ЖАН-БАТИСТ МОЛЬЕР

THE SHOPKEEPER TURNED GENTLEMAN

Жан-Батист Мольер

The Shopkeeper Turned Gentleman

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The Shopkeeper Turned Gentleman:

Содержание

Molière
The Shopkeeper Turned Gentleman

PERSONS REPRESENTED

MR. JOURDAIN.
CLÉONTE, *in love with* LUCILE.
DORANTE, *a count, in love with* DORIMÈNE.
COVIELLE, *servant to* CLÉONTE.
A MUSIC MASTER, ETC.
A DANCING MASTER, ETC.
A FENCING MASTER.
A PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.
A MASTER TAILOR.
ASSISTANT TAILORS.
TWO LACKEYS.
MRS. JOURDAIN.
LUCILE, *daughter to* MR. JOURDAIN.
DORIMÈNE, *a marchioness*.
NICOLE, *maid-servant to* MR. JOURDAIN.

The scene is in PARIS, *in* MR. JOURDAIN'S *house*.

ACT I

The overture is played by a great many instruments; and in the middle of the stage the PUPIL of the MUSIC MASTER is seated at a table composing a serenade which MR. JOURDAIN has asked for.

SCENE I

– MUSIC MASTER, DANCING MASTER, THREE SINGERS, TWO VIOLIN PLAYERS, FOUR DANCERS.

MUS. MAS. (*to the* MUSICIANS). Come into this room, and rest till he comes.

DAN. MAS. (*to the* DANCERS). Come also, on this side.

MUS. MAS. (*to his* PUPIL). Have you finished?

PUP. Yes.

MUS. MAS. Let me see. Very good.

DAN. MAS. Is it anything new?

MUS. MAS. Yes; it is an air for a serenade that I made him compose while we are waiting for our gentleman to wake up.

DAN. MAS. Will you allow me to see what it is?

MUS. MAS. You shall hear it, as well as the dialogue, when he comes; he won't be long.

DAN. MAS. We both have plenty to do now; have we not?

MUS. MAS. Indeed we have. We have found the very man we both wanted. He brings us in a comfortable little income, with his notions of gentility and gallantry which he has taken into his head; and it would be well for your dancing and my music if everybody were like him.

DAN. MAS. No; not altogether. I wish, for his sake, that he would appreciate better than he does the things we give him.

MUS. MAS. He certainly understands them but little; but he pays well, and that is nowadays what our arts require above all things.

DAN. MAS. I must confess, for my part, that I rather hunger after glory. Applause finds a very ready answer in my heart, and I think it mortifying enough that in the fine arts we should have to exhibit ourselves before fools, and submit our compositions to the vulgar taste of an ass. No! say what you will, there is a real pleasure in working for people who are able to appreciate the refinements of an art; who know how to yield a kind recognition to the beauties of a work, and who, by felicitous approbations, reward you for your labour. Yes! the most charming recompense one can receive for the things which one does is to see them understood, and to have them received with the applause that honours. Nothing, in my opinion, can repay us better than this for all our fatigues; and the praises of the enlightened are a true delight to me.

MUS. MAS. I grant it; and I relish them as much as you do. There is certainly nothing more refreshing than the applause you speak of; still we cannot live on this flattering acknowledgment of our talent. Undiluted praise does not give competence to a man; we must have something more solid to fall back upon, and the best praise is the praise of the pocket. Our man, it is true, is a man of very limited capacity, who speaks at random upon all things, and only gives applause in the wrong place; but his money makes up for the errors of his judgment. He keeps

his discernment in his purse, and his praises are golden. This ignorant, commonplace citizen is, as you see, better to us than that clever nobleman who introduced us here.

DAN. MAS. There is some truth in what you say; still I think that you set a little too much value on money, and that it is in itself something so base that he who respects himself should never make a display of his love for it.

MUS. MAS. Yet you receive readily enough the money our man gives you.

DAN. MAS. Certainly; but my whole happiness does not depend upon it; and I can still wish that with all his wealth he had good taste.

