

**GEORGE
FARQUHAR**

THE
INCONSTANT

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The Inconstant:

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REMARKS

This comedy, by a favourite writer, had a reception, on the first night of its appearance, far inferior to that of his other productions. It was, with difficulty, saved from condemnation; and the author, in his preface, has boldly charged some secret enemies with having attempted its destruction.

Dramatic authors have fewer enemies at the present period, or they have more humility, than formerly. For now, when their works are hissed from the stage, they acknowledge they have had a fair trial, and deserve their fate. Wherefore should an author seek for remote causes, to account for his failures, when to himself alone, he is certain ever to impute all his success?

Neither the wit, humour, nor the imitation of nature, in this play, are of that forcible kind, with which the audience had been usually delighted by Farquhar; and, that the moral gave a degree of superiority to this drama, was, in those days, of little consequence: the theatre was ordained, it was thought, for mere pleasure, nor did any one wish it should degenerate into instruction.

It may be consolatory to the disappointed authors of

the present day, to find, how the celebrated author of this comedy was incommoded with theatrical crosses. He was highly offended, that his play was not admired; still more angry, that there was an empty house, on his sixth night, and more angry still, that the Opera House, for the benefit of a French dancer, was, about this time, filled even to the annoyance of the crowded company. The following are his own words on the occasion:

"It is the prettiest way in the world of despising the French king, to let him see that we can afford money to bribe his dancers, when he, poor man, has exhausted all his stock, in buying some pitiful towns and principalities. What can be a greater compliment to our generous nation, than to have the lady on her re-tour to Paris, boast of her splendid entertainment in England: of the complaisance, liberty, and good nature of a people, who thronged her house so full, that she had not room to stick a pin; and left a poor fellow, who had the misfortune of being one of themselves, without one farthing, for half a year's pains he had taken for their entertainment."

This complaint is curious, on account of the talents of the man who makes it; and, for the same cause, highly reprehensible. If Farquhar, thought himself superior to the French dancer, why did he honour her by a comparison? and, if he wanted bread, why did he not suffer in silence, rather than insinuate, he should like to receive it, through the medium of a benefit?

A hundred years of refinement (the exact time since this author wrote) may have weakened the force of the dramatic pen;

but it has, happily, elevated authors above the servile spirit of dedications, or the meaner practice, of taking public benefits.

As the moral of this comedy has been mentioned as one of its highest recommendations, it must be added – that, herein, the author did not invent, but merely adopt, as his own, an occurrence which took place in Paris, about that period, just as he has represented it in his last act. The Chevalier de Chastillon was the man who is personated by young Mirabel, in this extraordinary event; and the Chevalier's friend, his betrothed wife, and his beautiful courtesan, are all exactly described in the characters of Duretete, Oriana, and Lamorce.

Having justly abridged Farquhar of the honour of inventing a moral, it may be equally just, to make a slight apology for his chagrin at the slender receipts of his sixth night. – He once possessed the income, which arose from a captain's commission in the army; and having prudently conceived that this little revenue would not maintain a wife, he had resolved to live single, unless chance should bestow on him a woman of fortune. His person and address were so extremely alluring, that a woman of family, but of no fortune, conceiving the passion she felt for him to be love, pretended she possessed wealth, and deceived him into a marriage, which plunged them both into the utmost poverty.

This admirable dramatist seems to have been born for a dupe. In his matrimonial distress, he applied to a nobleman, who had professed a friendship for him, and besought his advice how to

surmount his difficulties: The counsel given, was – "Sell your commission, for present support, and, before the money for its sale is expended, I will procure you another." Farquhar complied – and his patron broke his word.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Old Mirabel *Mr. Downton.*

Young Mirabel *Mr. C. Kemble.*

Captain Duretete *Mr. Bannister.*

Dugard *Mr. Holland.*

Petit *Mr. De Camp.*

Bravoes —*Messrs. Maddocks, Webb, Evans and Sparks*

Oriana *Mrs. Young.*

Bizarre *Mrs. Jordan.*

Lamorce *Miss Tidswell.*

ACT THE FIRST

SCENE I

The Street

Enter Dugard, and his Man, Petit, in Riding Habits

Dug. Sirrah, what's o'clock?

