

SCENE ADDED FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF MOLIÈRE

Translated and adapted by Frank J. Morlock

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Etext by Dagny

This was a scene added to a play called Le Boulevard Bonne nouvelle by Scribe, Moreau, and Melesville. 1820. It is published separately as Scene ajoutee au Le Boulevard Bonne nouvelle and was the work of Moreau.

1821

CHARACTERS

AN ENGLISHMAN

Mr. TRICOT

ENGLISHMAN: Oh! Sir is the Theatre Francais around here?

TRICOT: Oh! No, Sir, we are quite a ways from it.

ENGLISHMAN: So much the better; I'm very happy.

TRICOT: Why's that, sir?

ENGLISHMAN: Why? That Devil of a Moliere bores me a lot and every day on all the all the What do you call these papers attached to walls?

TRICOT: Ah! Posters.

ENGLISHMAN: Yes, I meant to say that I see his name on all the posters in huge letters.

TRICOT: That's not surprising. (singing)
It's right they celebrate the happy day,
Marking the birth of Moliere.
For his good deeds, it's a just return
Don't criticize our gratitude.
By illustrating in all his works
With all the art, the nation is his mother.
France in its happiest days
Has created a thousand heroes

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But has only seen one Molière born.

ENGLISHMAN: GODDAM! That's one too many.

TRICOT: May one know where this prejudice you have against him proceeds from?

ENGLISHMAN: Oh! I just can't stand him.

TRICOT: But what's the reason?

TRICOT: The reason is I can't stand him.

TRICOT: Perhaps the gentleman doesn't know him?

ENGLISHMAN: (laughing) Ouf! I know him perfectly well, I swear to you; I've had him played very often in my country house where Milady puts on very magnificent and expensive performances.

TRICOT: It was you who payed?

ENGLISHMAN: Yes. They put on comedies at my expense: I recall that it was a Member of Parliament who played Tartuffe, and Milady, my wife, had a part in Georges, beaten and satisfied.

TRICOT: Ah! Georges Dandin.

ENGLISHMAN: Yes. It was I who played Dandin. The play was very much in fashion, and they laughed a lot at me.

TRICOT: Since you owe such a success to Molière, I can't conceive why you cannot stand him.

ENGLISHMAN: Because of personal considerations: for I am, like all Englishmen, a great admirer of Molière. That devil of a man ruined me.

TRICOT: Not possible!

ENGLISHMAN: It's very possible. I had an uncle, totally rich and very miserly; very agreeable expectation for his heirs! Well, because he saw Harpagon, he became a bit dissipated; and he didn't allow himself to lack anything; he drank, he ate every day, that's quite a terrible thing for me.

TRICOT: Now I understand your rage against Molière.

ENGLISHMAN: That was nothing yet. I had a very old uncle, who had 20,000 pounds sterling in income, and he was attacked by the spleen at least that's what the family hoped. (singing)

Sad and pained, as its shadow enveloped him
He meditated a funereal plan.
When, by chance, he saw The Misanthrope
Suddenly he hesitated.
Pourceaugnac with the apothecary
Had almost made him sprightly,
And The Imaginary Invalid cured him completely.

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(speaking) All he did was laugh. He kept talking about Thos Diafoirus, and when I asked him for money, he told me: Clisterium donare, ensuite purgare. That was something to hang oneself for.

TRICOT: No question, it's a horror An author who cures the spleen in your own home, that's unheard of.

ENGLISHMAN: Indeed I thought so. We have Lord Byron who would be capable of giving it by himself to all England; but that's not all, yet I had an aunt.

TRICOT: Ah, my God, what a family.

ENGLISHMAN: Who wrote long novels, as long as Lady Morgan, which sold as highly priced as Walter Scott. She has the misfortune of seeing at Argitti-Rooms The Learned Ladies.

TRICOT: Ah! The Learned Ladies.

ENGLISHMAN: Yes. And she threw into the fire, the first ten volumes of a little novel for which the London Library was offering 6000 guineas and I needed to pay my debts with my aunt's novel.

TRICOT: I conceive that between Moliere and you, it's war to the death.

ENGLISHMAN: And I got here just in time for the Anniversary, for you are quite sure this was the anniversary?

TRICOT: Sir, they say so. It's one of my habits. The bell-ringer of Saint Eustache who made this discovery in the registry of the Parish.

ENGLISH: It would appear, then, that the place of his birth?

TRICOT: Sir, it's not known.

ENGLISHMAN: Ah! and the exact day?

TRICOT: That's not certain.

ENGLISHMAN: But his tomb?

TRICOT: Sir, that's very uncertain.

ENGLISHMAN: (singing)

You must agree, you are economical
In the honors you owe the gifted.
If we have less great men than you
We burn more incense on their altars.
Do justice to England
Your Moliere, applauded so many times
Hardly obtains a little plot of ground;
Garrick reposes beside our kings.

TRICOT: (singing)

It's too true; through a blind rage
This great man was outraged.
But the prejudices of a former age

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Have been avenged by our century.
The obscure man has entirely succumbed
But Moliere is still standing.
Who cares where his tomb may be
His genius is everywhere.

(speaking) And, Sir, I must not hide from you, that the modest Gymnasium Theatre is also allowing itself to celebrate the anniversary of his birth today.

ENGLISHMAN: Goddam! This Moliere who persecuted me, who had pursued all the ridiculous

TRICOT: You cannot escape him.

(The scene changes and represents the interior of a temple at the back of which can be seen a bust of Moliere placed on a pedestal . All the actors of the Prologue are grouped around him, and are preparing to crown him.)

GENERAL CHORUS:

Let's celebrate the prosperous day
When the first of authors
First saw the light.
And on the face of Moliere
Let's place some modest flowers.

AGNES: (singing)

O Moliere! O astonishing and sublime genius!
You that we admire without daring to flatter
May you deign to count us among your children.
Pardon our audacity because of the flame that animates us,
May our love legitimize us;
And let's be your children, at least to celebrate you.

(she approaches the bust of Moliere and places a crown of laurels on his head)

TRICOT: (singing)

Shakespeare may appear gay
To the lords of England.
Schiller is very intriguing
His touch is light
But his drama fatiguing.
With his controlled verve,
I like Moliere better, hey-ho
I like Moliere better.

MR. DUJOUR: (singing)

The art of joining to entertainment
Strict reason;
The art of gaily pursuing
Haughty stupidity;
The art of depicting, one after another
The man of heart, the bourgeois
Weren't those hearts born

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The day of Moliere's birth?

GEORGETTE: (singing)

This great man whose writings
Charmed the whole of France
Weren't scorned by the opinion
Of his cook
You know how he listened to her.
And since he consulted her
You can be proud when you are
Moliere's servant.

INVALID: (singing)

The doctors that he mocked,
That so proud faculty,
Tartuffe's that he revealed
Their souls in entirety;
You even fear his name
When you see the house
Where Moliere was born

ENGLISHMAN: (singing)

How many scenes do we see
In our England
Of elections
and of Ministers
Of budgets with stipends
As comic as slapstick?
That's what one doesn't find
At home with Mr. Moliere.

MADAME CHINCHILLA: (singing to the Audience)

Sometimes for our songs
A severe audience
Mixes its uproar with our noisy lyrics
Certain rumours of war
Too often take their turn
Let them be silent at least
For the anniversary of the day
That Moliere was born.

All repeat the general chorus:

Let's celebrate the prosperous day
When the first of authors
First saw the light.
And on the face of Moliere
Let's place some modest flowers.

CURTAIN