ЖАН-БАТИСТ МОЛЬЕР

THE BLUNDERER

Жан-Батист Мольер
The Blunderer

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The Blunderer:

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Molière
The Blunderer

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE

The Blunderer is generally believed to have been first acted at Lyons in 1653, whilst Molière and his troupe were in the provinces. In the month of November 1658 it was played for the first time in Paris, where it obtained a great and well-deserved success. It is chiefly based on an Italian comedy, written by Nicolo Barbieri, known as Beltrame, and called *L'Inavvertito*, from which the character of Mascarille, the servant, is taken, but differs in the ending, which is superior in the Italian play. An imitation of the classical boasting soldier, Captain Bellorofonte, Martelione, and a great number of *concetti*, have also not been copied by Molière. The fourth scene of the fourth act of *l'Ètourdi* contains some passages taken from the *Angelica*, a comedy by Fabritio de Fornaris, a Neapolitan, who calls himself on the title-page of his play "il Capitano Coccodrillo, comico confidente." A few remarks are borrowed from *la Emilia*, a comedy by Luigi Grotto, whilst here and there we find a reminiscence from Plautus, and one scene, possibly suggested by the sixteenth of the *Contes et Discours d'Eutrapel*, written by Nöel du Fail, Lord of la Hérissaye. Some of the scenes remind us of passages

in several Italian *Commedia del' arte* between *Arlecchino* and *Pantaleone* the personifications of impudence and ingenuity, as opposed to meekness and stupidity; they rouse the hilarity of the spectators, who laugh at the ready invention of the knave as well as at the gullibility of the old man, Before this comedy appeared the French stage was chiefly filled with plays full of intrigue, but with scarcely any attempt to delineate character or manners. In this piece the plot is carried on, partly in imitation of the Spanish taste, by a servant, Mascarille, who is the first original personage Molière has created; he is not a mere imitation of the valets of the Italian or classical comedy; he has not the coarseness and base feelings of the servants of his contemporaries, but he is a lineal descendant of Villon, a free and easy fellow, not over nice in the choice or execution of his plans, but inventing new ones after each failure, simply to keep in his hand; not too valiant, except perhaps when in his cups, rather jovial and chaffy, making fun of himself and everybody else besides, no respecter of persons or things, and doomed probably not to die in his bed. Molière must have encountered many such a man whilst the wars of the Fronde were raging, during his perigrinations in the provinces. Even at the present time, a Mascarille is no impossibility; for, "like master like man." There are also in *The Blunderer* too many incidents, which take place successively, without necessarily arising one from another. Some of the characters are not distinctly brought out, the style has often been found fault with, by Voltaire and

other competent judges, [Footnote: Victor Hugo appears to be of another opinion. M. Paul Stapfer, in his *les Artistes juges et parties* (2º Causerie, the Grammarian of Hauteville House, p. 55), states: – "the opinion of Victor Hugo about Molière is very peculiar. According to him, the best written of all the plays of our great comic author is his first work, *l'Ètourdi*. It possesses a brilliancy and freshness of style which still shine in *le Dépit amoureux*, but which gradually fade, because Molière, yielding unfortunately to other inspirations than his own, enters more and more upon a new way."] but these defects are partly covered by a variety and vivacity which are only fully displayed when heard on the stage.

In the third volume of the "Select Comedies of M. de Molière, London, 1732." *The Blunderer* is dedicated to the Right Honorable Philip, Earl of Chesterfield, in the following words: – "MY LORD, – The translation of *L'Ètourdi*, which, in company with the original, throws itself at your lordship's feet, is a part of a design form'd by some gentlemen, of exhibiting to the public a *Select Collection of Molière's Plays*, in *French* and *English*. This author, my lord, was truly a genius, caress'd by the greatest men of his own time, and honoured with the patronage of princes. When the translator, therefore, of this piece was to introduce him in an *English* dress in justice he owed him an *English* patron, and was readily determined to your lordship, whom all the world allows to be a genius of the first rank. But he is too sensible of the beauties of his author, and the refined taste your lordship is universally known to have in polite literature, to plead anything