Petit. Turned of eleven, sir.

Dug. No more! We have rid a swinging pace from Nemours, since two this morning! Petit, run to Rousseau's, and bespeak a dinner, at a Lewis d'or a head, to be ready by one.

Petit. How many will there be of you, sir?

Dug. Let me see – Mirabel one, Duretete two, myself three —

Petit. And I four.

Dug. How now, sir? at your old travelling familiarity! When abroad, you had some freedom, for want of better company, but among my friends, at Paris, pray remember your distance – Begone, sir! [*Exit Petit.*] This fellow's wit was necessary abroad, but he's too cunning for a domestic; I must dispose of him some

way else. – Who's here? Old Mirabel, and my sister! – my dearest sister!

Enter Old Mirabel and Oriana

Oriana. My Brother! Welcome!

Dug. Monsieur Mirabel! I'm heartily glad to see you.

Old Mir. Honest Mr. Dugard, by the blood of the Mirabels, I'm your most humble servant!

Dug. Why, sir, you've cast your skin, sure; you're brisk and gay – lusty health about you – no sign of age, but your silver hairs.

Old Mir. Silver hairs! Then they are quicksilver hairs, sir. Whilst I have golden pockets, let my hairs be silver, an' they will. Adsbud, sir, I can dance, and sing, and drink, and – no, I can't wench. But Mr. Dugard, no news of my son Bob in all your travels?

Dug. Your son's come home, sir.

Old Mir. Come home! Bob come home! By the blood of the Mirabels, Mr. Dugard, what say you?

Oriana. Mr. Mirabel returned, sir?

Dug. He's certainly come, and you may see him within this hour or two.

Old Mir. Swear it, Mr. Dugard, presently swear it.

Dug. Sir, he came to town with me this morning; I left him at the Banieurs, being a little disordered after riding, and I shall see him again presently.

Old Mir. What! and he was ashamed to ask a blessing with his boots on! A nice dog! Well, and how fares the young rogue, ha?

Dug. A fine gentleman, sir; he'll be his own messenger.

Old Mir. A fine gentleman! But is the rogue like me still?

Dug. Why, yes, sir; he's very like his mother, and as like you, as most modern sons are to their fathers.

Old Mir. Why, sir, don't you think that I begat him?

Dug. Why, yes, sir; you married his mother, and he inherits your estate. He's very like you, upon my word.

Oriana. And pray, brother, what's become of his honest companion, Duretete?

Dug. Who, the captain? The very same, he went abroad; he's the only Frenchman I ever knew, that could not change. Your son, Mr. Mirabel, is more obliged to nature for that fellow's composition, than for his own: for he's more happy in Duretete's folly than his own wit. In short, they are as inseparable as finger and thumb; but the first instance in the world, I believe, of opposition in friendship.

Old Mir. Very well: will he be home, to dinner, think ye?

Dug. Sir, he has ordered me to bespeak a dinner for us at Rousseau's, at a Lewis d'or a head.

Old Mir. A Lewis d'or a head! Well said, Bob; by the blood of the Mirabels, Bob's improved! But, Mr. Dugard, was it so civil of Bob, to visit Monsieur Rousseau, before his own natural father, eh? Harkye, Oriana, what think you now, of a fellow that can eat and drink ye a whole Lewis d'or at a sitting? He must be as

strong as Hercules; life and spirit in abundance. Before Gad, I don't wonder at these men of quality, that their own wives can't serve them! A Lewis d'or a head! 'tis enough to stock the whole nation with bastards, 'tis, 'faith! Mr. Dugard, I leave you with your sister.[*Exit.*

Dug. Well, sister, I need not ask you how you do, your looks resolve me; fair, tall, well-shaped; you're almost grown out of my remembrance.

