

" O U T W I T H T H E H A T "

A Romantic Opera

in

3 Acts.

An episode in the life of  
Thomas Gainsborough.

BY

ALBERT COATES

LIBRETTO by C. REGINALD GRUNDY.

PEGGY        One, two, three and four.  
              I wish we could dance at Ranelagh  
              One, two, three and four.

MOLLY        Why wish for something we'll never do?

PEGGY        One, two, three and four.

(Enter Mrs. Gainsborough)

Mrs. G.        (Fussily) Peggy! What are you doing?

PEGGY        Practising my dancing.

Mrs. G.        Upsetting the room - Look at those chairs - What disorder - You forget the Duchess of Devonshire is coming this morning to sit for her portrait - She will pass through this room on her way to the studio - Help me put everything back in its place.

PEGGY        Yes, mother.

Mrs. G.        (Stops in her work to address Molly) And you, Molly. Put by your work, and stop being sulky. We know what is best for your future.

MOLLY        Yes, mother.

Mrs. G.        (To Peggy) Tell James to be at the door and wait for the Duchess.

PEGGY.        Yes, mother.

Mrs. G.        (Gathering up things to be taken out) Now I must see the cook, nothing but worry and work. (Exit)

MOLLY        Nothing but worry and tears, that is my lot. (begins to cry)

PEGGY        Don't cry, dear Molly.

MOLLY How can I help it. It's now two days since father forbade me to see my Johann. Oh Peggy, what shall I do, I love him so much.

PEGGY Have patience and all will end well.

MOLLY But father's so obstinate, mother is worse. They will never agree to our marriage.

PEGGY Then, if you both love each other?

MOLLY Then, what?

PEGGY Your hearts will dictate what to do.

MOLLY Perhaps you are right.

(James enters mysteriously, surreptitiously looking round)

JAMES Miss Peggy, Please watch to see if anyone's coming.

PEGGY But why so mysterious?

JAMES Shush - I've something for Miss Molly (Gives Molly a note)

MOLLY A note from my Johann!

JAMES Be careful, if master finds out he'll dismiss me at once.

MOLLY I'll be careful, I promise. Oh, how can I thank you.

JAMES It's a pleasure to help such young lovers. (Exit).

PEGGY Well, what does he say?

MOLLY He loves me, he loves me! he loves me!

PEGGY I knew that - what else?

MOLLY He says he must see me. He's watching the house. The moment that mother goes out and father safely at work in his studio, I'm to give him a sign to come in. Oh Peggy, how happy I am! -

PEGGY It's madness.

MOLLY I know and don't care. Tra la la la - Tra la la la la

PEGGY Oh Molly be quiet. Suppose mother comes. She'll wonder why you're so gay.

MOLLY Ha, ha, I'll now be all sadness with pleasure.

(Mrs G enters, very upset)

Mrs. G. Really, this is too much.

MOLLY  
PEGGY What, what, what?

Mrs. G. Bills, bills and more bills. Letters demanding cheques by return. Letters of threat, Oh, what shall we do?

PEGGY But father said a few days ago that he'd pay them all and settle...

Mrs. G. (Breaks in) But he hasn't, and now, I fear, he'll refuse. A new craze has obsessed him.

MOLLY  
PEGGY What is it this time?

Mrs. G. Miss Foyle and her Harp.

MOLLY Is father intending buying it?

Mrs. G. Yes, and she wants sixty pounds. A monstrous price, while these bills go unpaid.

MOLLY. But father loves music.

Mrs. G. But why must he always be buying and collecting musical instruments, spending the little money we have. It's high time I stopped him else he'll end in a prison for debt.

PEGGY Don't worry. Father cannot fail. He's a genius.

Mrs. G. Yes, perhaps, but oh so impractical. All our future just now depends on the Duchess. If he would only please her all London would follow the Empress of Fashion, his fame would then be assured. Instead of which he makes her constantly wait for her sittings while he wastes his time painting, Oh horror, Miss Foyle, if you please.

MOLLY  
PEGGY How dreadful! -

Mrs. G. But worse is to come. Her Grace has asked him to vote for James Fox, for whom she is canvassing.

MOLLY  
PEGGY And what did he say?

Mrs. G. I'm afraid he intends to refuse.

PEGGY Well done father.

Mrs. G. (Turning on her angrily) You've no sense. We must all persuade him to vote Fox to please his great client and patron or else in her anger she may refuse to finish her portrait and ruin his future.

IMPERIAL  
CENTURY

ACT I  
Scene 1

5

*heard*  
(Knocking at front door)

Mrs. G. Who can that be?

MOLLY Some hungry looking strangers

Mrs. G. Oh Lud! They look like creditors. What shall we do?

JAMES *(outside)* (entering) Several men asking for master.

VOICES Gainsborough

Mrs. G. Don't let them in.

*(outside)*  
VOICES Gainsborough

JAMES Mercy, they're already in the hall.

*outside*  
VOICES Gainsborough

Mrs. G. We're lost (to Peggy) run and tell father to leave by the back door.

*outside*  
VOICES Gainsborough

Mrs. G. I'll receive them.

(James exit)

*outside*  
VOICES Gainsborough.

Mrs. G. This is what comes of marrying an artist.

MOLLY I wouldn't mind.

*outside*  
VOICES Gainsborough.

Mrs. G. Did I say that I did.

*outside*  
VOICES Gainsborough.

(The men enter)

*friends  
(they are musicians + colleagues  
of Gainsborough)*

Mrs. G. What do you want

VOICES We want to see Mr. Gainsborough

Mrs. G. But you can't

VOICES The Prince has sent us

*(They wink at each other)*

Mrs. G. Oh! (Puzzled she walks to Gainsborough's door and he appears)

(Enter Gainsborough perusing a book) *when he*

GAINS. At your service Gentlemen.

*sees them he does not recognize them at once*

VOICE Sir (stepping forward)

GAINS. But Gentlemen, this is a pleasant surprise. Margaret these are all young musicians and colleagues. ~~Let us~~ Let us have some ale brought in.

VOICES Hoorah!

GAINS. To what do I owe this friendly invasion.

Mrs. G. And I thought you were clients.

VOICES (Winking at each other) Ha ha ha. The Prince has requested us to invite you to help him choose the Queen of the Ball at the Maskerade at Ranelagh to-night.

GAINS (Winking likewise) I thank you, but I cannot accept, my wife does not approve of these entertainments; ask Reynolds.

Mrs. G. No, Tom, you had better accept.

GAINS. (*feigning surprise*) Margaret! Well, if it must be so, let us drink to the Prince and his Queen.

VOICES And we drink to you, sir

(knocking again and voices calling) *outside*

VOICES. Vote for Fox. Down with Wray.

JAMES (*entering at a rush*) Oh, oh, the Beadle and his officers Oh, oh.

GAINS. (*sternly*) Let them in; and you Margaret, order some more ale, and bring me a bottle of brandy. Gentlemen I count on your help.

*Musicians*  
STUDENTS You have but to command.

MRS. G. Oh, what a morning.

(James is suddenly precipitated back into the room. The Beadle and canvassers all rather tipsy, enter in a body.)

BEADLE Make way for Sir Thomas Tolley, Bart. Alderman of Westminster.

ALL Alderman of Westminster

(Sir T. Tolley is ushered in and starts off with a speech)

SIR T. A-ahem - we come to you on behalf of the Duchess of Devonshire

CHORUS Oh behalf of Her Grace of Devonshire

SIR T. We come to you on behalf of the oppressed nations of Europe

CHORUS We live

SIR T. Asia

CHORUS And die

SIR T. Africa - America

CHORUS For Charlie

SIR T. To solicit your vote for the right honorable Charles James Fox.

CHORUS We live and die for Charlie

~~Musc~~ STUDENTS Who will always be the polyphomist of politicians

SIR T. What's that you say.

GAINS. Gentlemen, Gentlemen

~~Musc~~ STUDENTS Fox, the gamut of accord -

BEADLE He ain't a gamon on a cord -

SIR T. 'Tis an insult. Come out and fight  
BEADLE

GAINS. <sup>ly</sup>gentlemen. Gentlemen

~~Musc~~ STUDENTS Bullies - sly foxes

CHORUS Come out and fight

GAINS. Gentlemen. Gentlemen. A good English ale that unites us all Under the Table

*A fight nearly issues The whole Gamist family*

*write in stopping it*



Scene 1.

- 8 -

CHORUS Ha ha ha, Under the Table.

SIR T. Unites us all under the table. (Falls)

*Canvassers*  
CHORUS

He's had an apoplexy.

*Musician*  
PEGGY

Not he - he's only drunk.

GAINS. Sir Thomas is overcome, you'd better carry him home.

BEADLE The country is going to the dogs.

*Musc*  
STUDENTS

The dogs.

BEADLE Since the Tories came in power.

*Musc.*  
STUDENTS

It will, if Fox gets in.

BEADLE (not taking any notice) Look at this man. His father could have drunk two bottles full, without turning a hair

*Musc*  
STUDENTS

~~Or a Fox.~~

BEADLE And he - he's knocked over with scarce half a bottle.

*Musc*  
STUDENTS

Down among the dead men -

BEADLE (In exit procession) The country is going to the dogs.