but your candour and goodness, for your acceptance of this performance. He persuades himself that your lordship, who best knows how difficult it is to speak like *Molière*, even when we have his sentiments to inspire us, will be readiest to forgive the imperfections of this attempt. He is the rather encouraged, my lord, to hope for a candid reception from your lordship, on account of the usefulness of this design, which he flatters himself will have your approbation. 'Tis to spirit greater numbers of our countrymen to read this author, who wou'd otherwise not have attempted it, or, being foil'd in their attempts, wou'd throw him by in despair. And however generally the *French* language may be read, or spoke in England, there will be still very great numbers, even of those who are said to understand *French*, who, to master this comic writer, will want the help of a translation; and glad wou'd the publishers of this work be to guide the feebler steps of some such persons, not only till they should want no translation, but till some of them should be able to make a much better than the present. The great advantage of understanding *Molière* your Lordship best knows. What is it, but almost to understand mankind? He has shown such a compass of knowledge in human nature, as scarce to leave it in the power of succeeding writers in comedy to be originals; whence it has, in fact, appear'd, that they who, since his time, have most excelled in the *Comic* way, have copied *Molière*, and therein were sure of copying nature. In this author, my lord, our youth will find the strongest sense, the purest moral, and the keenest satyr,

accompany'd with the utmost politeness; so that our countrymen may take a *French* polish, without danger of commencing fops and apes, as they sometimes do by an affectation of the dress and manners of that people; for no man has better pourtray'd, or in a finer manner expos'd fopperies of all kinds, than this our author hath, in one or other of his pieces. And now,'tis not doubted, my lord, but your lordship is under some apprehensions, and the reader under some expectation, that the translator should attempt your character, in right of a dedicator, as a refin'd wit, and consummate statesman. But, my lord, speaking the truth to a person of your lordship's accomplishments, would have the appearance of flattery, especially to those who have not the honour of knowing you; and those who have, conceive greater ideas of you than the translator will pretend to express. Permit him, then, my lord, to crave your lordship's acceptance of this piece, which appears to you with a fair and correct copy of the original; but with a translation which can be of no manner of consequence to your lordship, only as it may be of consequence to those who *would* understand Molière if they *could*. Your lordship's countenance to recommend it to such will infinitely oblige, my lord, your lordship's most devoted, and most obedient, humble servant, THE TRANSLATOR."

To recommend to Lord Chesterfield an author on account of "the purest moral," or because "no man has … in a finer manner exposed fopperies of all kinds," appears to us now a bitter piece of satire; it may however, be doubted if it seemed

so to his contemporaries. [Footnote: Lord Chesterfield appeared not so black to those who lived in his own time as he does to us, for Bishop Warburton dedicated to him his *Necessity and Equity of an Established Religion and a Test-Law Demonstrated*, and says in his preface: "It is an uncommon happiness when an honest man can congratulate a patriot on his becoming minister," and expresses the hope, that "the temper of the times will suffer your Lordship to be instrumental in saving your country by a reformation of the general manners."]

Dryden has imitated *The Blunderer* in *Sir Martin Mar-all; or the Feigned Innocence*, first translated by William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, and afterwards adapted for the stage by "glorious John." It must have been very successful, for it ran no less than thirty-three nights, and was four times acted at court. It was performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields by the Duke of York's servants, probably at the desire of the Duke of Newcastle, as Dryden was engaged to write for the King's Company. It seems to have been acted in 1667, and was published, without the author's name, in 1668. But it cannot be fairly called a translation, for Dryden has made several alterations, generally not for the better, and changed *double entendres* into single ones. The heroine in the English play, Mrs. Millisent, (Celia), marries the roguish servant, Warner (Mascarille), who takes all his master's blunders upon himself, is bribed by nearly everybody, pockets insults and money with the same equanimity, and when married, is at last proved a gentleman, by the disgusting Lord Dartmouth,