MUS. MAS. I wish it as much as you do; and we are both working as hard as we can towards that end. But at the same time he gives us the opportunity of making ourselves known. He shall pay for others, and others shall praise for him.

DAN. MAS. Here he comes.

SCENE II

– MR. JOURDAIN (*in a dressing-gown and night-cap*), THE MUSIC MASTER, THE DANCING MASTER, THE PUPIL OF THE MUSIC MASTER, A LADY SINGER, TWO MEN SINGERS, DANCERS, TWO SERVANTS.

MR. JOUR. Well, gentlemen! and what have you got there? Are you ready to show me your little drollery?

DAN. MAS. How? What little drollery?

MR. JOUR. Why, the … what do you call it? Your prologue or dialogue of songs and dancing.

DAN. MAS. Ah, ah!

MUS. MAS. You see we are quite ready.

MR. JOUR. I have kept you waiting a little, but it is because I am to be dressed to-day like a man of rank, and my tailor sent me a pair of silk stockings which I thought I should never be able to get on.

MUS. MAS. We are here only to await your leisure.

MR. JOUR. I hope you will both stop till they have brought me my clothes, so that you may see me.

DAN. MAS. As you please.

MR. JOUR. You will see me equipped fashionably from head to foot.

MUS. MAS. We have no doubt of it.

MR. JOUR. I have had this dressing gown made for me.

DAN. MAS. It is very handsome,

MR. JOUR. My tailor told me that people of quality are dressed like this in the morning.

MUS. MAS. It becomes you wonderfully well.

MR. JOUR. Hullo! fellows! hullo! I say; my two lackeys, here!

1ST LACK. Do you want anything, Sir?

MR. JOUR. No; it was only to see if you heard me readily. (*To the* TWO MASTERS) What do you think of my liveries?

DAN. MAS. They are magnificent.

MR. JOUR. (*opening his gown, and showing his tight breeches of scarlet velvet, and a green velvet morning jacket which he is wearing*). This is a kind of deshabille to go about early in the morning.

MUS. MAS. It is charming.

MR. JOUR. I say! lackey!

1ST LACK. Sir.

MR. JOUR. The other.

2ND LACK. Sir.

MR. JOUR. (*taking off his dressing-gown*). Hold my dressing-gown. (*To the* TWO MASTERS) Do you think I look well so?

DAN. MAS. Perfectly well; nothing could be better.

MR. JOUR. Now let us see a little of this affair of yours.

MUS. MAS. I should like, first of all, for you to hear an air which he (*pointing to his* PUPIL) has just composed for the serenade you asked of me. He is one of my pupils, who has an admirable talent for this kind of thing.

MR. JOUR. Yes; but you should not have had it done by a pupil; you were not too good for the business yourself.

MUS. MAS. You must not be deceived, Sir, by the name of pupil. These kind of pupils know sometimes as much as the greatest masters; and the air is as beautiful as possible. Only just listen to it.

MR. JOUR. (*to his* SERVANTS). Hand me my dressing-gown, so that may hear better… Stay, I believe that I shall be better without… No, give it me back again; that will be best.

THE PUPIL

All night and day I languish on;
the sick man none can save
Since those bright eyes have laid him low,
to your stern laws a slave;
If thus to those you love
a meed of care you bring,
What pain, fair Iris, will you find
your foemen's hearts to wring?

MR. JOUR. This song seems to me rather dismal; it sends one to sleep; could you not enliven it a bit here and there?

MUS. MAS. We must, Sir, suit the air to the words.

MR. JOUR. I was taught a very pretty one quite lately; stop a moment … ahem … What is it? How does it begin?

DAN. MAS. Upon my word, Sir, I do not know.

MR. JOUR. There is some lamb in it.

DAN. MAS. Lamb?

MR. JOUR. Yes, ah! I have it. (*He sings.*) /

When I had Jenny seen,
I thought her kind as fair,
I thought she'd gentler been
Than lambkin on the green;
But ah! but ah! she's far less mild,
Far sterner, I declare,
Than tigers are in forests wild.

