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Molière

Selected monologues from his plays

The following monologues are reprinted from "*The Dramatic Works of Molière, Vol. II*. Ed. Charles Heron Wall. London: George Bell & Sons, 1898". Found in monologuearchive.com/

From THE MISANTHROPE

ALCESTE:

No, you labour in vain, and in vain try to argue. Nothing can now deter me from my project; too much perversity reigns in our age, and I am resolved to avoid in future all intercourse with men. What! everyone sees that honour, probity, decency, and the laws are all against my adversary, men publish the justice of my cause, and my mind trusts to the certainty of my right! Yet in the end I am defeated! I have justice on my side, and I lose my cause! A miserable scoundrel, whose shameful history everyone knows, comes off triumphantly, thanks to the blackest falsehood! All good faith yields to his perfidy! He cuts my throat and proves that he is right. The weight of his mean, hypocritical grimace is thrown into the balance, and justice kicks the beam. He gets a decree of court to crown his infamy;

and not satisfied with the injury done to me, as there circulates in the world an abominable book, the mere reading of which would be blamable, and which deserves the strictest suppression, the paltry scoundrel has the impudence to proclaim me the author! Upon which Oronte is seen to mutter, and basely endeavours to support the calumny! Oronte, who is said at Court to be an honourable man, and to whom I have done no other wrong than to have told him the honest truth. Oronte, who comes to me in spite of myself, eagerly to ask my opinion on verses of his making; and because I speak to him frankly, and betray neither him nor the truth, he helps to crush me with an imaginary crime! He becomes my greatest enemy, and will never forgive me, because, forsooth! I could not find his sonnet good. 'Sdeath! and men are made thus! It is to such actions that glory leads them! This is the good faith, virtuous zeal, justice, and honour we find among them! No, it is too much to endure all the sorrows their malice can devise against us; I will escape out of this wood, out of this cut-throat place; and since men behave like wolves to each other, the traitors shall never have me among them so long as I am alive.

From TARTUFFE

ORGON:

Ah! if you had only seen him when I first met him, you would feel for him the same love that I have. He came every day to church, and with gentle looks knelt down straight before me on both his knees. He attracted the attention of the whole congregation by the ardour with which, wrapped in saintly ecstasy, he sent up his prayer to Heaven. He sighed deeply, and every moment humbly kissed the ground. When I went out, he would steal quickly before me to offer me holy water at the door. Having heard through his servant, who imitates him in everything, of his poverty and who he is, I made him small presents, but he, with the greatest modesty, always returned part of it: "It is too much," he would say, "too much by half, I do not deserve your pity;" and when I refused to take it back again, he went, before my eyes, to distribute it to the poor. At last Heaven moved me to take him into my house, and since then everything has been prospering here. I see that he reproves everything, and, with regard to my wife, takes extreme care of my honour. He warns me of the people who cast loving eyes upon her, and is a dozen times more jealous of her than I am. You would never believe how far he carries his pious zeal. He accuses himself of sin for the slightest thing imaginable; a mere trifle is enough to shock him; so much so, that the other day he blamed himself for having caught a flea while at his prayers, and for having killed it with too much wrath.

From THE MISER

JACQUES:

Since you wish it, Sir, I will tell you frankly that you are the laughing-stock of everybody; that they taunt us everywhere by a thousand jokes on your account, and that nothing delights people more than to make sport of you, and to tell stories without end about your stinginess. One says that you have special almanacs printed, where you double the ember days and vigils, so that you may profit by the fasts to which you bind all your house; another, that you always have a ready-made quarrel for your servants at Christmas time or when they leave you, so that you may give them nothing. One tells a story how not long since you prosecuted a neighbor's cat because it had eaten up the remainder of a leg of mutton; another says that one night you were caught stealing your horses' oats, and that your coachman--that is the man who was before me--gave you, in the dark, a good sound drubbing, of which you said nothing. In short, what is the use of going on? We can go nowhere but we are sure to hear you pulled to pieces. You are the butt and jest and byword of everybody; and never does anyone mention you but under the names of miser, stingy, mean fellow and userer.