who "cannot refuse to own him for my (his) kinsman." With a fine stroke of irony Millisent's father becomes reconciled to his daughter having married a serving-man as soon as he hears that the latter has an estate of eight hundred a year. Sir Martin Mar-all is far more conceited and foolish than Lelio; Trufaldin becomes Mr. Moody, a swashbuckler; a compound of Leander and Andrès, Sir John Swallow, a Kentish knight; whilst of the filthy characters of Lord Dartmouth, Lady Dupe, Mrs. Christian, and Mrs. Preparation, no counterparts are found in Molière's play. But the scene in which Warner plays the lute, whilst his master pretends to do so, and which is at last discovered by Sir Martin continuing to play after the servant has finished, is very clever. [Footnote: According to Geneste, *Some Accounts of the English Stage*, 10 vols., 1832, vol. i., p. 76, Bishop Warburton, in his *Alliance of Church and State* (the same work is mentioned in Note 2), and Porson in his *Letters to Travis* alludes to this scene.] Dryden is also said to have consulted *l'Amant indiscret* of Quinault, in order to furbish forth the Duke of Newcastle's labours. Sir Walter Scott states in his introduction: "in that part of the play, which occasions its second title of 'the feigned Innocence,' the reader will hardly find wit enough to counterbalance the want of delicacy." Murphy has borrowed from *The Blunderer* some incidents of the second act of his *School for Guardians*, played for the first time in 1767.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

[Footnote: Molière, Racine, and Corneille always call the dramatis personae *acteurs*, and not *personnages*.]

LELIO, *son to* PANDOLPHUS.

LEANDER, *a young gentleman of good birth*.

ANSELMO, *an old man*.

PANDOLPHUS, *an old man*.

TRUFALDIN, *an old man*.

ANDRÈS, *a supposed gipsy*.

MASCARILLE, *servant to Lelio*.

[Footnote: *Mascarille* is a name invented by Molière, and a diminutive of the Spanish *mascara*, a mask. Some commentators of Molière think that the author, who acted this part, may sometimes have played it in a mask, but this is now generally contradicted. He seems, however, to have performed it habitually, for after his death there was taken an inventory of all his dresses, and amongst these, according to M. Eudore Soulié, *Recherches sur Molière*, 1863, p. 278, was: "a … dress for *l'Étourdi*, consisting in doublet, knee-breeches, and cloak of satin." Before his time the usual name of the intriguing man-servant was *Philipin*.]

ERGASTE, *a servant*.

A MESSENGER.

Two Troops of Masqueraders.

CELIA, *slave to* TRUFALDIN.
HIPPOLYTA, *daughter to* ANSELMO.
Scene. – MESSINA.

ACT I

SCENE I. – LELIO, *alone*

LEL. Very well! Leander, very well! we must quarrel then, – we shall see which of us two will gain the day; and which, in our mutual pursuit after this young miracle of beauty, will thwart the most his rival's addresses. Do whatever you can, defend yourself well, for depend upon it, on my side no pains shall be spared.

SCENE II. – LELIO, MASCARILLE

LEL. Ah! Mascarille!

MASC. What's the matter?

LEL. A great deal is the matter. Everything crosses my love. Leander is enamoured of Celia. The Fates have willed it, that though I have changed the object of my passion, he still remains my rival.

MASC. Leander enamoured of Celia!

LEL. He adores her, I tell you.

[Footnote: In French, *tu, toi*, thee, thou, denote either social superiority or familiarity. The same phraseology was also employed in many English comedies of that time, but sounds so stiff at present, that the translator has everywhere used "you."]

MASC. So much the worse.

LEL. Yes, so much the worse, and that's what annoys me. However, I should be wrong to despair, for since you aid me, I ought to take courage. I know that your mind can plan many intrigues, and never finds anything too difficult; that you should be called the prince of servants, and that throughout the whole world…

MASC. A truce to these compliments; when people have need of us poor servants, we are darlings, and incomparable creatures; but at other times, at the least fit of anger, we are scoundrels, and ought to be soundly thrashed.