Now, isn't it pretty?

MUS. MAS. The prettiest thing in the world.

DAN. MAS. And you sing it very well.

MR. JOUR. Do I? I have never learnt music.

MUS. MAS. You ought to learn it, Sir, as you do dancing. These are two arts which are closely bound together.

DAN. MAS. And which open the human mind to the beauty of things.

MR. JOUR. Do people of rank learn music also?

MUS. MAS. Yes, Sir.

MR. JOUR. I will learn it, then; but I hardly know how I shall find time for it; for, besides the fencing master who teaches me, I have engaged a professor of philosophy, who is to begin this morning.

MUS. MAS. Philosophy is something, no doubt; but music, Sir, music…

DAN. MAS. Music and dancing, Sir; in music and dancing we have all that we need.

MUS. MAS. There is nothing so useful in a state as music.

DAN. MAS. There is nothing so necessary to men as dancing.

MUS. MAS. Without music no kingdom can exist.

DAN. MAS. Without dancing a man can do nothing.

MUS. MAS. All the disorders, all the wars that happen in the world, are caused by nothing but the want of music.

DAN. MAS. All the sorrows and troubles of mankind, all the fatal misfortunes which fill the pages of history, the blunders of statesmen, the failures of great captains, all these come from the want of a knowledge of dancing.

MR. JOUR. How is that?

MUS. MAS. Does not war arise from a want of concord between them?

MR. JOUR. True.

MUS. MAS. And if all men learnt music, would not this be the means of keeping them in better harmony, and of seeing universal peace reign in the world?

MR. JOUR. You are quite right.

DAN. MAS. When a man has committed some fault, either in the management of his family affairs, or in the government of a state, or in the command of an army, do we not say, "So-and-so has made a false step in such an affair"?

MR. JOUR. Yes, we do say so.

DAN. MAS. And from whence can proceed the false step if

it is not from ignorance of the art of dancing?

MR. JOUR. This is true, and you are both right.

DAN. MAS. This will give you an idea of the excellence and importance of dancing and music.

MR. JOUR. I understand it now.

MUS. MAS. Will you look at our two compositions?

MR. JOUR. Yes.

MUS. MAS. I have already told you that it is a short attempt which I made some time since to represent the different passions which can be expressed by music.

MR. JOUR. Very well.

MUS. MAS. (*to the* SINGERS). Come forward. (*To* MR. JOURDAIN) You must fancy that they are dressed like shepherds.

MR. JOUR. Why always shepherds? One sees nothing but that everywhere.

DAN. MAS. When we make people speak to music, we must, for the sake of probability, adopt the pastoral. Singing has always been affected by shepherds, and it is not very likely that our princes or citizens would sing their passions in dialogue.

MR. JOUR. Well! well! Go on.

LADY SINGER.

The realm of passion in a loving heart
Full many a care may vex, full many a smart;
In vain we fondly languish, softly sigh;
We learn too late, whatever friends may cry,

To value liberty before it fly.

1ST MAN SINGER.

Sweeter than liberty are love's bright fires,
Kindling in two fond hearts the same desires;
Happiness could never live by love unfed,
Pleasure itself would die if love were dead.

2ND MAN SINGER.

Love would be sweet if love could constant be,
But ah! sad fate, no faithful loves we see!
The fair are false; no prayers their heart can move,
And who will love when they inconstant prove?

1ST SING. Ah! love, how sweet thou art!
LADY SING. Ah! freedom is happier!
2ND SING. Thou inconstant heart!
1ST SING. To me how dear, how blest!
LADY SING. My soul enraptured see!
2ND SING. I shrink, I turn from thee!
1ST SING. Ah! leave this idle strife, and learn to love.
LADY SING. I will show thee one who'll constant prove.
2ND SING. Alas! where seek her?
LADY SING.

To defend our name,

I offer you my heart, nor heed your blame.

2ND SING. But, Lady, dare I trust that promise blest?
LADY SING. Experience will decide who loves the best.
2ND SING.