Oriana. Why, truly, brother, I look pretty well, thank nature, and my toilet; I eat three meals a day, am very merry when up, and sleep soundly when I'm down.

Dug. But, sister, you remember that upon my going abroad, you would chuse this old gentleman for your guardian; he's no more related to our family, than Prester John, and I have no reason to think you mistrusted my management of your fortune. Therefore, pray be so kind as to tell me, without reservation, the true cause of making such a choice.

Oriana. Lookye, brother, you were going a rambling, and 'twas proper, lest I should go a rambling too, that somebody should take care of me. Old Monsieur Mirabel is an honest gentleman, was our father's friend, and has a young lady in his house, whose company I like, and who has chosen him for her guardian as well as I.

Dug. Who, Mademoiselle Bizarre?

Oriana. The same; we live merrily together, without scandal or reproach; we make much of the old gentleman between us,

and he takes care of us; all the week we dance and sing, and upon Sundays, go first to church, and then to the play. — Now, brother, besides these motives for chusing this gentleman for my guardian, perhaps I had some private reasons.

Dug. Not so private as you imagine, sister; your love to young Mirabel's no secret, I can assure you, but so public, that all your friends are ashamed on't.

Oriana. O' my word, then, my friends are very bashful; though I'm afraid, sir, that those people are not ashamed enough at their own crimes, who have so many blushes to spare for the faults of their neighbours.

Dug. Ay, but, sister, the people say —

Oriana. Pshaw! hang the people! they'll talk treason, and profane their Maker; must we, therefore infer, that our king is a tyrant, and religion a cheat? Lookye, brother, their court of inquiry is a tavern, and their informer, claret: They think as they drink, and swallow reputations like loches; a lady's health goes briskly round with the glass, but her honour is lost in the toast.

Dug. Ay, but sister, there is still something —

Oriana. If there be something, brother, 'tis none of the people's something: Marriage is my thing, and I'll stick to't.

Dug. Marriage! young Mirabel marry! he'll build churches sooner. Take heed, sister, though your honour stood proof to his home-bred assaults, you must keep a stricter guard for the future: He has now got the foreign air, and the Italian softness; his wit's improved by converse, his behaviour finished by observation,

and his assurances confirmed by success. Sister, I can assure you, he has made his conquests; and 'tis a plague upon your sex, to be the soonest deceived, by those very men that you know have been false to others. — But then, sister, he's as fickle —

Oriana. For God's sake, brother, tell me no more of his faults, for, if you do, I shall run mad for him: Say no more, sir; let me but get him into the bands of matrimony, I'll spoil his wandering, I warrant him; I'll do his business that way, never fear.

Dug. Well, sister, I won't pretend to understand the engagements between you and your lover; I expect when you have need of my counsel or assistance, you will let me know more of your affairs. Mirabel is a gentleman, and as far as my honour and interest can reach, you may command me, to the furtherance of your happiness: In the mean time, sister, I have a great mind to make you a present of another humble servant; a fellow that I took up at Lyons, who has served me honestly ever since.

Oriana. Then why will you part with him?

Dug. He has gained so insufferably on my good-humour, that he's grown too familiar; but the fellow's cunning, and may be serviceable to you in your affair with Mirabel. Here he comes.

Enter Petit

Well, sir, have you been at Rousseau's?

Petit. Yes, sir, and who should I find there but Mr. Mirabel and the captain, hatching as warmly over a tub of ice, as two hen

pheasants over a brood – They would not let me bespeak any thing, for they had dined before I came.

Dug. Come, sir, you shall serve my sister, I shall still continue kind to you; and if your lady recommends your diligence, upon trial, I'll use my interest to advance you. – Wait on your lady home, Petit.[*Exit.*

Petit. A chair! a chair! a chair!