LEL. Nay, upon my word, you wrong me by this remark. But let us talk a little about the captive. Tell me, is there a heart so cruel, so unfeeling, as to be proof against such charming features? For my part, in her conversation as well as in her countenance, I see evidence of her noble birth. I believe that Heaven has concealed a lofty origin beneath such a lowly station.

MASC. You are very romantic with all your fancies. But what will Pandolphus do in this case? He is your father, at least he says so. You know very well that his bile is pretty often stirred up; that he can rage against you finely, when your behaviour offends him. He is now in treaty with Anselmo about your marriage with his daughter, Hippolyta; imagining that it is marriage alone that mayhap can steady you: now, should he discover that you reject his choice, and that you entertain a passion for a person nobody knows anything about; that the fatal power of this foolish love causes you to forget your duty and disobey him; Heaven knows what a storm will then burst forth, and what fine lectures you will be treated to.

LEL. A truce, I pray, to your rhetoric.

MASC. Rather a truce to your manner of loving, it is none of the best, and you ought to endeavour.

LEL. Don't you know, that nothing is gained by making me angry, that remonstrances are badly rewarded by me, and that a servant who counsels me acts against his own interest?

MASC. (*Aside*). He is in a passion now. (*Aloud*). All that I said was but in jest, and to try you. Do I look so very much like

a censor, and is Mascarille an enemy to pleasure? You know the contrary, and that it is only too certain people can tax me with nothing but being too good-natured. Laugh at the preachings of an old grey-beard of a father; go on, I tell you, and mind them not. Upon my word, I am of opinion that these old, effete and grumpy libertines come to stupify us with their silly stories, and being virtuous, out of necessity, hope through sheer envy to deprive young people of all the pleasures of life! You know my talents; I am at your service.

LEL. Now, this is talking in a manner I like. Moreover, when I first declared my passion, it was not ill received by the lovely object who inspired it; but, just now, Leander has declared to me that he is preparing to deprive me of Celia; therefore let us make haste; ransack your brain for the speediest means to secure me possession of her; plan any tricks, stratagems, rogueries, inventions, to frustrate my rival's pretensions.

MASC. Let me think a little upon this matter. (*Aside*). What can I invent upon this urgent occasion?

LEL. Well, the stratagem?

MASC. What a hurry you are in! My brain must always move slowly. I have found what you want; you must… No, that's not it; but if you would go…

LEL. Whither?

MASC. No, that's a flimsy trick. I thought that…

LEL. What is it?

MASC. That will not do either. But could you not…?

LEL. Could I not what?

MASC. No, you could not do anything. Speak to Anselmo.

LEL. And what can I say to him?

MASC. That is true; that would be falling out of the frying-pan into the fire. Something must be done however. Go to Trufaldin.

LEL. What to do?

MASC. I don't know.

LEL. Zounds! this is too much. You drive me mad with this idle talk.

MASC. Sir, if you could lay your hand on plenty of pistoles, [Footnote: The pistole is a Spanish gold coin worth about four dollars; formerly the French pistole was worth in France ten *livres*– about ten francs – they were struck in Franche-Comté.] we should have no need now to think of and try to find out what means we must employ in compassing our wishes; we might, by purchasing this slave quickly, prevent your rival from forestalling and thwarting you. Trufaldin, who takes charge of her, is rather uneasy about these gipsies, who placed her with him. If he could get back his money, which they have made him wait for too long, I am quite sure he would be delighted to sell her; for he always lived like the veriest curmudgeon; he would allow himself to be whipped for the smallest coin of the realm. Money is the God he worships above everything, but the worst of it is that…

LEL. What is the worst of it?..

MASC. That your father is just as covetous an old hunk, who does not allow you to handle his ducats, as you would like; that

there is no way by which we could now open ever so small a purse, in order to help you. But let us endeavour to speak to Celia for a moment, to know what she thinks about this affair; this is her window.

LEL. But Trufaldin watches her closely night and day; Take care.

MASC. Let us keep quiet in this corner. What luck! Here she is coming just in the nick of time.

