a trifling matter.

Clitandre (to ORONTE and ALCESTE). Your presence, gentlemen, is very timely, for you are both concerned in this affair.

Arsinoe (to CELIMENE). It may surprise you, madame, to see me here, and I must tell you that these gentlemen have caused my coming. They came to see me to complain of something my heart cannot believe. I have too high an esteem for your real depth of soul to think you capable of so great a wrong. My eyes refused their strongest testimony; and my friendship, overlooking our small jars, has brought me to you in their company that I may see you clear yourself at once of this foul calumny.

Acaste. Madame, we wish to see, in a kindly spirit, how you will take these facts. Here is a letter written by you to Clitandre.

Clitandre. And here is a tender billet written by you to Alcaste.

Acaste (to ORONTE and ALCESTE). Gentlemen, this writing is well-known to you, of course. I do not doubt that her civilities have frequently enabled you to see it. But the letter itself is worthy of being read.

(Reads.) "What a strange man you are to blame me for my gayety, and to declare that I am never so pleased as when you are not with me. Nothing was ever more unjust; and

if you do not come at once and beg my pardon for this offence, I will never in my life forgive you for it. Our tall, ungainly viscount—”

He ought to be present, and hear this.

“Our tall, ungainly viscount, the first whom you complain of, is a man who never pleased me; and since I saw him, for an hour together, spit in a pond in order to make bubbles, I have had a poor opinion of him. As for the little marquis—”

That is myself, gentlemen; I say it without vanity.

“As for the little marquis, who held my hand today for a long time, I think him the most finical of little beings; there’s nothing of him but his nobility. And as for the man of the green ribbons—”

(*To ALCESTE.*) Your turn now, monsieur.

“As for the man of the green ribbons, he amuses me at times with his bluntness and his surly grumbling; but there are moments when I think him the most irritating mortal upon earth. As for the man of sonnets—”

(*To ORONTE.*) This is to your address, monsieur.

“As for the man of sonnets, who has flung himself into poesy and wishes to be an author in defiance of everybody, I do not give myself the trouble to listen to him. His prose fatigues me even more than his verses. Therefore, do pray believe that I am not so gay and amused in your absence as you fancy, and that I think of you—more than I could wish—at the parties of pleasure to which I am dragged; it is a wonderful seasoning of all enjoyments to think of those we love.”

Clitandre. And here am I, in this billet to Acaste. Your *Clitandre*, of whom you speak, and who says sweet things to me, is the very

last man for whom I could feel regard. He is absurd to imagine he is loved; and you are still more absurd to fancy you are not loved. Exchange opinions; and then you will, both of you, be more nearly right. Come and see me as often as you can, and help me to bear the annoyance of being beset by him. There, madame, is the model of a noble character; you know what it is called. Enough! We shall each exhibit, wherever we go, this glorious picture of your heart.

Alciste. I might say much to you, for the subject is a fine one; but I do not count you worthy of my anger. I will let you see that little marquises can win, for consolation, hearts that are worth far more than yours.

[*Exeunt marquises.*]

SCENE V.

CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ARSINOE, ALCESTE, ORONTE,
PHILINTE.

Oronte. Can it be that you tear me thus to pieces after all that you have written and said to me? Does your heart, adorned with such fine semblances of love, give itself, in turn, to all the human race? Go!—I have been a dupe, but I am one no longer. You have done me, madame, a service in letting me unmask you. I shall profit in the heart I thus regain, and find my vengeance in your loss. (*To ALCESTE.*) Monsieur, I offer no further hindrance to your love; you can conclude your treaty with madame. [*Exit.*]

SCENE VI.

CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ARSINOE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE.

Arsinoe. Truly this is the basest act I have ever known. I cannot keep silence, for I feel so shocked. Was ever any conduct seen like yours? I take no interest in those other men, but as for monsieur (*motioning to ALCESTE*) who rested all his happiness on you, a man like him, of honor and great merit, who cherished you with absolute idolatry, ought he—

Alceste. Allow me, madame, if you please, to manage my affairs myself. Pray do not take upon yourself superfluous cares. In vain my heart hears you take up its quarrel; it is not in a state to pay for great zeal. If by another choice I wished to avenge myself it would not be on you that choice would fall.

Arsinoe. Eh! do you imagine, monsieur, that such a thought exists, or any eagerness is felt to win you? I think your mind is far too full of vanity if it can flatter itself with that belief. Madame's rejected leavings are a merchandise one would be foolish indeed to take a fancy to. Pray undeceive yourself; carry your thoughts less high; I'm not the sort of woman you should aspire to. You would do well to keep your sighs for her; I long to see so suitable a match. [*Exit.*]

SCENE VII.

CELIMENE, ELIANTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE.

Alceste (to CELIMENE.) Madame, I have kept silence, in spite of all that I have seen and heard. I have allowed all others to speak before me. Have I controlled myself enough, and may I now—

Celimene. Yes, say all; you have a right to complain, and to reproach me as you will. I have done wrong,—I here confess it; and my discomfited soul will seek no vain excuse to answer you. I have despised the anger of the others, but I admit my crime to you. Your indignation, without a doubt, is reasonable. I know how guilty I must seem to you,—how all things go to prove I have betrayed you. In short, you have every right to hate me. Do so; I consent.