*Musician*

(Students also take leave of all, shaking hands and linking arms)

*Musc*  
STUDENTS The dogs. (Exit) (*Gainsborough family alone*)

Mrs. G. Oh, I got such a fright, I thought they had come to arrest you.

GAINS For what?

Mrs. G. For not paying those bills.

GAINS. Oh those, they all will be paid in due time.

Mrs. G. I have heard that before.

GAINS. (smiling) And possibly, you may hear it again.

Mrs. G. But one day you'll regret spending money on musical instruments

GAINS But Margaret dear, it pleased my fancy!

Mrs. G. It's not fair to us all

*Stop*

MOLLY Please, father.

PEGGY Please, mother.

(Knock at the door)

Mrs. G. It's the Duchess.

GAINS I've someone before her.

(Enter James)

JAMES Miss Foyle, sir.

GAINS Ask her to go up to the studio.

Mrs. G. Tom, please send her away.

GAINS I must finish her portrait.

Mrs. G. You cannot keep her Grace waiting.

GAINS Her Grace and I are such old friends, she will understand.

Mrs. G. Oh, you would tax anyone's patience.

PEGGY Please, father.

MOLLY Please, mother.

Mrs. G. At least, promise Her Grace your vote for James Fox.

GAINS Not on your life! (laughing heartily he exits)

PEGGY *(aside)* Bravo! father!

Mrs. G. *(jessily impatient)* Peggy, get me my bonnet, I will go to the market myself this morning. (Exit, after adjusting bonnet etc.)

MOLLY At last, now I can see my Johann!

PEGGY But how?

MOLLY I'll call James, and keep him here, while you let Johann in.

PEGGY (makes distasteful movement, Molly rushes to her)

MOLLY Please Peggy, Do help me!

PEGGY (Giving in) Yes, of course!

MOLLY (kissing Peggy and rushing to door) *as she exits* James, James!

JAMES (enters) Did you call, miss?

MOLLY Yes, (Looking towards window) Look it's raining

JAMES (singing) Always raining  
Here in London  
Fog and rain  
Rain and fog,  
Give me the country

MOLLY (interrupting) Yes James. But, dear me, Mr. Fischer in the meantime will catch his death of cold in the rain. Please ask him in.

JAMES Not allowed. Master's orders

MOLLY He won't know. He's busy painting. Mother is out.

(Fischer and Peggy enter)

FISCHER And I - am here!

MOLLY (flinging herself towards him) Johann!

JAMES Lord a 'mercy!

PEGGY Here is your hero!

(Quartett)

JAMES You must go, sir, and at once!

MOLLY But it's raining!

PEGGY --- pelting!

FISCHER --- Furchtbar!

JAMES I can't help that, I have orders!

MOLLY Not so loud!

PEGGY --- softer!

FISCHER --- piano!

MOLLY We will protect you, Dear James!

PEGGY Take all the blame too!

JAMES --- Rascals!

FISCHER --- Help us!

" Here's a sovereign for your trinken

JAMES This is tempting

PEGGY --- foaming ale

MOLLY --- sparkling wit!

JAMES Well, I'll chance it, but be quick. out

ALL Hoorah for James!

MOLLY I'll guard the front door, and you (to Peggy) the studio,

ALL Dear, dear James!

JAMES Foolish, foolish James!

(Peggy and James exit - bye plays)

FISCHER (Taking Molly in his arms) Oh how lovely to hold you again to my heart,  
To see your sweet soul shine through your eyes,  
To feel your dear lips -kiss - so soft - kiss - so tender - kiss -  
My angel, my darling, mein Liebling  
Tell me you love me.

MOLLY I love you, I love you!

FISCHER Tell me, that no one can ever part us.

MOLLY No one Johann, I am yours, all yours - kiss -

FISCHER I feel I could fight the whole world.

MOLLY No, just father and mother, persuade them to give us their consent.

FISCHER Impossible, your mother wants you to marry a Duke, or a Lord - Your father - someone who has no opinions at all. He ordered me out of the house because I argued with him that Handel was greater than Bach.

MOLLY But what did you tell him?

FISCHER That his knowledge of music was nil

MOLLY Lud! No wonder. But you can mend this. Tell him now that perhaps he was right.

FISCHER Oh no, he was wrong. Handel is greater than Bach.

MOLLY Well, compromise and say Handel is equal with Bach.

FISCHER What! and betray my artistic convictions.

MOLLY (almost crying) Ah! you don't love me!

FISCHER Molly!

MOLLY Bach is far more important to you than I am.

FISCHER Not Bach - but <sup>the</sup> Truth.

MOLLY Oh bother the truth. Why should I suffer for it?

FISCHER That is my point:  
As we cannot persuade your parents to give their consent, let us elope!

MOLLY Elope? How can I? No, no, it's not right.

FISCHER Then you don't love me.

MOLLY I do, I do.

FISCHER Think how exciting it is to elope - Moonlight - The world is asleep. You softly descend by the stairs - Each step brings you nearer and nearer to me - You reach the front door - You open it gently - I am waiting. You are in my arms - We run to the carriage.

MOLLY Oh Johann (Throws herself excitingly into his arms)

PEGGY (rushing in breathlessly) Hide - quickly - mother.

MOLLY We are lost!

FISCHER Where can I hide?

MOLLY Under the sofa!

FISCHER I can't, it's too low!

JAMES (rushing in) We are caught. Please protect me. Tell the mistress I've been all this time in the kitchen. (exit)

PEGGY (trying to squeeze Fischer under sofa) Push him in!

MOLLY It's no use.

MRS. G. (outside) James, James (bursting in) This is disgraceful. The front door wide open and James not there. Whats been going on here?

PEGGY Nothing. James I think, is in the kitchen.

MRS. G. In the kitchen, Huh! The Duchess is due to arrive.

PEGGY (At the window) Oh mother, The Duchess has just driven up.

MRS. G. Oh what shall I do? James, James, I am glad the rain made me - James - return.

(James enters)

JAMES Madam <sup>(aside)</sup> - Lords a'mercy.

MRS. G. Quick the front door. *(James see quickly that Mrs. G. has no idea what has happened at once becomes the good servant)*

JAMES Yes ma'am (just about to exit)

MRS. G. Wait, I'll go with you to receive Her Grace

(James bows deeply at the door, and Mrs. G. sweeps out)

MOLLY Don't move, (~~dearest man.~~)

(Fischer sneezes)

PEGGY Oh! don't sneeze

FISCHER Can't help it. This dust ... (gurgles)

MOLLY I am fainting!

FISCHER Courage my darling

PEGGY *(quietly arranging the room)* Balcony scene, with Romeo comfortably sneezing under the chair.

MRS. G. (leads the way with gracious mien) This way, Your Grace.

DUCHESS *(entering like a whirlwind)* Oh good people, I'm tired, pumped out, exhausted, dead!

MRS. G. Your Grace *(cross forward)* (chair - byplay)

DUCHESS Oh thank you. I've been canvassing amongst the Covent Garden porters, kissing the babes of tradesmen, begging, blustering, beseeching, all for Mr. Fox.

MRS. G. (offering port and biscuits) A little port.

DUCHESS Oh, thank you.

MRS. G. Molly tell your father Her Grace has arrived.

MOLLY I, mother? (falters) *(Peggy helps her out)*

PEGGY I'll do it (runs off)

(The Duchess notices the two girls byplays, is amused)

MRS. G. You are doing a great work.

DUCHESS Elections are always exciting. Meeting strange people. Seeing a little of their lives, so unbellished and grey - striving and struggling - I wonder for what.

MOLLY For Love.

MRS. G. Molly!

DUCHESS (amused) No, she's perhaps right, but few of us possess it for long.

(Enter Peggy rather scared)

Ready for me?

PEGGY Father begs Your Grace to wait a few minutes.

DUCHESS Can't he ever be punctual - It's very annoying!

MRS. G. I am sorry Your Grace.

PEGGY He's almost finished the portrait,

DUCHESS Whose?

PEGGY Miss Foyles.

DUCHESS What the harp player?

MRS. G. Yes.

DUCHESS Quite pretty.

MRS. G. But a nuisance.

PEGGY Conceited.

MOLLY Ill mannered.

MRS. G.) We dislike her intensely.  
MOLLY ) She's not worth the canvas  
PEGGY ) not even the paint.

DUCHESS Well, that's some consolation for his having kept me waiting.

MRS. G. I'll go and get rid of her at once. (Exit)

DUCHESS (to Molly) And now come and sit here by me.

MOLLY (hesitatingly) H'm

DUCHESS Don't be so shy

Scene 1 (~~hedging~~) (~~hedging~~) - 15 -

MOLLY I can't walk - my - my shoe hurts me so.

DUCHESS Your shoe! I know how painful that can be, but come, Peggy will help you to hop over here on one foot. I'll soon find out what there is wrong with your - shoe.

MOLLY Oh, Your Grace, I am only too certain you will.

(Molly hops with Peggy's help to the couch disclosing Fischer's boot)

DUCHESS (Looking at Fischer's boot and laughing heartily)  
Now I see the cause of your trouble. It's not the shoe, it's the boot.

MOLLY Y-yes- it's my father's. He leaves them about all over the house.

FISCHER (sneezes) (the girls are petrified)

DUCHESS But how very interesting. The boot seems to have caught cold.