SCENE III. – CELIA, LELIO, MASCARILLE

LEL. Ah! madam, what obligations do I owe to Heaven for allowing me to behold those celestial charms you are blest with! Whatever sufferings your eyes may have caused me, I cannot but take delight in gazing on them in this place.

CEL. My heart, which has good reason to be astonished at your speech, does not wish my eyes to injure any one; if they have offended you in anything, I can assure you I did not intend it.

LEL. Oh! no, their glances are too pleasing to do me an injury. I count it my chief glory to cherish the wounds they give me; and…

MASC. You are soaring rather too high; this style is by no means what we want now; let us make better use of our time; let us know of her quickly what…

TRUF. (*Within*). Celia!

MASC. (*To Lelio*). Well, what do you think now?

LEL. O cruel mischance! What business has this wretched old man to interrupt us!

MASC. Go, withdraw, I'll find something to say to him.

SCENE IV. – TRUFALDIN, CELIA, MASCARILLE, *and* LELIO *in a corner*

TRUF. (*To Celia*). What are you doing out of doors? And what induces you to go out, – you, whom I have forbidden to speak to any one?

CEL. I was formerly acquainted with this respectable young man; you have no occasion to be suspicious of him.

MASC. Is this Signor Trufaldin?

CEL. Yes, it is himself.

MASC. Sir, I am wholly yours; it gives me extreme pleasure to have this opportunity of paying my most humble respects to a gentleman who is everywhere so highly spoken of.

TRUF. Your most humble servant.

MASC. Perhaps I am troublesome, but I have been acquainted with this young woman elsewhere; and as I heard about the great skill she has in predicting the future, I wished to consult her about a certain affair.

TRUF. What! Do you dabble in the black art?

CEL. No, sir, my skill lies entirely in the white.

[Footnote: The white art (*magie blanche*) only dealt with beneficent spirits, and wished to do good to mankind; the black art (*magie noire*) invoked evil spirits.]

MASC. The case is this. The master whom I serve languishes for a fair lady who has captivated him. He would gladly disclose

the passion which burns within him to the beauteous object whom he adores, but a dragon that guards this rare treasure, in spite of all his attempts, has hitherto prevented him. And what torments him still more and makes him miserable, is that he has just discovered a formidable rival; so that I have come to consult you to know whether his love is likely to meet with any success, being well assured that from your mouth I may learn truly the secret which concerns us.

CEL. Under what planet was your master born?

MASC. Under that planet which never alters his love.

CEL. Without asking you to name the object he sighs for, the science which I possess gives me sufficient information. This young woman is high-spirited, and knows how to preserve a noble pride in the midst of adversity; she is not inclined to declare too freely the secret sentiments of her heart. But I know them as well as herself, and am going with a more composed mind to unfold them all to you, in a few words.

MASC. O wonderful power of magic virtue!

CEL. If your master is really constant in his affections, and if virtue alone prompts him, let him be under no apprehension of sighing in vain: he has reason to hope, the fortress he wishes to take is not averse to capitulation, but rather inclined to surrender.

MASC. That's something, but then the fortress depends upon a governor whom it is hard to gain over.

CEL. There lies the difficulty.

MASC. (*Aside, looking at Lelio*). The deuce take this

troublesome fellow, who is always watching us.

CEL. I am going to teach you what you ought to do.

LEL. (*Joining them*). Mr. Trufaldin, give yourself no farther uneasiness; it was purely in obedience to my orders that this trusty servant came to visit you; I dispatched him to offer you my services, and to speak to you concerning this young lady, whose liberty I am willing to purchase before long, provided we two can agree about the terms.

MASC. (*Aside*). Plague take the ass!

TRUF. Ho! ho! Which of the two am I to believe? This story contradicts the former very much.

MASC. Sir, this gentleman is a little bit wrong in the upper story: did you not know it?

TRUF. I know what I know, and begin to smell a rat. Get you in (*to Celia*), and never take such a liberty again. As for you two, arrant rogues, or I am much mistaken, if you wish to deceive me again, let your stories be a little more in harmony.