From **THE IMPOSTURES OF SCAPIN**

ZERBINETTE:

I shall not risk much by telling you this story, for it is an adventure which is not likely to remain secret long. Fate placed me among one of those bands of people who are called gypsies, and who, tramping from province to province, tell you your fortune, and do many other things besides. When we came to this town, I met a young man, who, on seeing me, fell in love with me. From that moment he followed me everywhere; and, like all young men, he imagined that he had but to speak and things would go on as he liked; but he met with a pride which forced him to think twice. He spoke of his love to the people in whose power I was, and found them ready to give me up for a certain sum of money. But the sad part of the business was that my lover found himself exactly in the same condition as most young men of good family, that is, without any money at all. His father, although rich, is the stingiest old skinflint and greatest miser you ever heard of. And our people wished to leave town today, and my lover would have lost me through his lack of money if, in order to wrench some out of his father, he had not made use of a clever servant he has. His name is Scapin. He is a most wonderful man and deserves the highest praise. Just listen to the plan he adopted to take in his dupe--ha! ha! ha! ha! I can't think of it without laughing--ha! ha! ha! He went to that old screw--ha! ha! ha!--and told him that while he was walking about the harbour with his son--ha! ha!--they noticed a Turkish galley; that a young Turk had invited them to come in and see it; that he had given them some lunch--ha! ha!--and that, while they were at table, the galley had gone into the open sea; that the Turk had sent him alone back, with the

express order to say to him that, unless he sent five hundred crowns, he would take his son to be a slave in Algiers--ha! ha! ha! You may imagine our miser, our stingy old curmudgeon, in the greatest anguish, struggling between his love for his son and his love for his money. Those five hundred crowns that are asked of him are five hundred dagger-thrusts--ha! ha! ha! ha! He can't bring his mind to tear out, as it were, this sum from his heart, and his anguish makes him think of the most ridiculous means to find money for his son's ransom--ha! ha! ha! He wants to send the police into the open sea after the Turk's galley--ha! ha! ha! He asks his servant to take the place of his son till he has found the money to pay for him--money he has no intention of giving--ha! ha! ha! The servant shows him each time how absurd is what he proposes, and each reflection of the old fellow is accompanied by an agonizing, "But why the devil did he go in that galley for? Ah! cursed galley. Ah! scoundrel of Turk!" At last, after many hesitations, after having sighed and groaned for a long time ... but it seems to me that my story does not make you laugh. Why aren't you laughing?

From DON JUAN:

DON JUAN:

There is no longer any shame in hypocrisy; it is a fashionable vice, and all fashionable vices pass for virtues. To act the part of a good man is the best part one can act. The profession of hypocrisy has wonderful advantages. It is an art, the imposture of which is always looked upon with respect; and although the world may see through the deceit, it dares say nothing against it. All the other vices of mankind are opened to censure, and everyone is at liberty to attack them boldly; but hypocrisy is a privileged vice which closes the mouth of everyone, and enjoys in peace a sovereign impunity. By dint of cant we enter into a kind of league with those of the same party, and whoever falls out with one of us has the whole set against him; whilst those who are really sincere, and who are known to be in earnest, are always the dupes of the others, are caught in the net of the hypocrites, and blindly lend their support to those who ape their conduct. You could hardly believe what a number of these people I know who with the help of such stratagem have put a decent veil over the disorders of their youth, have sought shelter under the cloak of religion, and under its venerated dress are allowed to be as wicked as they please. Although people are aware of their intrigues, and know them for what they are, their influence is none the less real. They are well received everywhere, and a low bending of the head, deep sighs, and rolling eyes, make up for all they can be guilty of. It is under this convenient dress that I mean to take refuge and put my affair to rights. I shall not give up my dear habits, but will carefully hide them, and avoid all show in my pleasures. If I am discovered, the whole cabal will take up my interests of their own accord, and will defend me against everybody. In short, it is the only safe way of doing all I like with impunity. I shall set up for a censor of other people's actions. I shall

speaking evil of everybody. If I am but ever so slightly offended, I shall never forgive, but bear an irreconcilable hatred. I shall make myself the avenger of the interests of Heaven, and under this convenient shelter I will pursue my enemies, will accuse them of impiety, and know how to let loose against them the officious zealots who, without understanding how the truth stands, will heap abuse upon them and damn them boldly on their own private authority. It is thus that we can profit by the weaknesses of men, and that a wise man can accommodate himself to the vices of his age.