MOLLY I'm fainting!

PEGGY Oh faint, and have done with it. (On her knees to Duchess) Oh please, Your Grace, forgive our deception, we were trying to hide him from mother.

DUCHESS A boot and a cold - but I am anxious to know to whom they belong.

FISCHER (from behind armchair) To Johann Fischer, Your Grace.

DUCHESS But - but - this is delightful. Ha ha ha, the great and elegant Mr. Fischer. The Prince's pet oboe player, hiding under - under - ha ha ha

(Laughing quartett)

MOLLY (after timidly joining in with the others) All this is my fault Your Grace, I feel so ashamed.

DUCHESS My dear, you must not. We all have been through it. It's so lovely! The Spring of our life - be happy my dear, be proud to be loved, and to love. I am entirely on your side.

MOLLY

PEGGY

FISCHER

Oh, thank you, Your Grace



DUCHESS Now tell me your real trouble.

MOLLY My parents are against our marriage.

DUCHESS That is sad, but not hopeless.

FISCHER I fear, Your Grace, it is, and therefore I propose to elope with...

DUCHESS Tut, tut, Mr. Fischer, certainly not. At least, not until we have tried other ways first.

MOLLY And if they fail?  
FISCHER

DUCHESS Then perhaps, but meanwhile I think I could possibly help you.

MOLLY You, Your Grace?  
FISCHER

DUCHESS But first Mr. Fischer I must put some questions to you, to see if you really and truly deserve such a darling.

(Molly bows smilingly and looks perturbed at Fischer)

FISCHER At your service, Your Grace.

DUCHESS Do you drink?

FISCHER An occasional glass.

MOLLY But remains always sober!

DUCHESS Gamble?

FISCHER A little on horses.

MOLLY He never plays cards!

DUCHESS Your temper?

FISCHER Mildly quarrelsome.

MOLLY He has a kind heart!

DUCHESS Have you ever been married before?

FISCHER } No, never

MOLLY } Oh, no.

PEGGY } Oh, no.

DUCHESS Well then, to summon up. The Jury is for you.

FISCHER)  
MOLLY } Oh, thank you, Your Grace.  
PEGGY }

DUCHESS An now, let us plan how to get the consent of your father. Ah! now listen! I know what I'll do. You must all come to Ranelagh to-night, as my guests. I will get the Prince to excuse you your duties to-night Mr. Fischer, and there we will give Mr. Gainsborough the surprise of his life.

FISCHER)  
MOLLY } Your Grace!  
PEGGY }

DUCHESS Donot thank me. I am happy to help you, but also am happy to teach him a lesson, for his want of manners, in keeping me invariably waiting.

MOLLY Your Grace! (perturbed)

(For Quartett - next page)

End of Scene 1

Duchess

Molly

Fischer

Peggy

We must all bow to  
the power of love.  
For love transfig-  
ures life and is  
stronger than death

When love reigns in  
our hearts

My heart (is a flo-  
wer) blooms with  
love

My heart is flaming

I wish I were transfigured

Heaven is within us

Like a rose in June

With love for Molly

Although I'm young

When love leaves us

It's Heaven

Till death it shall  
keep alight

I feel I could love

Life is empty and  
dark

I will pray that  
love

Oh what happiness it  
will be

If I find the right man

Cling to love

may never leave me

to have

Like Molly

Be grateful

.. .. I will

so gentle

Altho' I would prefer

Be faithful to love

.. .. I will

So loving a wife

Someone quite different

And you will have  
through your life

for ever and ever

Like Goddess of Love  
(To Duchess)

A soldier who will fight

Happiness beyond  
price

cherish love in  
my heart

You seem to have come  
on earth

In great battles

That even the grave

and with it grati-  
tude to you

As Guardian Angel

If wounded, I'll nurse him to  
life

Cannot take from  
you

For helping us to  
happiness

To lovers like us

Then - wed him - perhaps

Duchess goes towards door as if to

Curtain End of first scene

go to the studio - still curtain, + Fischer bows - Curtain -

End of first scene

Scene 2. Gainsborough's Studio  
ACT I

GAINS (Painting Miss Foyle's portrait) Another touch will spoil it

FOYLE How lovely. You must have flattered me.

GAINS It's true to life. The harmonies of light and colour I have made, all help the effect.

FOYLE Ah, and yet it's me. Are you really going to give it me?

GAINS Of course. It's our bargain.

FOYLE What bargain?

GAINS That you would exchange your harp for this portrait.

FOYLE My harp enshrines precious memories.

GAINS Be an angel and don't try to get out of your bargain. Remember that.

FOYLE (furious) Then it's been my harp which interested you, not myself. How could you be so cruel raising my hopes only to blight them like this (totters towards him)

(Sounds at door - Foyle springs away)

MRS. G. If you have not finished your business with Mr. Gainsborough, kindly finish it another time. The Duchess is furious at being kept waiting.

FOYLE I'll go at once.

MRS. G. Thank you. I'll tell the Duchess

(Gainsborough accompanies Mrs. G. to door, exit)

GAINS (returning) What dreams and visions did I suggest?

FOYLE Dreams of love.

GAINS I never spoke a word of love to you.

FOYLE But your every action suggested it. You kissed me on the mouth. Remember the old Folk rythm---

FOYLE

*My own*  
 (contin) Kiss on the hand  
 Yours to command.  
 Kiss on the cheek  
 Your friendship seek.  
 But to kiss the mouth  
 Of Love is the token,  
 A plighted troth  
 Ne'er to be broken.

*During this  
 Gainsboro's is  
 preparing the  
 easel with the Duchess's  
 portrait*

GAINS

A fig for that nursery rythm, which I presume you in-  
 vented yourself. Are you going to let me have the harp?

FOYLE

Oh, I understand now. The Duchess is waiting. What a  
 fool I've been. You are in love with the Duchess.

GAINS

(very angrily) You are mad (rings the bell furiously)  
 Please go.

FOYLE

Oh please don't be angry.

GAINS

We will finish this conversation some other time.

FOYLE

To-night after the Fete at Ranelagh.

GAINS

Perhaps

FOYLE

Promise me?

GAINS

If you let me have the harp.

FOYLE

I will go and fetch it at once.

GAINS

(overjoyed) Ah! (rushes towards Foyle.) *(James enters)*

*Gains changes his manner at once*  
 (James enters.) *(Gainsboro very collectedly)*  
 (*cooly*) Tell Mrs. Gainsborough I am ready for Her Grace.

JAMES

Yes Sir, (Exit)

FOYLE

(collecting her things. Sings)

But to kiss the mouth Of love is the token  
 A plighted troth ne'er to be broken.

(The Duchess enters and overhears Foyle)

Kiss me goodbye.

No, a love kiss.

(Gainsborough kisses her quickly)  
 " kisses her and she leaves  
after he has seen her to the door. He  
turns to find the Duchess in the room)

GAINS

Your Grace.

DUCHESS

Excuses are useless. I quite understand your delay.

GAINS But Your Grace.

DUCHESS Zounds man (remembers her promise to Molly and Fischer)

GAINS (noticing change) May we begin?

DUCHESS Not yet. I'm tired from waiting. I will rest for a moment. (*sits*)

GAINS I'm sorry your Grace.

DUCHESS (*After a considerable pause in which G is bowed with ease*)  
Do you go to Ranelagh to-night?

GAINS Yes Your Grace.

DUCHESS I have invited Molly and Peggy

GAINS Yes, but --

DUCHESS Oh, I will chaperone them myself.

GAINS You're very kind --

DUCHESS It will do Molly good. She looks very sad.

GAINS Don't change your expression. Can you keep like that?

DUCHESS (*pause*) What was I thinking about. (*pause*) I heard a nightingale last night and I made a poem about it. Would you like to hear it?

GAINS I should. (continues to paint while Duchess sings)

DUCHESS It goes like this.

Oh Nightingale, what love song art thou singing?  
What fervent passion fires thy throbbing strain?  
Does it breathe hope to which thy heart is clinging  
Tells it of joys that ne'er may come again.

Is it alluring, poignant, pleading to the one you love?  
Or does it mourn for loneliness profound  
Song so sweet and sad might well a mistress move,  
Or be the dirge for hopes dashed to the ground.

Dear rapturous songster with thy music voicing  
Our highest bliss and our most sore distress  
Only Heaven will hear it, all rejoicing  
For there alone, is unalloyed Happiness.

GAINS Your Grace sang so divinely. I listened entranced.

DUCHESS Can I talk now? (laughingly)

GAINS Oh please keep still.

DUCHESS Does Miss Foyle keep still?

GAINS No, Yes. NO - Oh what does it matter what she does? But you - You in everything fulfill the artist's ideal. This picture shall enshrine your beauty. Thousands down through the ages, will be thrilled by this portrait of a great lady.

DUCHESS (*provokingly*) So you think this portrait of yours will become famous?

GAINS Without a doubt. It will be inscribed (*impishly*) A portrait of a great lady by an unknown artist.

DUCHESS Modest flatterer.

GAINS I love and worship - Beauty.

DUCHESS Oh you artists. What monstrous excuses you make for your fickleness.

No one girl has Beauty complete,  
So for a figure from crown to feet  
A full score - or more - do duty.  
Life must be gay  
Amidst the display  
Of so much Beauty.