Alceste. Ah! can I, traitress? Can I thus conquer love? However I may long to hate you, have I a heart within me to obey my will? (*To ELIANTE and PHILINTE*). See what this abject tenderness can do! I call you both to witness my great weakness. And yet, this is not all; you are about to see me carry that weakness farther, show what a folly 't is to call us wise, and prove that in all hearts there's still the man. (*To CELIMENE*). Yes, I am willing to forget your guilt; my heart is ready to excuse it and call this wrong a foible to which the vices of the times misled your youth.—*provided* you here consent to clasp hands with the purpose I have formed to separate from men and live apart in country solitudes; to which, without delay you now must follow me. In that way only can you still repair, before the eyes of all men, the wrong that you have done me. Do this, and notwithstanding the notoriety which noble hearts abhor, I still shall find it in my heart to love you.

Celimene. I! renounce the world before I am old, and bury myself with you in country solitudes?

Alceste. But if your love responds to mine what matters all the world to you? Will you not be content with me alone?

Celimene. Solitude has terrors for a heart

so young. I feel that mine has not the grandeur, nor the strength, to resolve upon a scheme of this kind. If the bestowal of my hand can satisfy your wishes I will consent to tie the knot of marriage—

Alceste. No; my soul revolts against you now; this hard refusal moves me more than all the rest. And since you cannot in so sweet a tie find all in me as I found all in you, go!— I reject you. This sore outrage frees me forever from your unworthy bonds. [*Exit Celimene.*]

SCENE VIII.

ELIANTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE.

Alceste (to ELIANTE). Madame, your beauty is adorned with every virtue; never have I seen aught in you but strict sincerity. I have long valued you most highly. Let me continue to esteem you thus; and suffer that my heart, in all its divers troubles, should not demand the honor of your bonds. I feel myself unworthy; I begin to know that heaven did not give me life for the ties of marriage. 'T would be too base a homage to offer you the leavings of a heart not worth your own; therefore—

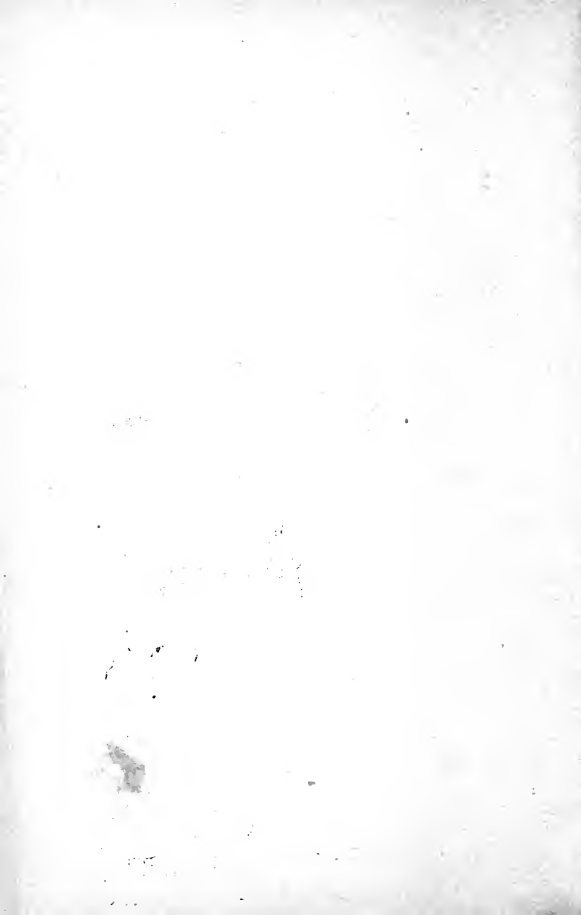
Eliante. You can fulfil that thought, Alceste. My hand is not so difficult to bestow, for here's your friend, who, if I asked him, would willingly accept it.

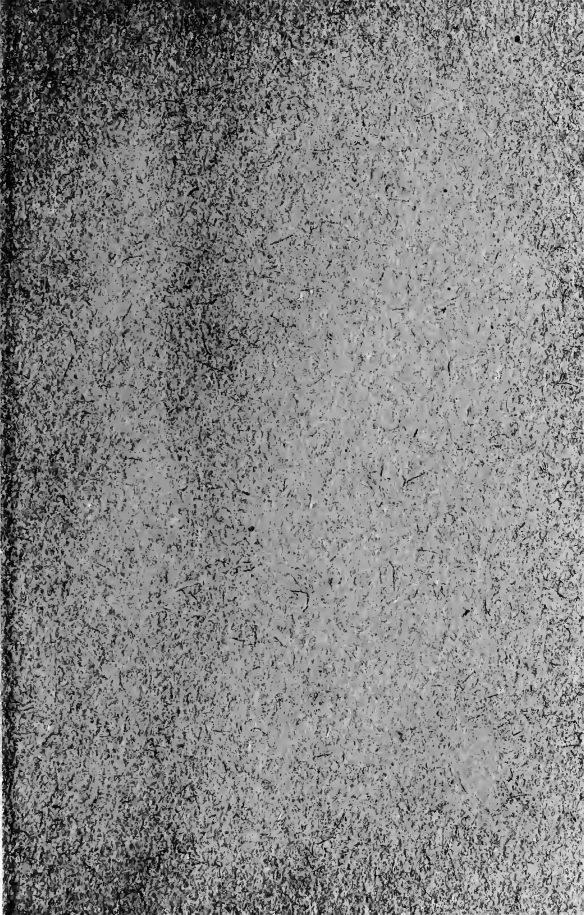
Philinte. Ah! that honor, madame, is my sole desire. To gain it, I would sacrifice both blood and life.

Alceste. And may you ever taste of true contentment, by keeping, each for each, such sentiments. As for me, betrayed on all sides, crushed by injustice, I leave a pit where vices triumph, to seek somewhere on earth a lonely spot where I am free to be a man of honor.

Philinte. Come, madame, come, let us employ all ways to thwart this scheme his heart proposes.

END OF THE MISANTHROPE.





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