SCENE V. – LELIO, MASCARILLE

MASC. He is quite right. To speak plainly, I wish he had given us both a sound cudgelling. What was the good of showing yourself, and, like a Blunderer, coming and giving the lie to all that I had been saying?

LEL. I thought I did right.

MASC. To be sure. But this action ought not to surprise me. You possess so many counterplots that your freaks no longer astonish anybody.

LEL. Good Heavens! How I am scolded for nothing! Is the harm so great that it cannot be remedied? However, if you cannot place Celia in my hands, you may at least contrive to frustrate all Leander's schemes, so that he cannot purchase this fair one before me. But lest my presence should be further mischievous, I leave you.

MASC. (*Alone*). Very well. To say the truth, money would be a sure and staunch agent in our cause; but as this mainspring is lacking, we must employ some other means.

SCENE VI. – ANSELMO, MASCARILLE

ANS. Upon my word, this is a strange age we live in; I am ashamed of it; there was never such a fondness for money, and never so much difficulty in getting one's own. Notwithstanding all the care a person may take, debts now-a-days are like children, begot with pleasure, but brought forth with pain. It is pleasant for money to come into our purse; but when the time comes that we have to give it back, then the pangs of labour seize us. Enough of this, it is no trifle to receive at last two thousand francs which have been owing upwards of two years. What luck!

MASC. (*Aside*). Good Heavens! What fine game to shoot flying! Hist, let me see if I cannot wheedle him a little. I know with what speeches to soothe him. (*Joining him*). Anselmo I have just seen…

ANS. Who, prithee?

MASC. Your Nerina.

ANS. What does the cruel fair one say about me?

MASC. Say? that she is passionately fond of you.

ANS. Is she?

MASC. She loves you so that I very much pity her.

ANS. How happy you make me!

MASC. The poor thing is nearly dying with love. "Oh, my dearest Anselmo," she cries every minute, "when shall marriage

unite our two hearts? When will you vouchsafe to extinguish my flames?"

ANS. But why has she hitherto concealed this from me? Girls, in troth, are great dissemblers! Mascarille, what do you say, really? Though in years, yet I look still well enough to please the eye.

MASC. Yes, truly, that face of yours is still very passable; if it is not of the handsomest in the world, it is very agreeable. [Footnote: The original has a play on words which cannot be translated, as, *ce visage est encore fort mettable…s'il n'est pas des plus beaux, il est des agreables*; which two last words, according to pronunciation, can also mean disagreeable. This has been often imitated in French. After the Legion of Honour was instituted in France in 1804, some of the wits of the time asked the Imperialists: *etes-vous des honores?*]

ANS. So that…

MASC. (*Endeavouring to take the purse*). So that she dotes on you; and regards you no longer…

ANS. What?

MASC. But as a husband: and fully intends…

ANS. And fully intends…?

MASC. And fully intends, whatever may happen, to steal your purse…

ANS. To steal…?

MASC. (*Taking the purse, and letting it fall to the ground*). To steal a kiss from your mouth.

[Footnote: There is here again, in the original, a play on the words *bourse*, purse, and *bouche*, mouth, which cannot be rendered in English.]

ANS. Ah! I understand you. Come hither! The next time you see her, be sure to say as many fine things of me as possible.

MASC. Let me alone.

ANS. Farewell.

MASC. May Heaven guide you!

ANS. (*Returning*). Hold! I really should have committed a strange piece of folly; and you might justly have accused me of neglect. I engage you to assist me in serving my passion. You bring good tidings, and I do not give you the smallest present to reward your zeal. Here, be sure to remember…

MASC. O, pray, don't.

[Footnote: Compare in Shakspeare's *Winter's Tale* Autolyeus' answer to Camillo (Act IV., Scene 3), who gives him money, "I am a poor fellow, sir, … I cannot with conscience take it."]

ANS. Permit me…

MASC. I won't, indeed: I do not act thus for the sake of money.

ANS. I know you do not. But however…

MASC. No, Anselmo, I will not. I am a man of honour; this offends me.

ANS. Farewell then, Mascarille.