GAINS Your sarcastic remarks are unjust.

DUCHESS Truth hurts.

GAINS (*throwing down his brush*) You've spoilt my mood. I cannot paint any more. Let's be gay!

DUCHESS Yes! Let's be gay and speak of friend Tolley, and did you give him your promise for Fox.

*The last sentence  
must sound like gallow-  
-humour*

GAINS Sir Thomas came to my house this morning with a mob of drunken ruffians - and collapsed before he could ask me for anything!

DUCHESS You must have deliberately made the poor man drunk.

GAINS But your Grace -

DUCHESS Tell me Mr. Gainsborough, has Pitt offered you a place if your efforts secure Fox's defeat?

GAINS The accusation is preposterous.

DUCHESS Yes, and to think how much worse it will sound when the wits get hold of it. (*sings*)

Charles Fox's great canvas was such a success  
The Tories sent Gainsborough to make it a mess  
For though as an artist he's but a pot boiler  
There's none can surpass him as canvass spoiler.

GAINS I see Your Grace does not allow your flights of fancy to be spoiled by any slavish subserviance to the truth.

DUCHESS Do not forget Mr. Gainsborough that I am a whig canvasser.

GAINS I try not to remember it. Of all my sitters, Your Grace is the only one who has dared to use her patronage to try and influence my vote.

DUCHESS Well, your vote will not decide the election anyhow, Mr. Gainsborough. If you were not so cantankarus with your sitters, you would not have to waste so much valuable time on mere landscape.

GAINS Landscape, Your Grace? Do you truly realize what landscape is?

Landscape - sky and earth unite to form its beauty.  
Winter's icy snow.

Spring's breezy showers and summer's sunshine bright  
are preludes meet for autumn's glow.

When leaves and fruit of georgeous colours vie with  
richest gems of nature's alchemy

Think of the trees, piercing the amvient air.

Man's noblest works, his great cathedral piles, with  
nature's woodland fanes cannot compare.

Where towering trees arch over greenwalled aisles,  
their leafy boughs encroaching on the sky

To form giant roofs that glow with emerald light,  
where chirs of feathered songsters,

Sing on high, trilling to Heaven, psalms of pure  
delight.

That - Your Grace - is what landscape means to me.

DUCHESS (Gainsborough has not noticed her great affection and enthusiastic endorsement of all his beautiful ideas.  
She now goes on cool and collectedly)

Our ideas on art as well as politics are evidently at variance. Despite your preference for trees over humanity I should like to proceed now with our sitting. But I will look at my portrait first.

GAINS As you will Your Grace

DUCHESS (after examining portrait a considerable time) I vow that I do not like it as well as I did. There's a kind of likeness, but you have made me too serious. People will think that it's a portrait of my grandmother.

GAINS I am afraid that Your Grace has allowed our political differences to prejudice your vision. You liked it well enough yesterday.



- DUCHESS I know what is wrong with it. It's the Hat. It's too heavy for me. I always look better bareheaded. You must take it out.
- GAINS I assure Your Grace, the hat suits you perfectly. You thought so yourself.
- DUCHESS Anyhow I don't now. Remove it.
- GAINS Your Grace may have changed her mind again by the next sitting.
- DUCHESS Well, if I do, you can paint it in again.
- GAINS The hat is the keynote of the picture. Eliminate it and the design is ruined.
- DUCHESS That is what is wrong about it. My face should be the keynote, and you have sacrificed it to the hat.  
Out with the hat.
- GAINS *(earnestly, as if pleading with her)*  
I put in the hat because there was nothing else (earnestly)
- DUCHESS Out with the hat
- GAINS Which would suit Your Grace's style of beauty so charmingly.
- DUCHESS Out with the hat. (Gainsborough prepares to paint out the face) Man, the hat shall come out. I insist.
- GAINS I'm damned if it shall. (paints out the face with a stroke of his brush)
- DUCHESS Oh, oh, oh, (trying in vain to stop him) You have ruined it. Insolent man. How dare you spoil my picture. You'll now have a spoilt canvas on your hands.
- GAINS Not so your Grace. I have a pretty <sup>*servant maid*</sup> ~~housemaid~~ with a face suitable for the design. I'll insert it and sell the work as a fancy picture.
- DUCHESS You petty-fogging limner. (furious) I'll tell all my friends of your abominable rudeness so that none of them sit to you.
- GAINS I see that I must fall back upon landscape painting. Even Your Grace's displeasure cannot prevent me from using the woods and pastures, the birds of the air, the sheep, the dogs, cows and horses all as my sitters.
- DUCHESS Ah! Mr. Gainsborough. You have forgotten the pigs. I have heard that your pig pictures are masterpieces. You

DUCHESS (contin) can follow up your triumphs with them. You will find them most complaisant sitters. Whenever I see my piggies at Chatworth it will remind me of this interview. (Collects her things for departure)  
 For though as an artist he is but a pot boiler, There's none can surpass him (laughs heartily) as canvas spoiler. (slow exit, as Duchess goes out with a most whimsical smile, She by chance drops her handkerchief.)

*She suddenly realizes the Comedy of the situation*

*+ James just before exit*

*If only I could paint her as I see her, (exit)*

(Gainsborough's first impulse is to pick it up and give it to her - He thinks better of it and quietly picks it up and puts it with a smile into his inner coat pocket and exits.)  
 There is a noise at the door and James comes clumsily in with the harp followed by Miss Foyle. As James carries the harp past the Duchess's portrait he drops it in his amazement at the ruined picture. Miss Foyle is upset at the dropping of her harp but also happens to see the cause - gives way to a passion of curiosity and finally having convinced herself of the ruined picture stifles an inclination to laugh and hurriedly steals out of the room, ignoring James's outstretched hand for a tip.)

End of Scene 2. ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1 Ranelagh - ~~Sounds heard from Rotunda.~~

*(Beautiful garden on the river in the distance  
the Lips Rotunda) Sounds of music from  
the Rotunda*

DUCHESS *(Haven)* (alone) What a change from the madding crowd at the Rotunda to this ~~backwater~~ of silence. The Peace is heavenly. Even the distant music is stilled.

Peace broods o'er this heavenly summer night,  
Here with nature I commune  
I freely breathe beneath the tender light  
Of the mysterious ever restful moon.

What joy to leave the madding crowd  
For the country bright and fair  
And idly bask upon a sun-warmed down  
One faithful heart with me my solitude to share.

(Lady Betty Foster and a party of ladies in  
hilarious mood romp onto the stage)

BETTY Good Lud! You here all alone? What have you done with your bevy of followers?

LADY A I vow I heard a serenade.

LADY B You noisy rollickers have frightened the musical swain away.

LADY C Let's unearth him.

LADY D You girls search those trees.

LADY E Quick, before he comes.

(Betty bends down and plays with flower petals)

BETTY  
He loves me  
He don't  
He'll have me  
He wont  
He would if he could  
But he can't  
So he don't.

LADY A *(also with flower - slower)*

He loves me  
He don't  
He'll have me

LADY A        (contin)  
              He won't  
              He would if he could  
              But he can't  
              So he don't.

Ugh, I never tried to tell my own fortune but it came out unlucky.

BETTY        Who is he, the Prince?

LADIES       Ha ha ha ha ha ha.

LADY A       Hist, I hear someone coming.

LADY B       Masks! (All don their masks.)

(Gainsborough and his friends allmasked and with musical instruments are searching the park for the Duchess. Gainsborough sees her first, gives a sign and they all stop and greet all the ladies, and the Duchess with courtly sweepings of their hats)

GAINS        (seranading the Duchess while his friends accompany him on their different instruments).

Most glorious Goddess of the night  
Thy beauty shown to mortal eyes  
Inspires a love that dare not rise  
To one who on Olympian heights  
Amongst the Gods sits crowned.

But as you've doffed celestial state  
To tread the earth as woman sweet  
What wonder if when you I meet  
My heart your pleasure to await.  
I lay upon the ground.

DUCHESS     (answering from among her ladies)

Moon crowned Diana came to earth  
To where Endymion sleeping lay  
Her glory made it bright as day  
Cupid passed and swayed by mirth  
He sped two arrows right away.

GAINS        Grant me some hope, and I will strive  
Thy beauties to immortalize.  
So paint your smile and sparkling eyes  
On canvas that you'll seem alive,  
And your charms will live for ever.

DUCHESS       Cupid's shafts both pierced a heart  
                  Diana loved her swain  
                  He dared return her love again,  
                  For those transfixed by Cupid's darts  
                  True lovers must remain.

(Chorus - men singing Gainsborough's words,  
women those of the Duchesses'.)

GAINS         (alone)  
                  Oh beauteous Goddess, your sweet grace,  
                  Emboldens me to raise my eyes,  
                  And hope to see a smiling face,  
                  When you do bid me rise.

(The Prince and His Gentlemen are seen ap-  
proaching during Gainsborough's solo)

PRINCE        (clapping Gainsborough on the shoulder) Bravo, young  
man. Why, it's our Mr. Gainsborough. I never thought  
to hear you serenade so deliciously. (Glancing to the  
Duchess, who has risen) and to some purpose to -  
(Prince passes towards the Duchess) I have come to  
pay my homage to the Queen of Hearts. (low curtsy from  
the Duchess. The Prince bends over her)  
                  ~~And how is the canvassing for Fox progressing?~~

DUCHESS       ~~Devilish good sire, we win -~~

PRINCE        ~~Good, very good.~~

DUCHESS       (natural voice) Sire, I have a favour to ask.