Oriana. No, no, I'll walk home, 'tis but next door.[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

A Tavern

Young Mirabel *and* Duretete *discovered, rising from Table*

Y. Mir. Welcome to Paris once more, my dear Captain; we have eat heartily, drank roundly, paid plentifully, and let it go for once. I liked every thing but our women; they looked so lean and tawdry, poor creatures! 'Tis a sure sign the army is not paid. Give me the plump Venetian, brisk, and sanguine, that smiles upon me like the glowing sun, and meets my lips like sparkling wine, her person, shining as the glass, and spirit, like the foaming liquor.

Dur. Ah, Mirabel, Italy I grant you; but for our women here in France, they are such thin, brawn, fallen jades, a man may as well make a bed-fellow of a cane chair.

Y. Mir. France! A light, unseasoned country, nothing but feathers, foppery, and fashions. – There's nothing on this side the Alps worth my humble service t'ye – Ha, Roma la Santa! – Italy for my money! – their customs, gardens, buildings, paintings, music, policies, wine, and women! the paradise of the world! –

not pestered with a parcel of precise, old, gouty fellows, that would debar their children every pleasure, that they themselves are past the sense of; – commend me to the Italian familiarity – "Here, son, there's fifty crowns, go, pay your girl her week's allowance."

Dur. Ay, these are your fathers, for you, that understand the necessities of young men! not like our musty dads, who, because they cannot fish themselves, would muddy the water, and spoil the sport of them that can. But now you talk of the plump, what d'ye think of a Dutch woman?

Y. Mir. A Dutch woman's too compact, – nay, every thing among them is so; a Dutch man is thick, a Dutch woman is squab, a Dutch horse is round, a Dutch dog is short, a Dutch ship is broad bottomed; and, in short, one would swear, that the whole product of the country were cast in the same mould with their cheeses.

Dur. Ay, but Mirabel, you have forgot the English ladies.

Y. Mir. The women of England were excellent, did they not take such unsufferable pains to ruin, what nature has made so incomparably well; they would be delicate creatures indeed, could they but thoroughly arrive at the French mien, or entirely let it alone; for they only spoil a very good air of their own, by an awkward imitation of ours. But come, Duretete, let us mind the business in hand; Mistresses we must have, and must take up with the manufacture of the place, and upon a competent diligence, we shall find those in Paris shall match the Italians from top to

toe.

Dur. Ay, Mirabel, you will do well enough, but what will become of your friend? you know, I am so plaguy bashful! so naturally an ass upon these occasions, that —

Y. Mir. Pshaw! you must be bolder, man! Travel three years, and bring home such a baby as bashfulness! A great lusty fellow, and a soldier; fie upon it!

Dur. Lookye, sir, I can visit, and I can ogle a little, — as thus, or thus now. Then I can kiss abundantly — but if they chance to give me a forbidding look, as some women, you know, have a devilish cast with their eyes — or if they cry, "What do you mean? what d'ye take me for? Fie, sir, remember who I am, sir — A person of quality to be used at this rate!" — 'Egad, I'm struck as flat as a fryingpan.

Y. Mir. Words of course! never mind them: Turn you about upon your heel, with a jantée air; hum out the end of an old song; cut a cross caper, and at her again.

Dur. [*Imitates him.*] No, hang it, 'twill never do! — Oons! what did my father mean, by sticking me up in an university, or to think that I should gain any thing by my head, in a nation, whose genius lies all in their heels! — Well, if ever I come to have children of my own, they shall have the education of the country — they shall learn to dance, before they can walk, and be taught to sing, before they can speak.

Y. Mir. Come, come, throw off that childish humour — put on assurance, there's no avoiding it; stand all hazards, thou'rt a

stout, lusty fellow, and hast a good estate; – look bluff, hector, you have a good side-box face, a pretty impudent face; so, that's pretty well. – This fellow went abroad like an ox, and is returned like an ass.[*Aside.*

Dur. Let me see now, how I look. [*Pulls out a Pocket Glass, and looks on it.*] A side-box face, say you! – 'Egad, I don't like it, Mirabel! Fie, sir, don't abuse your friends, I could not wear such a face for the best countess in christendom.