MASC. (*Aside*). How long-winded he is!

ANS. (*Coming back*). I wish you to carry a present to the fair

object of my desires. I will give you some money to buy her a ring, or any other trifle, as you may think will please her most.

MASC. No, there is no need of your money; without troubling yourself, I will make her a present; a fashionable ring has been left in my hands, which you may pay for afterwards, if it fits her.

ANS. Be it so; give it her in my name; but above all, manage matters in such a manner that she may still desire to make me her own.

SCENE VII. – LELIO, ANSELMO, MASCARILLE

LEL. (*Taking up the purse*). Whose purse is this?

[Footnote: During the whole of the preceding scene Mascarille has quietly kicked the purse away, so as to be out of sight of Anselmo, intending to pick it up when the latter has gone.]

ANS. Oh Heavens! I dropt it, and might have afterwards believed somebody had picked my pocket. I am very much obliged to you for your kindness, which saves me a great deal of vexation, and restores me my money. I shall go home this minute and get rid of it.

SCENE VIII. – LELIO, MASCARILLE

MASC. Od's death! You have been very obliging, very much so.

LEL. Upon my word! if it had not been for me he would have lost his money.

MASC. Certainly, you do wonders, and show to-day a most exquisite judgment and supreme good fortune. We shall prosper greatly; go on as you have begun.

LEL. What is the matter now? What have I done?

MASC. To speak plainly as you wish me to do, and as I ought, you have acted like a fool. You know very well that your father leaves you without money; that a formidable rival follows us closely; yet for all this, when to oblige you I venture on a trick of which I take all the shame and danger upon myself…

LEL. What? was this…?

MASC. Yes, ninny; it was to release the captive that I was getting the money, whereof your officiousness took care to deprive us.

LEL. If that is the case, I am in the wrong. But who could have imagined it?

MASC. It really required a great deal of discernment.

LEL. You should have made some signs to warn me of what was going on.

MASC. Yes, indeed; I ought to have eyes in my back. By Jove,

be quiet, and let us hear no more of your nonsensical excuses. Another, after all this, would perhaps abandon everything; but I have planned just now a master-stroke, which I will immediately put into execution, on condition that if…

[Footnote: The play is supposed to be in Sicily; hence Pagan oaths are not out of place. Even at the present time Italians say, *per Jove! per Bacco!*]

LEL. No, I promise you henceforth not to interfere either in word or deed.

MASC. Go away, then, the very sight of you kindles my wrath.

LEL. Above all, don't delay, for fear that in this business…

MASC. Once more, I tell you, begone! I will set about it. (*Exit Lelio*). Let us manage this well; it will be a most exquisite piece of roguery; if it succeeds, as I think it must. We'll try…But here comes the very man I want.

SCENE IX. – PANDOLPHUS, MASCARILLE

PAND. Mascarille!

MASC. Sir?

PAND. To tell you the truth, I am very dissatisfied with my son.

MASC. With my master? You are not the only one who complains of him. His bad conduct which has grown unbearable in everything, puts me each moment out of patience.

PAND. I thought, however, you and he understood one another pretty well.

MASC. I? Believe it not, sir. I am always trying to put him in mind of his duty: we are perpetually at daggers drawn. Just now we had a quarrel again about his engagement with Hippolyta, which, I find he is very averse to. By a most disgraceful refusal he violates all the respect due to a father.

PAND. A quarrel?

MASC. Yes, a quarrel, and a desperate one too.

PAND. I was very much deceived then, for I thought you supported him in all he did.

MASC. I? See what this world is come to! How is innocence always oppressed! If you knew but my integrity, you would give me the additional salary of a tutor, whereas I am only paid as his servant. Yes, you yourself could not say more to him than I do

in order to make him behave better. "For goodness' sake, sir," I say to him very often, "cease to be driven hither and thither with every wind that blows, – reform; look what a worthy father Heaven has given you, what a reputation he has. Forbear to stab him thus to the heart, and live, as he does, as a man of honour."

PAND. That was well said; and what answer could he make to this?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.