PRINCE        Your favours are granted before you ask.

DUCHESS       It is that two young friends of mine be invited to the  
Royal Pavilion, and you sire to be sponsor to their  
betrothal.

PRINCE        Since when am I to be the good fairy? T'is a role I  
have not yet filled.

DUCHESS       Your Royal Highness has always had a tender heart for  
young lovers.

(Prince bows and looks round)

PRINCE        ~~When will we know for certain?~~

DUCHESS       ~~By midnight.~~

PRINCE        ~~I can hardly wait.~~

DUCHESS       ~~Courage sire, I stake my life on our victory.~~

(Prince invites her to sit by him. Steward comes towards them and asks the Prince's permission for the dancing to begin)

STEWARD Ladies and gentlemen. Will you now kindly take your places for the Minuette D'Amour. (The Prince dances with the Duchess, Betty with Beechmaster.) Ladies + Gentlemen. (Gainsborough is with his friends joining in with the instrumentalists)

(During minuet Miss Foyle appears and starts a scene with Gainsborough.)

FOYLE You have scarcely been near me all the evening.

GAINS Is that such a hineous sin?

FOYLE I brought my harp to your studio as I promised.

GAINS Had I known - I would have sent you your portrait.

FOYLE I am not surprised at anything any more.

GAINS What do you mean?

FOYLE You are in love.

GAINS Woman? -

FOYLE You promised me to take me home after the ball to-night.

GAINS I have not refused -- as yet.

FOYLE Are you going to dally after the heels of the Duchess?

GAINS I insist..

FOYLE (breaking in) Like a discharged flunkey hoping to be re-instated.

GAINS That you do not speak about the Duchess like that.

FOYLE I saw the blackened face of the portrait this morning.

GAINS What's that to do with it

FOYLE I would have thought a lot..

GAINS What I do and think is no business of yours (goes away)

FOYLE Oh, I can't bear this any longer! (disappears)

(The young men get hold of Gainsborough and push him forward to sing the Mayday song)

(Song with mixed chorus and dance.)

CHORUS Advance.

GAINS The dawn will bring the first of May.

CH. The first of May

GAINS So we shall stay till the rise of the sun.

CH. The rise of the sun

GAINS Willing the sil'vry night away.

CH. Night away.

GAINS With mirth and dancing music and song.

CH. Dance, all you lads and lasses, dance - Set to partners.  
Retire (The men make mistakes.)

LADIES (jeering) Ha ha ha ha ha (They get round Fischer who takes Gainsborough's play while Gainsborough goes to back Duchess) *to his friends -*

CH. Advance

FISCHER Sing out the merry Roundelay.

CH. The Roundelay.

FISCHER Away has gone the winter cold -

CH. The winter cold -

FISCHER Its sombre garb of drab and gold -

CH. Drab and gold -

FISCHER Is covered up with green and gold - Oh dance, all you lads and lasses. 'Gain set to partners - Retire (The men do it right)

LADIES Ah, well done

MEN Ha ha.

ALL Advance. (They crowd round Gainsborough again.)

GAINS The hawthorn floods the air with scent,  
The nightingale its music thrills..

CHORUS      Its music thrills

GAINS.      Each note with poignant passion blent

CH.          Passion blent.

GAINS.      As every lovers heart it thrills.

CH.          Dance all lads and lasses. 'Gain set to partners -  
Retire - Advance.

(Dance like Roger de Coverley - only orchestra -  
with cries and shrieks. Twelve o'clock strikes  
Everybody including the Prince unmask.  
Noises and shouts from everywhere. Trumpets  
etc., Fanfares, Bells, fireworks. The people  
sing God save the Prince of Wales.)

ALL          God bless the Prince of Wales  
2 (God grant him health and strength,  
The man the farflung empire hails  
As one to whom shall come at length  
The heaviest crown in all the world  
God preserve the Prince  
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah.

(Everybody follows the Prince, who with the  
Duchess on his arm leads the way off to the  
Rotunda - all singing 'God bless the Prince  
of Wales'. Gainsborough is lost amongst the  
crowd. Miss Foyle is left still searching  
scanning each face to try and find him. The  
Equerry, Lord Eldermere, comes in search of  
Gainsborough with him are Lord Aspen and  
Beechmaster.)

EQUERRY      (Seeing Miss Foyle) Miss Foyle, (makes a bow) have you  
seen Mr. Gainsborough.

FOYLE        Oh, my lord, there's no speaking to him, since he made  
the Duchess eat humble pie.

EQUERRY      The Duchess - What Duchess?

FOYLE        Of Devonshire, of course.

L. ASPEN     Good Lud, How did he manage it?

FOYLE        The Duchess wanted her portrait altered.

BEECHM.      And what happened?

FOYLE        Gainsborough would not alter it. The Duchess insisted.



EQUERRY And Gainsborough?

FOYLE He took up his paint brush

ALL THREE Yes?

FOYLE And daubed it across the face in the picture.

ASPEN Good Lud!

BEECHM. Gracious Heavens!

EQUERRY The devil he did.

FOYLE The Duchess screamed blue murder.

EQUERRY I don't believe it.

ASPEN You're bubbling us.

FOYLE It's true every word. He has his pictures on view for the Academy. Mine among them. Make a point of going to his studio to-morrow.

BEECHM. Egad, we'll get the Prince to go.

EQUERRY Stab my vitals, won't he laugh when he hears about it.  
(laughs)

ASPEN The Duchess has never been so flouted (laughs)

FOYLE Flouted!

BEECHM. A nine days wonder (laughs)

ASPEN Quick <sup>to</sup> the Prince ( laughs running off )

BEECHM. Let's be the first with the news (laughs - runs off )

EQUERRY In the meantime I must find the culprit.

FOYLE Here he comes and his precious musicians with him.

GAINS Miss Foyle, I'm sorry that...

(Miss Foyle turns smilingly towards him when Equerry interferes)

EQUERRY Mr. Gainsborough, Ha ha ha.

GAINS (offended) My Lord.

MUSICNS. (picking a quarrel) My lord.

EQUERRY Oh, no offence Gentlemen. No offence meant. On the contrary I have been commanded by His Royal Highness to take you Mr. Gainsborough, to the Royal Pavilion. Haste, or we shall be too late.

MUSICNS.

GAINS Too late for what?

EQUERRY Ho, ho, Mr. Gainsborough will find out quite soon enough

(All go off - Gainsborough starts to bow his adieu to Foyle, she suddenly covers her side face with her hand, and does not answer his salutation. He finishes his bow quietly and accompanies the impatient Equerry.)

FOYLE (alone on stage) Flouted! Her gracious Grace flouted!  
(laughs - enjoying the scandal she has begun.)

ACT II

Scene 2.

Ranelagh.

*The Royal Pavillion.*

END OF SUPPER PARTY

(The Prince and Gentlemen all very merry)  
(He is singing a rollicking son and they are listening  
in easy attitudes and joining in with glasses and cheers  
and singing) - (Solomon is there a picture like this?)

CH. Hurrah -

PRINCE The best time of day is the morning  
With the small hours just begun  
And nought to disturb him till dawning  
Which heralds the rising sun.

CH.

(with Prince)

In the morning, ere the dawning  
Is the time to sup and drink  
(Tally Ho)  
Work has ceased so we may feast  
And with friends our glasses clink.

P. (solo) The cares which oppressed us cease troubling  
We sit and we play with our tongues  
Our wit to the surface come bubbling  
Our voices rise mellow in songs.

CH.

(with Prince)

Our grudges and feuds are forgotten  
Or settled by making amends -  
With foes of long standing we cotton  
And hail them from henceforth as friends.

(Lord Aspen & Beechmaster enter  
hurriedly and whisper to the Prince)

PRINCE. Gentlemen, a most entertaining piece of news -  
A new scandal around the Queen of Hearts -

ALL What. Georgiana? (~~Solomon~~)

MARQUIS. We can expect her any moment now.

PRINCE Then, Gentlemen, quick, out with it, before she  
arrives.

- B. The Duchess sat to Gainsboro'.
- CH. Gainsboro'.
- A. He painted her portrait.
- CH. Her portrait.
- B. But the Duchess didn't like her portrait.
- CH. The portrait.
- A. She told him that he must alter the portrait he'd painted.
- CH. The portrait he painted.
- B. Gainsboro' refused!
- CH. Oh!
- A. The Duchess insisted!
- CH. Yes !
- B. Gainsboro said he's be damned first!
- CH. Oh!
- A. And filling his brush with black paint he daubed it over the Duchess' face.
- CH. Ha!
- PRINCE. What, daubed it over Her Grace's face!
- B. The face in the portrait he means.
- CH. Oh.
- A. The Duchess screamed blue murder!
- CH. Blue Murder!
- A. When she saw her face in the portrait - as black as a spade.
- CH. A spade?
- PRINCE. Ha. Ha. Ha.

CH. Ha, ha, ha.