Who fails in constancy or depth of love
The gods from him their favour will remove.

ALL THREE.

Such noble feelings should our souls inspire,
And melt our heart beneath love's gentle fire.
For love is sweet when hearts are true and pure,
And love shall last while earth and heaven endure.

MR. JOUR. Is that all?
MUS. MAS. Yes.
MR. JOUR. I think it very well turned out, and there are in it some pretty enough little sayings.
DAN. MAS. You have here from me an essay of the most beautiful movements and most graceful attitudes with which a dance can be varied.
MR. JOUR. Are these shepherds also?
DAN. MAS. They are what you please. (*To the* DANCERS) Ho! ho! here!

Entry of the BALLET.

FOUR DANCERS *execute the various movements and steps which the*

DANCING MASTER *orders them.*

ACT II

SCENE I

– MR. JOURDAIN, DANCING MASTER, MUSIC MASTER.

MR. JOUR. This performance is not bad, and these fellows don't do it badly.

MUS. MAS. When the dance is accompanied by the music, you will find it still more effective, and you will see something charming in the little ballet we have prepared for you.

MR. JOUR. It is for this afternoon, mind; and the person for whom I have ordered all this is to do me the honour of coming to dine here.

DAN. MAS. Everything is ready.

MUS. MAS. But, Sir, this is not enough; a gentleman magnificent in all his ideas like you, and who has taste for doing things handsomely, should have a concert at his house every Wednesday or Thursday.

MR. JOUR. But why should I? Do people of quality have concerts?

MUS. MAS. Yes, Sir.

MR. JOUR. Oh! very well! Then I too must have some. It'll

be fine?

MUS. MAS. Very. You must have three voices: a treble, a counter-tenor, and a bass; which must be accompanied by a bass-viol, a theorbo lute, and a harpsichord for the thorough-basses, with two violins to play the harmonics.

MR. JOUR. You must also have a trumpet-marine. [Footnote: An instrument with one thick string.] The trumpet-marine is an instrument that I like, and a very harmonious one.

MUS. MAS. Leave all the arrangements to us.

MR. JOUR. Be sure you don't forget to send me, by and by, some singers to sing at table.

MUS. MAS. You shall have all that is necessary.

MR. JOUR. But, above all, give us a nice ballet.

MUS. MAS. You will be pleased with it, and particularly with certain minuets which you shall see in it.

MR. JOUR. Ah! minuets are my favourite dance, and you should see me dance one. Come, my master.

DAN. MAS. A hat, Sir, if you please. (MR. JOURDAIN *takes the hat from his* SERVANT, *and puts it on over his night-cap; his master takes him by both hands, and makes him dance to a minuet air which he hums.*) La, la, la, la, la, la; la, la, la, la, la, la, la; la, la, la, la, la, la; la, la, la, la, la, la; la, la, la, la, la; in time, if you please; la, la, la, la, la; the right leg, la, la, la; do not shake your shoulders so much; la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la; your two arms are crippled; la, la, la, la, la; hold up your head; turn out your toes; la, la, la; your body erect.

MR. JOUR. Eh! eh!

MUS. MAS. Wonderfully well done.

MR. JOUR. Now I think of it! Teach me to make a bow to a marchioness.

I shall have need of it presently.

DAN. MAS. A bow to a marchioness?

MR. JOUR. Yes; a marchioness, whose name is Dorimène.

DAN. MAS. Give me your hand.

MR. JOUR. No. You need only do it yourself. I shall be sure to remember.

DAN. MAS. If you want to salute her with great respect, you must first of all bow whilst stepping backward, then, advancing towards her, make three bows, and at the last bow bend down to her very knees.

MR. JOUR. Do it a little for me to see. (*After the* DANCING MASTER *has made three bows*) Good.

SCENE II.

– MR. JOURDAIN, MUSIC MASTER, DANCING MASTER, A SERVANT.

SER. Sir, your fencing master is here.