Y. Mir. Why can't you, blockhead, as well as I?

Dur. Why, thou hast impudence to set a good face upon any thing; I would change half my gold for half thy brass, with all my heart. Who comes here? Odso, Mirabel, your father!

Enter Old Mirabel

Old Mir. Where's Bob? – dear Bob?

Y. Mir. Your blessing, sir?

Old Mir. My blessing! Damn ye, ye young rogue, why did not you come to see your father first, sirrah? My dear boy, I am heartily glad to see thee, my dear child, 'faith! – Captain Duretete, by the blood of the Mirabels, I'm yours! Well, my lads, ye look bravely, 'faith. – Bob, hast got any money left?

Y. Mir. Not a farthing, sir.

Old Mir. Why, then, I won't gi' thee a souse.

Y. Mir. I did but jest, here's ten pistoles.

Old Mir. Why, then, here's ten more: I love to be charitable

to those that don't want it. – Well, and how do you like Italy, my boys?

Y. Mir. O, the garden of the world, sir! Rome, Naples, Venice, Milan, and a thousand others – all fine.

Old Mir. Ay! say you so? And they say, that Chiari is very fine too.

Dur. Indifferent, sir, very indifferent; a very scurvy air, the most unwholesome to a French constitution in the world.

Y. Mir. Pshaw! nothing on't: these rascally gazetteers have misinformed you.

Old Mir. Misinformed me! Oons, sir, were we not beaten there?

Y. Mir. Beaten, sir! we beaten!

Old Mir. Why, how was it, pray, sweet sir?

Y. Mir. Sir, the captain will tell you.

Dur. No, sir, your son will tell you.

Y. Mir. The captain was in the action, sir.

Dur. Your son saw more than I, sir, for he was a looker on.

Old Mir. Confound you both, for a brace of cowards! here are no Germans to overhear you – why don't ye tell me how it was?

Y. Mir. Why, then, you must know, that we marched up a body of the finest, bravest, well dressed fellows in the universe; our commanders at the head of us, all lace and feather, like so many beaux at a ball – I don't believe there was a man of them but could dance a charmer, Morbleau.

Old Mir. Dance! very well, pretty fellows, 'faith!

Y. Mir. We capered up to their very trenches, and there saw, peeping over, a parcel of scare-crow, olive-coloured, gunpowder fellows, as ugly as the devil.

Dur. E'gad, I shall never forget the looks of them, while I have breath to fetch.

Y. Mir. They were so civil, indeed, as to welcome us with their cannon! but for the rest, we found them such unmannerly, rude, unsociable dogs, that we grew tired of their company, and so we e'en danced back again.

Old Mir. And did ye all come back?

Y. Mir. No, two or three thousand of us staid behind.

Old Mir. Why, Bob, why?

Y. Mir. Pshaw! because they could not come that night.

Dur. No, sir, because they could not come that night.

Y. Mir. But, come, sir, we were talking of something else; pray, how does your lovely charge, the fair Oriana?

Old Mir. Ripe, sir, just ripe; you'll find it better engaging with her than with the Germans, let me tell you. And what would you say, my young Mars, if I had a Venus for thee too? Come, Bob, your apartment is ready, and pray let your friend be my guest too; you shall command the house between ye, and I'll be as merry as the best of you.[*Exeunt.*

ACT THE SECOND

SCENE I

Old Mirabel's *House*

Oriana and Bizarre

Bis. And you love this young rake, d'ye?

Oriana. Yes.

Bis. In spite of all his ill usage?

Oriana. I can't help it.

Bis. What's the matter wi' ye?

Oriana. Pshaw!

Bis. Um! – before that any young, lying, swearing, flattering, rakehelly fellow, should play such tricks with me – O, the devil take all your Cassandras and Cleopatras for me. – I warrant now, you'll play the fool when he comes, and say you love him! eh?