PRINCE. We shall have to rename her, Queen of Spades.

CH. Queen of Spades, Ha, ha, ha, (Long laughter)

PRINCE. But I can't believe it. The Duchess would never demean herself.

B. But the portrait, black face and all, is in Gainsboro's studios.

A. Your Royal Highness has merely to go there, and see it for yourself.

PRINCE Its an extraordinary tale, and yet it accounts for a lot. T'will be monstrously entertaining to watch Her Grace handle the situation.

EQ. (Entering and enjoying the commition)

Sir, I have brought Mr. Gainsboro'.

PRINCE. Gentlemen - Not a word more now for the present.

ENTER GAINSBORO'.

The Prince rises - all rise -

PRINCE.

(jovially to G)

Gentlemen, we welcome Mister Gainsboro' (all bow)

G. I thank your Royal Highness for your gracious invitation, Gentlemen! (bows all round)

PRINCE We do not know what we've let ourselves in for but one thing we do know.

CH. And what's that, sir?

PRINCE (to G)

We all look to you to make the speech of the evening.

G. (taken aback)

But, Goodlud, Sir, I can't speak.

PRINCE. None of us can.

CH. Oh, oh, oh,

PRINCE But you're the only man amongst us who dare confess it

(Commotion at door - Enter the Duchess, Betty Foster and ladies, Molly and Fischer - Molly veiled - Peggy in background.)

Ah! Mr. Gainsborough, now is the moment.

GAINS (jovially) I will certainly do my best sir,

(Duchess, Betty and Ladies sing in three parts)

TRIO

*Duchess  
(sotto)*

Gone is winter glooming  
Everything is blooming  
Fields are fresh and green  
Warm the breezes quiver  
Over mead and river,  
Bright with golden sheen.  
All the birds are singing  
Love songs while they're winging  
Each to find its mate.  
For they now are pairing  
None are left despairing  
'Cause they woo'd too late.

GAINS (sotto) Thank goodness Fischer ~~and~~ is hooked at last.  
He won't be able to dangle after my Molly now.

CHORUS; DUCHESS, & BETTY.

Now the sun is shining  
Let's have no repining  
All is bright and fair.  
Tall the crops are growing  
Gay the flowers are blowing,  
Scenting sweet the air.  
'Tis the time for mating,  
What's the use of waiting.  
Go to church and wed  
In this halcyon weather  
Youth and love together  
Share the nuptial bed.

(The Duchess presents Molly and Fischer to the Prince. Molly wishes to kiss his hand but the Prince lifts her up to him with the following words.)

PRINCE No, no, I shall claim my full priviledges from a new made bride.

(Molly lifts her veil and G. sees it is his daughter. He is quite overcome.)

GAINS Gracious, it's Molly.

(The Prince kisses Molly and then leads them both round the circle of friends. The Prince comes in front of G. who rises)

PRINCE I have the pleasure of presenting the future Mrs. Fischer to you. We have all abetted the action, so we too must plead for forgiveness.

MOLLY (On her knees in front of G.) Forgive us, father.

FISCHER Dearest friend, grant pardon. (G. lifts Molly up and holds her against his breast ~~big heartedly~~)

GAINS *(By heartedly)* I'll do everything in my power to help you both (to Fischer) and you will earn my eternal gratitude by making my Molly happy.

(A Roundelay is sung during which the cake is cut.)

PRINCE Let us drink a bumper,  
A bumper to the happy pair,  
Give them health and riches  
From now, without a single care.

DUCHESS & BETTY (Ladies joining in later)  
Molly what a beau you've got  
May Fischer a faithful husband prove  
And every cloud in married life  
Be merged at once in Light of Happy Love.

(The fanfare at the Rotunda is heard, the steward enters to show everybody to their places.)

PRINCE The music in the Rotunda is beginning again. I know that the ladies especially, would not like to miss this part of the performance, therefore, we will all meet again a little later.

(The Minuet D'Amour is heard again - the ladies prepare to leave the pavilion. Lord Beechmaster and Aspen get into conversation with the Duchess.) *with other sounds intermingling*

BEECHM. Was it not a charming scene. Your Grace need not wear black looks any longer. The kindness with which you have treated Gainsborough's daughter will induce the artist to remove them from your portrait.

DUCHESS I don't know what you mean, Lord Beechmaster.

BEECHM. Didn't Gainsborough disfigure your portrait with black because you asked him to alter it.

DUCHESS How monstrously amusing.

ASPEN Why, he said you went on your bended knees to him!

DUCHESS Someone has been bubbling you my friends. Tell them all— it's a stupid lie.

(Molly runs up to the Duchess and Fischer in background)

MOLLY Oh thank you, Your Grace, for all you have done for us; father was kindness itself.

(Duchess kisses Molly.)

DUCHESS Lord Eldermere, will you make me your everlasting debtor by kindly showing my two young friends to my box.

(Lord Eldermere exits with Molly and Fischer, after elaborate gestures etc., adieu taking)

DUCHESS (going towards Gainsborough who disengages himself from the gentlemen) I congratulate <sup>you</sup> on your role of a forgiving father.

GAINS (jovially) As Your Grace vouches for the desirability of my future son-in-law I must needs approve of my daughter's choice.

DUCHESS How kind you sound. Yet to punish me for my interference, you slander me!

GAINS (nonplussed) Slander you!

(Betty Foster having stood enough from Aspen who is jokingly spreading the scandal runs over to the Duchess and overhears the last words)

BETTY Yes infamously. Everyone here is full of it.

DUCHESS Has the Prince heard?

(Gainsborough is getting angry)

BETTY He's swallowed it all

GAINS (fiercely) I have not uttered a word against her Grace.

DUCHESS Who can believe it.

BETTY Huh!

GAINS How dare you say that to me?



Scene 2.

- 7 -

*(During this scene between D+G, Lord Bechmaster + his cronies have been fashioning a quip which now causes the laughter)*

DUCHESS Dare?

BETTY Huh!

GAINS I demand an explanation.

*"He made the Duchess face so black that she could only cry black"*

DUCHESS The only explanation you deserve is a horsewhipping.

*Bechmaster*

*Unless the Gods give me their aid I'm henceforth known as Queen of Spades*  
(Laughter from the Prince's group interrupt them and the Prince comes smilingly towards them.)

PRINCE I am glad to find you together. I have been hearing so much about Mr. Gainsborough's wonderful portrait of Your Grace, and that Mr. Gainsborough departing from his usual style, has made black its principal colour.

GAINS Your Royal Highness has been misinformed. Except for the hat there's scarcely any black in the picture.

PRINCE (bursting with curiosity) I must see this most intriguing picture. (To Duchess) Have you any objection Duchess?

DUCHESS (coldly watching Gainsborough.) None at all, but as it's unfinished it's for Mr. Gainsborough to say -

PRINCE And you Mr. Gainsborough?

GAINS (bowing) I shall be proud for Your Royal Highness to see it any time you please.

PRINCE Be gad, I'll come to-morrow morning. Will that suit Your Grace?

DUCHESS (Pretending indifference but boiling inside) Oh yes, but I'm not very much interested in the picture. (Gainsborough may very surprised and hurt) Mr. Gainsborough may be very good at pigs and trees but when one wants a real portrait, one goes to Reynolds. (With a grand curtsey full of disdain and abhorrence for G. and forcing a smile for the Prince she sweeps out. - Gainsborough gains his composure very gradually and the Prince enjoys the scene which he himself, has provoked)

PRINCE (quietly to G.) Ladies are whimsical creatures. Generally rudest to those they most esteem. Give them time for penitence and they become angels again. A glass of wine is the best solace, so have one with me.

(steward brings wine etc.,)

*Chor*  
GAINS (A glass of wine is the best solace -  
(mechanically - still quite dazed) Your Royal Highness is goodness itself.

PRINCE As I presume you would not care to sit next Her Grace in her present mood, I am leaving you to the care of our friends. Gentlemen - The ladies.

CHORUS The ladies.

~~PRINCE The ladies, and may their tempers always be as good as their looks. (he prepares to exit)~~

~~CH. May their tempers be always as good as their looks.~~

(Prince exits)

Come back soon. God bless you sir. We'll miss you sir. We're a dull lot without you.

ASPEN The ladies - God bless them.

GAINS (ironically) The ladies, the ladies. A set of changeable creatures who don't know their own minds for two minutes in succession.

BEECHM. Ah, you're seeing black looks on ladies everywhere.

ASPEN (chorus laughing) Now I'll give you a toast that will suit you all.

CH. Sweethearts.?

ASPEN Aye, aye,

~~BEECHM. Wait Gentlemen. Fill up your glasses, when Aspen starts he means business. (all laugh again)~~

CH. Tra la, Tra, la, tra, la, la.

(G. sits morosely still)

ASPEN Let each one toast his sweetheart. His sweetheart that shall be. For whether she be a lowly maid or maid of high degree.

CHORUS Let each one toast his sweetheart,  
His sweetheart that shall be,  
For whether she be a lowly maid  
Or maid of high degree.

ASPEN It may be she has black eyes,  
Or may be they are blue,  
Each sees in them his love returned  
With adoration true.