MR. JOUR. Make him come in here for my lesson. (*To the* MUSIC *and* DANCING MASTERS) I wish you to see me perform.

SCENE III.

– MR. JOURDAIN, FENCING MASTER, MUSIC MASTER, DANCING MASTER, A SERVANT *holding two foils.*

FEN. MAS. (*taking the two foils from the hands of the* SERVANT, *and giving one to* MR. JOURDAIN). Now, Sir, the salute. The body upright, resting slightly on the left thigh. The legs not so far apart; the feet in a line. The wrist in a line with the thigh. The point of the foil opposite the shoulder. The arm not quite so much extended. The left hand as high as the eye. The left shoulder more squared. The head erect; the look firm. Advance; the body steady. Engage my blade in quart, and retain the engagement. One, two. As you were. Once more, with the foot firm. One, two; a step to the rear. When you make an attack, Sir, the sword should move first, and the body be well held back. One, two. Engage my blade in tierce, and retain the engagement. Advance; the body steady. Advance; one, two. Recover. Once more. One, two. A step to the rear. On guard, Sir; on guard. (*The* FENCING MASTER *delivers two or three attacks, calling out*, "On guard!")

MR. JOUR. Ah!

MUS. MAS. You are doing wonders.

FEN. MAS. As I have already told you, the whole art of fencing consists of one of two things – in giving and not

receiving; and as I showed you the other day by demonstrative reason, it is impossible for you to receive if you know how to turn aside your adversary's weapon from the line of your body; and this again depends only on a slight movement of the wrist to the inside or the out. [Footnote: Kindly corrected by Mr. Maclaren, The Gymnasium, Oxford.]

MR. JOUR. So that a man, without having any courage, is sure of killing his man, and of not being killed himself.

FEN. MAS. Exactly. Did you not see plainly the demonstration of it?

MR. JOUR. Yes.

FEN. MAS. And this shows you of what importance we must be in a state; and how much the science of arms is superior to all the other useless sciences, such as dancing, music…

DAN. MAS. Gently, Mr. Fencing Master; speak of dancing with respect, if you please.

MUS. MAS. Pray learn to treat more properly the excellence of music.

FEN. MAS. You certainly are odd sort of people to try and compare your sciences to mine.

MUS. MAS. Just see the man of importance!

DAN. MAS. A fine animal, to be sure, with his plastron.

FEN. MAS. Take care, my little dancing master, or I shall make you dance in fine style. And you, my little musician, I'll teach you to sing out.

DAN. MAS. And you, my beater of iron, I'll teach you your

trade.

MR. JOUR. (*to the* DANCING MASTER). Are you mad to go and quarrel with a man, who understands tierce and quart, and knows how to kill another by demonstrative reason?

DAN. MAS. I don't care a straw for his demonstrative reason, and his tierce and his quart.

MR. JOUR. (*to the* DANCING MASTER). Gently, I tell you.

FEN. MAS. (*to the* DANCING MASTER). How! You little impudent fellow!

MR. JOUR. Ah! my fencing master!

DAN. MAS. (*to the* FENCING MASTER). How! you great cart-horse!

MR. JOUR. Stop! my dancing master!

FEN. MAS. If I once begin with you…

MR. JOUR. (*to the* FENCING MASTER). Gently.

DAN. MAR. If I lay my hand upon you…

MR. JOUR. Softly.

FEN. MAS. I will beat you after such a fashion…

MR. JOUR. (*to the* FENCING MASTER). For goodness sake!

DAN. MAS. I'll thrash you in such a style…

MR. JOUR. (*to the* DANCING MASTER). I beg of you…

MUS. MAS. Let us teach him a little how to behave himself.

MR. JOUR. (*to the* MUSIC MASTER). Gracious heavens! Do stop.

SCENE IV.

– PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, MR. JOURDAIN, MUSIC MASTER, DANCING MASTER, FENCING MASTER, A SERVANT.

MR. JOUR. Oh! you are in the very nick of time with your philosophy.

Pray come here and restore peace among these people.