Oriana. Most certainly; I can't dissemble, Bizarre; besides, 'tis past that, we're contracted.

Bis. Contracted! alack-a-day, poor thing! – What, you have

changed rings, or broken an old broadpiece between you! I would make a fool of any fellow in France. Well, I must confess, I do love a little coquetting, with all my heart! my business should be to break gold with my lover one hour, and crack my promise the next; he should find me one day with a prayer book in my hand, and with a play book another. – He should have my consent to buy the wedding ring, and the next moment would I ask him his name.

Oriana. O, my dear! were there no greater tie upon my heart, than there is upon my conscience, I would soon throw the contract out of doors; but the mischief on't is, I am so fond of being tied, that I'm forced to be just, and the strength of my passion keeps down the inclination of my sex.

Bis. But here's the old gentleman!

Enter Old Mirabel

Old Mir. Where's my wenches? – where's my two little girls? Eh! Have a care, – look to yourselves, 'faith, they're a coming – the travellers are a coming! Well! which of you two will be my daughter-in-law now? Bizarre, Bizarre, what say you, madcap? Mirabel is a pure, wild fellow.

Bis. I like him the worse.

Old Mir. You lie, hussy, you like him the better, indeed you do! What say you, my t'other little filbert, eh?

Oriana. I suppose the gentleman will chuse for himself, sir.

Old Mir. Why, that's discreetly said, and so he shall.

Enter Mirabel and Duretete; they salute the Ladies

Bob, harkye, you shall marry one of these girls, sirrah!

Y. Mir. Sir, I'll marry them both, if you please.

Bis. [*Aside.*] He'll find that one may serve his turn.

Old Mir. Both! why, you young dog, d'ye banter me? – Come, sir, take your choice. – Duretete, you shall have your choice too, but Robin shall chuse first. – Come, sir, begin. Well! which d'ye like?

Y. Mir. Both.

Old Mir. But which will you marry?

Y. Mir. Neither.

Old Mir. Neither! Don't make me angry now, Bob – pray, don't make me angry. – Lookye, sirrah, if I don't dance at your wedding to-morrow, I shall be very glad to cry at your grave.

Y. Mir. That's a bull, father.

Old Mir. A bull! Why, how now, ungrateful sir, did I make thee a man, that thou shouldst make me a beast?

Y. Mir. Your pardon, sir; I only meant your expression.

Old Mir. Harkye, Bob, learn better manners to your father before strangers! I won't be angry this time: But oons, if ever you do't again, you rascal! – remember what I say. [*Exit.*]

Y. Mir. Pshaw! what does the old fellow mean by mewing me up here with a couple of green girls? – Come, Duretete, will you

go?

Oriana. I hope, Mr. Mirabel, you han't forgot —

Y. Mir. No, no, madam, I han't forgot, I have brought you a thousand little Italian curiosities; I'll assure you, madam, as far as a hundred pistoles would reach, I han't forgot the least circumstance.

Oriana. Sir, you misunderstand me.

Y. Mir. Odso! the relics, madam, from Rome. I do remember, now, you made a vow of chastity before my departure; a vow of chastity, or something like it – was it not, madam?

Oriana. O sir, I'm answered at present.[*Exit.*

Y. Mir. She was coming full mouth upon me with her contract – 'Would I might despatch t'other!

Dur. Mirabel, that lady there, observe her, she's wondrous pretty, 'faith! and seems to have but few words; I like her mainly – speak to her, man, pr'ythee speak to her.

Y. Mir. Madam, here's a gentleman, who declares —

Dur. Madam, don't believe him, I declare nothing – What, the devil, do you mean, man?

Y. Mir. He says, madam, that you are as beautiful as an angel.

Dur. He tells a damned lie, madam! I say no such thing – Are you mad, Mirabel? Why, I shall drop down with shame.

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