CHORUS (Basses.) Pompous of porte,  
(Tenors) Or of Humble mien,  
B \_\_\_\_\_ Laughing or flighty,  
T \_\_\_\_\_ Or sober and staid,  
B \_\_\_\_\_ Inclined to rashness,  
T \_\_\_\_\_ Or over afraid,  
B \_\_\_\_\_ Fat as a bullock  
T \_\_\_\_\_ Or graceful and lean,  
(Together) There's a woman one of us thinks his Queen.

(Gainsborough gets up suddenly and takes the centre from Aspen, who is highly amused)

GAINS (He drinks to them all)  
Now you may toast your ladies,  
High ladies of degree,  
Not one of them is woman, is woman for me.

CHORUS O ho ho, ho ho, ho ho! -

GAINS Be she Countess, Duchess or Queen,  
For the girl I admire is the  
Serving maid of England,  
Who comes at your call to give you her aid. (He drinks deeply)

CHORUS The serving maid, Ho ho, Ho ho,

B. (P.)  
Shall we stop him?

T. (p)  
No! Play up to him!

T Here's to the serving maid

B " " " " "

GAINS With smiling face, respectful mien no matter what her work is,

The serving maid keeps tidy and clean  
The serving maid of old England.

B (playing up to him)  
Ladies of rank at fete and at ball  
T \_\_\_\_\_ Expect you to stand at their beck and call  
B \_\_\_\_\_ Till you are nearly worn out with waiting  
T \_\_\_\_\_ But the serving maid will wait on you  
B \_\_\_\_\_ Bringing you ale of your favourite brew -  
T \_\_\_\_\_ Glass after glass without any ado  
B \_\_\_\_\_ Till you find your thirst is abating  
T and B (together)

The serving maid of England  
La, lala,  
To the serving maid

T and B

(Gainsborough throws his glass down and goes out of  
the pavilion in a blaze of temper - rather unsteadily)  
(Laugh heartily)

(QUICK CURTAIN)

*End of second act,*

ACT III  
Scene 1

Duchess' Boudoir

Names  
red

FREDA (Tidying the room etc.) Is Your Grace going ~~to sit for~~ to sit for Mr. Gainsborough to-day?

DUCHESS (Uneasily) No, I will not sit to Gainsborough. (Freda looks curiously at her Mistress who is very distressed)

(A knock at the door)

DUCHESS Come in!

FOOTMAN (At the door) A young person, Missus Fischer, desires to wait upon Your Grace.

DUCHESS (Frowns suddenly, then her face lightens) Show Mrs. Fisher up.

FOOTMAN (In meantime has brought a dress and laid it on big chair) I have brought Your Grace your brown dress.

(Opening door)

DUCHESS (to Freda) Missus Fisher, Your Grace.  
Put the dress down, I will ring when I want you.

FOOTMAN Yes your Grace. (Goes out)

(Molly comes shyly forward)

MOLLY I fear that I come at an inconvenient time, but I felt that I must thank you again for your great kindness to my husband and myself.

DUCHESS Tut, tut, (Kissing her) I was very pleased to help you, though your father did not seem to approve of my action.

MOLLY What makes Your Grace think so?

DUCHESS (After a slight pause) He slandered me last night.

MOLLY (Intensely upset) Your Grace must be mistaken.

DUCHESS Not I. What he said was repeated from mouth to mouth till the supper party was agog with it. Even the Prince twilled me. Your father tells every one, I went on bended knees to implore him to alter my portrait back to what it was, and he, the great artist, (did dainfully) would not deign to grant my prayers. It's damnable.

MOLLY I'm sure he never said anything of the kind. (Very earnestly) You know it's not true.

DUCHESS (After a pause) Who else could have known about the portrait?

MOLLY I wonder if Miss Foyle did. She brought her harp to father's studio very soon after you had left.

DUCHESS Oh Lud, that minx!

MOLLY We all dislike her intensely and think she is capable of anything.

DUCHESS I saw her at Ranelagh last night about the time the scandal started. I wonder ---

(Betty Foster, unannounced, the privilege of an old friend, comes in and hesitates at the door in astonishment.)

BETTY Why do you have Gainsborough's daughter here after his vile slanders?

DUCHESS Betty!

MOLLY My father is no slanderer.

DUCHESS Molly thinks it might be Miss Foyle.

BETTY Bah! What difference does that make? It only shows him a coward.

DUCHESS Betty!

BETTY (Continues) Putting up the minx to utter slanders he dare not say himself.

MOLLY (Interrupting) It's untrue, untrue. I know my father and you don't.

BETTY (Getting more and more excited) He spoilt the picture, did he not? Yet last night, when the Prince wanted to see it, he made no demur, but egged him on to view it this morning.

MOLLY )Desperately) If he did, the picture will be fully restored when the Prince sees it.

DUCHESS Rubbish, child, it would take him three days to repaint the face. How can he do it in a single morning without a model?

TRIO

MOLLY He knows Your Grace's face so well that he could paint it from memory.

DUCHESS (Aside) I cannot but believe that she is speaking the truth.

BETTY The inventive minx had better be careful.

MOLLY My father could paint your Grace easily from memory.

BETTY *to Duchess* Who called you Queen of Spades? That name alone is proof of his vile slanders.

DUCHESS You're much too hard on the child.

TRIO

DUCHESS	BETTY	MOLLY
Betty, you are much too hard on the girl, she's really speaking the truth. My good child, You had better go now, I believe you.	Insolent man who called you Queen of Spades that name alone is proof of his vile slanders. The inventive minx.	The picture will be alright. It breaks my heart to con- template that Your Grace can so misunderstand.  Please believe me.

(Molly curtseys to Duchess and runs off sobbing)

(Betty and Duchess alone, rather embarrassed)

BETTY What are you going to do?

DUCHESS Remain here, I suppose.

BETTY And leave him to show your blackened picture - and explain it - so as to confirm his slanders.

DUCHESS I can't credit Mr. Gainsborough with spreading those  
scandals about me.

BETTY (Angrily)  
You're infatuated with the fellow.

DUCHESS I'm not.

BETTY Even the great Gainsborough cannot perform miracles and  
repaint a picture in a couple of hours.

DUCHESS (Contemplatingly)  
If I went early I could prevent him from showing it.

BETTY (Angrily, shortly)  
He would show it, whether you wanted or not.

DUCHESS (Striking a new note)  
He is a gentleman!!

BETTY (Impetuously)  
If you believe that - it's no use argueing with you - I'll  
leave you to your maid you mad creature risking your re-  
putation for an impudent lying paint-dauber.

DUCHESS (Severly)  
Betty, you forget yourself.

BETTY (Bursting with impatience)  
Bah!  
(Bangs the door open and flings herself out)

(The Duchess rises and goes as if to call  
her back - then stops -)

(The Duchess is full of indisions)

(At last she makes up her mind to act - )

DUCHESS (Rings her bell)  
(Freda enters)  
Get the costume I wore when I sat to Mr. Gainsborough,  
be quick -

(Freda rushes off to obey and brings it back  
almost immediately - with a wave of her head  
the Duchess dismisses her and sits next to  
the costume which she pats occasionally.



DUCHESS

SOLILOQUY

Should I go?  
Dare I go?  
When it was only last night I struck the grievous blow to <sup>at</sup> his pride -  
His skill I then decried to the Prince and to them all -  
Oh, what shall me befall  
If I go?  
Ah, me -  
What can I do to try call back those wanton words -  
He thinks I scorn his work -  
If he but knew  
I thrill with pride at every fervent stroke he sets on  
canvas.  
Harmony divine flows from his brush.

// (remembering his words)

Landscape -  
Sky and earth unite to form its beauty.  
Think of the trees -  
Man's noblest works, his great cathedral piles, with  
Nature's woodland fanes cannot compare -  
Giant roofs that glow with emerald light -"

How can I ease his smart,  
For well I know my angry words pierced to his heart! -  
I must go! I shall go!  
Whatever may befall,  
For now I feel I know that me he ne'er belied,  
So I'll curb my pride,  
No matter what poignant disgrace -  
The Prince and all I will face by his side -

(SLOW CURTAIN)

End of 1<sup>st</sup> scene III<sup>rd</sup> act

ACT III

Scene 2 Gainsborough's studio. Gainsborough (in arm-chair with coat off having restless sleep).  
Enter Molly and Fisher, Mrs G., and Peggy.

MOLLY On father - (Gainsborough starts up) - the Duchess

GAINS (Still under the influence of sleep)

What's that? Who's there -

MRS G (Going close to him)

Oh, Tom do wake up, its terrible!

GAINS What's terrible?

MOLLY I've just seen the Duchess.

GAINS Oh! (beginning to understand)

FISHER Her Grace was angry, cross,

MOLLY Lady Betty was the worst

MRS G I ought perhaps to have gone myself -

MOLLY But Mother, you scarce know her

MRS G (starting a row)

Well, I'm -

GAINS (breaking in)

Peace, peace,  
What said the Duchess?

MOLLY That you couldn't mend the portrait,

GAINS Let her think so - I won't touch it!

MRS G But you must!

FISHER Judicious it will be, most wise!

MOLLY (pleadingly)

Please Father. Do put the portrait to rights,-

GAINS (looking at the portrait)

Ha, Ha, Ha

GAINS  
(cont) They shall see the Black Duchess -

MOLLY No, No.