PROF. PHIL. What is going on? What is the matter, gentlemen?

MR. JOUR. They have got themselves into such a rage about the importance that ought to be attached to their different professions that they have almost come to blows over it.

PROF. PHIL. For shame, gentlemen; how can you thus forget yourselves? Have you not read the learned treatise which Seneca composed on anger? Is there anything more base and more shameful than the passion which changes a man into a savage beast, and ought not reason to govern all our actions?

DAN. MAS. How, Sir! He comes and insults us both in our professions; he despises dancing, which I teach, and music, which is his occupation.

PROF. PHIL. A wise man is above all the insults that can be offered him; and the best and noblest answer one can make to all kinds of provocation is moderation and patience.

FEN. MAS. They have both the impertinence to compare

their professions to mine!

PROF. PHIL. Why should this offend you? It is not for vain glory and rank that men should strive among themselves. What distinguishes one man from another is wisdom and virtue.

DAN. MAS. I maintain that dancing is a science which we cannot honour too much. [Footnote: In fact, dancing was much more honoured in Molière's time than it is now.]

MUS. MAS. And I that music is a science which all ages have revered.

FEN. MAS. And I, I maintain against them both that the science of attack and defence is the best and most necessary of all sciences.

PROF. PHIL. And for what, then, do you count philosophy? I think you are all three very bold fellows to dare to speak before me with this arrogance, and impudently to give the name of science to things which are not even to be honoured with the name of art, but which can only be classed with the trades of prize-fighter, street-singer, and mountebank.

FEN. MAS. Get out, you dog of a philosopher.

MUS. MAS. Get along with you, you beggarly pedant.

DAN. MAS. Begone, you empty-headed college scout.

PROF. PHIL. How, scoundrels that you are!

(*The* PHILOSOPHER *rushes upon them, and they all three belabour him.*)

MR. JOUR. Mr. Philosopher.

PROF. PHIL. Infamous villains!

MR. JOUR. Mr. Philosopher!

FEN. MAS. Plague take the animal!

MR. JOUR. Gentlemen!

PROF. PHIL. Impudent cads!

MR. JOUR. Mr. Philosopher!

DAN. MAS. Deuce take the saddled ass!

MR. JOUR. Gentlemen!

PROF. PHIL. Scoundrels!

MR. JOUR. Mr. Philosopher!

MUS. MAS. Devil take the insolent fellow!

MR. JOUR. Gentlemen!

PROF. PHIL. Knaves, beggars, wretches, impostors!

MR. JOUR. Mr. Philosopher! Gentlemen! Mr. Philosopher! Gentlemen! Mr. Philosopher!

SCENE V.

– MR. JOURDAIN, A SERVANT.

MR. JOUR. Well! fight as much as you like, I can't help it; but don't expect me to go and spoil my dressing-gown to separate you. I should be a fool indeed to thrust myself among them, and receive some blow or other that might hurt me.

SCENE VI.

– PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, MR. JOURDAIN, A SERVANT.

PROF. PHIL. (*setting his collar in order*). Now for our lesson.

MR. JOUR. Ah! Sir, how sorry I am for the blows they have given you.

PROF. PHIL. It is of no consequence. A philosopher knows how to receive things calmly, and I shall compose against them a satire, in the style of Juvenal, which will cut them up in proper fashion. Let us drop this subject. What do you wish to learn?

MR. JOUR. Everything I can, for I have the greatest desire in the world to be learned; and it vexes me more than I can tell that my father and mother did not make me learn thoroughly all the sciences when I was young.

PROF. PHIL. This is a praiseworthy feeling. *Nam sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago*. You understand this, and you have no doubt a knowledge of Latin?

MR. JOUR. Yes; but act as if I had none. Explain to me the meaning of it.

PROF. PHIL. The meaning of it is, that, *without science, life is an image of death*.

MR. JOUR. That Latin is quite right.

PROF. PHIL. Have you any principles, any rudiments of science?

MR. JOUR. Oh yes; I can read and write.

PROF. PHIL. With what would you like to begin? Shall I teach you logic?

MR. JOUR. And what may this logic be?

PROF. PHIL. It is that which teaches us the three operations of the mind.

MR. JOUR. What are they, these three operations of the mind?

PROF. PHIL. The first, the second, and the third. The first is to conceive well by means of universals; the second, to judge well by means of categories; and the third, to draw a conclusion aright by means of the figures *Barbara, Celarent, Darii, Ferio, Baralipton*, &c.

MR. JOUR. Pooh! what repulsive words. This logic does not by any means suit me. Teach me something more enlivening.

PROF. PHIL. Will you learn moral philosophy?

MR. JOUR. Moral philosophy?

PROF. PHIL. Yes.

MR. JOUR. What does it say, this moral philosophy?

PROF. PHIL. It treats of happiness, teaches men to moderate their passions, and…

MR. JOUR. No, none of that. I am devilishly hot-tempered, and, morality or no morality, I like to give full vent to my anger whenever I have a mind to it.

PROF. PHIL. Would you like to learn physics?

MR. JOUR. And what have physics to say for themselves?

PROF. PHIL. Physics are that science which explains the principles of natural things and the properties of bodies, which discourses of the nature of the elements, of metals, minerals, stones, plants, and animals; which teaches us the cause of all the meteors, the rainbow, the *ignis fatuus*, comets, lightning, thunder, thunderbolts, rain, snow, hail, wind, and whirlwinds.

MR. JOUR. There is too much hullaballoo in all that; too much riot and rumpus.

PROF. PHIL. What would you have me teach you then?

MR. JOUR. Teach me spelling.

PROF. PHIL. Very good.

MR. JOUR. Afterwards you will teach me the almanac, so that I may know when there is a moon, and when there isn't one.

PROF. PHIL. Be it so. In order to give a right interpretation to your thought, and to treat this matter philosophically, we must begin, according to the order of things, with an exact knowledge of the nature of the letters, and the different way in which each is pronounced. And on this head I have to tell you that letters are divided into vowels, so called because they express the voice, and into consonants, so called because they are sounded with the vowels, and only mark the different articulations of the voice. There are five vowels or voices, *a, e, i, o, u*. [Footnote: It is scarcely necessary to say that this description, such as it is, only applies to the French vowels as they are pronounced in *pâte, thé, ici, côté, du* respectively.]

MR. JOUR. I understand all that.

PROF. PHIL. The vowel *a* is formed by opening the mouth very wide; *a*.

MR. JOUR. *A, a*; yes.

PROF. PHIL. The vowel *e* is formed by drawing the lower jaw a little nearer to the upper; *a, e*.

MR. JOUR. *A, e; a, e;* to be sure. Ah! how beautiful that is!

PROF. PHIL. And the vowel *i* by bringing the jaws still closer to one another, and stretching the two corners of the mouth towards the ears; *a, e, i*.

MR. JOUR. *A, e, i, i, i, i*. Quite true. Long live science!

PROF. PHIL. The vowel *o* is formed by opening the jaws, and drawing in the lips at the two corners, the upper and the lower; *o*.

MR. JOUR. *O, o*. Nothing can be more correct; *a, e, i, o, i, o*. It is admirable! *I, o, i, o*.

PROF. PHIL. The opening of the mouth exactly makes a little circle, which resembles an *o*.

MR. JOUR. *O, o, o*. You are right. *O*! Ah! what a fine thing it is to know something!

PROF. PHIL. The vowel *u* is formed by bringing the teeth near each other without entirely joining them, and thrusting out both the lips whilst also bringing them near together without quite joining them; *u*.

MR. JOUR. *U, u*. There is nothing more true; *u*.

PROF. PHIL. Your two lips lengthen as if you were pouting; so that, if you wish to make a grimace at anybody, and to laugh at him, you have only to *u* him.

MR. JOUR. *U, u*. It's true. Oh! that I had studied when I was younger, so as to know all this.

PROF. PHIL. To-morrow we will speak of the other letters, which are the consonants.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.