GAINS The Queen of Spades

MOLLY It was all Lady Betty. She is monstrous; she said I was lying -

FISHER (fiercely) Lady Betty is one dimm nasty one

GAINS (impressed) (shutting up the portrait)  
H'm -

MRS G You must put it right, else she'll ruin you

GAINS She has done her best already  
Why should I not strike back?  
Am I a ~~work~~ to be trampled upon - ?

MRS G But she won't take the picture  
Remember the unpaid bills - (She gets up to go to the bell)  
I shall tell James to say you are ill; and not to let anyone in - (Gainsborough jumps up and rings the bell violently)

MRS G (wringing her hands)  
You will ruin us all! -

Enter James -

GAINS The Prince, the Duchess and many other visitors may call this morning - If they do, show them straight up here.

JAMES Yes Sir. (going out to himself)  
(pp) God bless my soul, God bless my soul.

GAINS (sitting down again)  
You had better leave me

MOLLY Oh, Father, -

GAINS I wish to be alone

FISHER Tom, my dear friend

GAINS (louder) I wish to be alone

FISHER (p) Um Gotteswillen - Scandal - scandal.

*(Takes Molly + Peggy as far as door)*

MRS G Tom, you must really tidy yourself.

GAINS Yes, oh yes. But please leave me now!

MRS G (at the door) If you two hadn't interferred I could have managed him. (All exit. Gainsborough alone)

GAINS (soliloquy)

Last night she flouted me before them all,  
Defamed my art,  
Held me to ridicule,  
Twitted me with Reynolds,  
Oh God, Why did she treat me thus?  
Her words smote me like a whiplash.  
But her look of disdain was so grand,  
I could have shouted Bravo!  
It was just like this -  
(starts a pencil study of Duchess)  
Yes, that's the expression!  
But one cannot suggest its full beauty without colour.  
I have it in the portrait - (opens the portrait)  
Ha, ha, ha, ha,  
What a hideous daub it looks now  
My Lady Duchess never suspected 'twas a mere splodger  
Of Lampblack - which a wet rag would remove.  
Ha, Ha, Ha; Ha, Ha, Ha; Ha, Ha, Ha;  
(Stops suddenly struck by a new idea)

GAINS But, No, I can't leave you to the mercy of that gang of scandal mongers -  
With their gibes - their sneers!  
It would be damnable  
Z'ounds, No, I'll remove it  
(Collects his implements)  
(During which he cleans and retouches the portrait)

You've conquered many a heart, Lady Disdain  
Left many an aching smart, Lady Disdain  
For your smile strikes like a ray of tropic sun -  
A single fervent glance!  
The mischief's done!

GAINS

But what divine rapture  
That sweet smile to capture,  
A moment's glimpse of Heaven, then it's gone! -

(f)

You are beautiful and proud, Lady Disdain,  
Every head to you is bowed, Lady Disdain;  
A score of generations in their tomb  
Have lived and died to raise your single bloom;

(p)

You wondrous and matchless flower,  
Just to live your little hour,  
And then, like them to fade into the gloom,

(f)

My poor brush that you despise, Lady Disdain,  
Preserves your looks for all men's eyes, Lady Disdain,  
Immortal on this canvas you'll remain,  
Fairest of Queens who did men's hearts enchain.

(p)

Every beauty of your face,  
Your proud and stately Grace,  
Will live through me alone,  
Lady Disdain.

(The Duchess enters and stands uncertainly at the door)

(Gainsborough is rooted to the spot)

DUCHESS

I - am - here -

GAINS

(regaining his poise)

Your Grace does me an honour.

DUCHESS

(trying to go on)

I am here - to sit -

GAINS

After what your Grace said last night -

DUCHESS

I never meant it -

GAINS

But why say it -

DUCHESS

In self-defence -

They forced me to it -

GAINS

(incredulously)

Forced the Duchess of Devonshire!

DUCHESS

They said you were boasting that I had gone down on my  
knees to you -

GAINS

And you believed it!

DUCHESS

For one brief moment -

Could I have come here now, if I still believed it -

GAINS

(very upset)

The Arch Devils -

Monstrous - to say that of me,

DUCHESS

(very quietly)

What does it matter now?

JAMES

(very hurriedly entering, and showing nervousness)

His Royal Highness, the - the Prince of Wales.

DUCHESS (under her breath)  
Don't show him the portrait. I will say I must give you another sitting before it can be shown.

GAINS (Also under his breath)  
Please be calm - it will be alright.

(The court begins to come in - also Mrs. Gainsborough, Peggy and Molly Fisher)

(The Prince very jovially enters)

~~X~~ PRINCE <sup>But</sup> ~~sth!~~ This is very delightful. <sup>T</sup> To find the Queen of Beauty gracing Mr. Gainsborough's Studio -

DUCHESS) Your Royal Highness  
GAINS ) (Bowing)

~~X~~ (The Courtiers are peering about. Mrs. Gainsborough dexterously turns the portrait away from them)

PRINCE Now we will be able to compare her portrait with the original.

DUCHESS (smiling)  
Ah, your Royal Highness, it might be a trial today; the picture is still unfinished, and you know what a difference the finishing touches make to a work -

PRINCE (still very amiable)  
Quite so, Your Grace, but I can make allowances. I am sure Mister Gainsborough will let me have a peep -

GAINS Your Royal Highness is sufficient master of the arts to make allowances for any shortcomings -

(Gainsborough invites the Prince to come over to the easel on which the picture stands, turned away from the inquisitive eyes of all the rest of the company.)

PRINCE (Without any outward sign to his followers, speaks.)  
Ah! I see you have introduced some black, Mr. Gainsborough.

(All present chuckle with subdued mirth, priming themselves on their subtlety.)

(Mrs. Gainsborough, Molly, Peggy and Fisher very upset)

PRINCE (interrupts the Courtiers' unseemly behaviour) <sup>2</sup>  
But you have used it with masterly effect. <sup>2f</sup>

(This sentence has a very subduing influence on every one present, and Lady March, during the following

scene between the Prince and the Duchess, at last succeeds in getting a full face view of the portrait, Gainsborough turning the easel about playing with them all)

PRINCE I congratulate you Duchess. Its superb - Never has your friend Reynolds made a more successful portrait.  
(He studies the portrait anew)  
(to Gainsborough)  
You must let me sit to you for through your masterly forethought  
(he holds up the rag with which Gainsborough cleaned the face)  
(Gainsborough makes an involuntary movemnet to take it from the Prince)

PRINCE You have conquered all our hearts and given some of us  
(seeing the trepidation and anxiety on the faces of the courtiers)  
really thrilling palpitations - Ha, Ha, Ha -

LADY M (aside to courtiers)  
The picture is perfect  
You have bubbled us all  
The Prince will be furious

LORD A&B  
Damn that Foyle girl

GAINS I am greatly honoured by Your Royal command -  
And as you have so graciously approved of the picture perhaps Her Grace will allow me to show it to the rest of the Company -

CH. (exaggeratedly)  
Oh Please, Oh Please, Your Grace, Giorgiana!  
(The Duchess assents still doubtful of the portrait)

CH. Ah, Ah,  
(stop dumbfounded)

LADY M (insistently to men)  
(p)  
Bray, donkeys, bray -

BEACHMITS.)  
& BASSES)  
f Wonderful. <sup>p</sup> Damn that Foyle girl, <sup>f</sup> superb.

LADY M (to women)  
(p)

Bray, donkeys, bray -

~~FREN~~ Glorious indeed -

LADIES Devastating extatique, unique -

~~FREN~~ Wont we catch it yet -

LADY M Bray, donkeys, bray -

ALL (trying to outvie each other)  
'Tis wonderful, superextatique, unique -

PRINCE (holds up his hand for silence)  
And now we must not keep the Duchess from her sitting any longer - We never thought to see such Beauty so truthfully depicted and the background of trees is superb. The only things I miss Your Grace are those little famous piggies you were speaking so feelingly about -

DUCHESS Your Royal Highness, I'm so proud of my portrait, just as it is, but, nevertheless - I'll endeavour to persuade Mister Gainsborough to paint one little fellow in, for your special benefit!

(smilingly she curtseys)

(Prince laughs joyfully)

PRINCE Y our Grace is truly bewitching  
(He bows and kisses her hand and exit)  
(All the others bow and get out, best way they can) -  
(The Duchess slaps A and B on the shoulders with her fan as they slink out) - (Mrs. G. (veryhappy), Molly, Fisher, Peggy in turn leave the studio)

Gainsborough and Duchess alone -

DUET

GAINS Grant me some hope and I will strive thy beauties to immortalize,  
So paint your smile and sparkling eyes on canvas, that you'll seem alive and your charms will live for ever

Duchess Diana loved her swain, she dared return her love again  
For those transpired by Cupides darts true lovers must remain -

GAINS (on his knees)  
You came to save me from the result of my own rudeness and folly -

My divinity and guardian Angel -

(He kisses her hand)

(The Duchess touches his head)

*Slow curtain  
End of opera!*

*2<sup>nd</sup> line*

*off scene*

*5<sup>th</sup> line He 2<sup>nd</sup> line*

*4<sup>th</sup> line*

*3<sup>rd</sup>*

*3<sup>rd</sup>*

*X +*