

~~"OUT WITH THE HAT"~~

Gainsborough

A Romantic Opera

in

3 Acts.

~~An episode in the life of
Thomas Gainsborough.~~

18

BY

ALBERT COATES

LIBRETTO by C. REGINALD GRUNDY.

ACT I
Scene 1.

Gainsborough

" ~~GUP WITH THE HAT~~ "

X

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. X *visit* 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.~~ *You will follow the dictates of your hearts*

MOLLY ~~Perhaps you are right.~~ *That we will!*

(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's safely at work in his studio, I'm to give him a sign to come in. Oh Peggy, how happy I am!- */s*

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 ^{payment} ~~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 the~~ ~~for~~ 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~~ *him sittings* finish ~~her~~ *for* portrait and ruin his future.

or "refuse to let him finish" &c

M.S. for this page already sent

ACT I
Scene 1

(Knocking heard at front door)

Mrs. G. Who can that be?

MOLLY Some hungry looking strangers.

Mrs. G. Oh Lud! They look like ~~creditors~~ ^{bailiffs}. What shall we do?

JAMES (entering) Several men asking for master.

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

Mrs. G. Don't let them in.

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

JAMES Mercy, they're already in the hall.

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

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

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

Mrs. G. I'll receive them.

(James exit)

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

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

MOLLY I wouldn't mind.

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

Mrs. G. Did I say that I did.

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

(The men enter) (They are musicians, ~~friends and colleagues~~ of Gainsborough)

friends + colleagues

Mrs. G. What do you want?

~~VOICES~~ ^{Musc.} We want to see Mr. Gainsborough

Mrs. G. But you can't.

~~VOICES~~ The Prince has sent us. (They wink at each other)

A Musician

M.S. already sent

Scene 1

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

(Enter Gainsborough perusing a book. When he sees them he does not recognize them at once.)

GAINS. At your service Gentlemen.

A musician
~~VOICE~~

Sir (stepping forward)

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

Musc
~~VOICES~~

Hoorah!

GAINS. To what do I owe this friendly invasion?

Mrs. G. And I thought you were clients.

~~VOICES~~
Musc

(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.

Musc
~~VOICES~~

And we drink to you, sir.

(knocking again outside and voices calling)

Canvassers (outside)

~~VOICES~~

Vote for Fox. Down with Wray.

JAMES (entering on 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 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.

Conv.
CHORUS On behalf of Her Grace of Devonshire.

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

Conv.
CHORUS We live.

SIR T. Asia.

Conv.
CHORUS And die.

SIR T. Africa - America.

Conv.
CHORUS For Charlie.

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

Conv.
CHORUS We live and die for Charlie.

MUSC. Who will always be the polyphomist of politicians.

SIR T. What's that you say?

GAINS. Gentlemen, Gentlemen.

MUSC. 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. Gentlemen. Gentlemen.

MUSC. Bullies - sly foxes.

Conv.
CHORUS Come out and fight.

May Fox never fall into a Pit *selected alternative*

(A fight nearly insues. The whole Gainsborough family unite in stopping it)

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

All CHORUS Ha ha ha, Under the Table.

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

CANVASSERS He's had an apoplexy.

MUSICIANS Not he - he's only drunk.

GAINS. Sir Thomas is overcome, you'd better carry him home. They prepare to carry Polley out and as this is being done the Beadle soliloquizes -

BEADLE The country is going to the dogs.

MUSC. (jovially) The dogs.

BEADLE Since the Tories came in power.

MUSC. (winking at each other) 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.~~ ~~On a Fox.~~

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

MUSC. Down among the dead men -

(Canvassers with Polley being carried out pass out -)

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

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

MUSC. 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 pleases my fancy!

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

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. (fussily 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 as she exits and rushing to door) 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.

*It's always wet in London town
The fog comes low the rain pours down
And its sheets of golden yellow mud
You've got to find a stove to buy your food*

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!

Scene 1

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PEGGY Take all the blame too!

JAMES --- Rascals!

FISCHER --- *guinea* Help us!
Here's a ~~sovereign~~ for your trinket.

JAMES *(puts guinea to one eye)*
~~This is tempting.~~ *one eye still sees you*

PEGGY --- *Roughish James* ~~feeling~~ *ale*

MOLLY --- *Roughish James* Sparkling wit!

JAMES *(Fischer gives James a 2nd guinea)*
~~Well,~~ *Now* I'll chance it, but be quick.

ALL Hoorah for James!

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

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 the 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. What's 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, *and...*

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. *(aside)* Lords a'mercy.

MRS. G. Quick the front door.

James sees quickly that Mrs. G. has no idea what has happened, at once becomes the good servitor.

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.

Fischer sneezes.

PEGGY Oh, don't sneeze.

FISCHER Can't help it. *Jim wet...* ~~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. *(brings forward chair)*

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 ~~unballasted~~ ~~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 ~~Boyle's~~ *Boyle's*.

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.

MOLLY (hedging) 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)
FISCHER) And if they fail?

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

MOLLY)
FISCHER) You, Your Grace?

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 Ah 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 tonight, as my guests. ~~I will get the Prince to excuse you your duties tonight Mr. Fischer,~~ and there we will give Mr. Gainsborough the surprise of his life.

FISHER)

MOLLY) Your Grace!

PEGGY)

DUCHESS ~~Do not 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.

DUCHESS

MOLLY

FISCHER

PEGGY

See new Quartett, A.C.

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-flow-
er) 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 grat-
itude 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 go the Studio - All curtsey - Fischer bows.

CURTAIN.

End of Scene 1.

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 Kiss on the hand During this Gainsborough
 Yours to command. is preparing the easel
 Kiss on the cheek with the Duchess' portrait.
 Your friendship seek.
 But to kiss the mouth
 Of Love is the token,
 A plighted troth
 Ne'er to be broken.
- GAINS A fig for that nursery rythm, which I presume you invented
 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 Tonight 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 and coolly) 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. (Gainsborough kisses her ^{on the cheek} quickly) ~~mouth~~
No, a love kiss. (Gainsborough 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.

After a considerable pause in which Gainsborough is busy with easel.

DUCHESS Do you go to Ranelagh tonight?

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 (impishly) 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~~.
our Queen of Loveliness -

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. *the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire by an unknown artist*

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! (the last sentence must sound like gallow-humour)

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

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 (~~patiently~~) I see Your Grace does not allow your flights of fancy to be spoilt 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 cantankerous 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 ambient 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 choirs 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 at 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....
- 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 serving maid with a face suitable for the design. I'll insert it and sell the work as a fancy picture.

DUCHESS You petty-fogging limner. (*furiously*) 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 can follow up your triumphs with them. You will find them most complaisant sitters. Whenever I see my piggies at Chatsworth it will remind me of this ~~interview~~ interview. (*Collects her things for departure*)

For though as an artist he is but a pot boiler, There's none can surpass him (*She suddenly realises the comedy of the situation*) (*laughs heartily*) as canvas spoiler. (*slow exit, as Duchess goes out with a most whimsical smile, she by chance drops her handkerchief*).

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.

GAINS If only I could paint her as I see her. (*Exit*)

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.)

ACT II

Scene 1. Ranelagh.

Beautiful garden on the river in the distance the
lit up Rotunda. Sounds of music from the Rotunda.

DUCHESS (alone) What a change from the madding crowd at the
Rotunda to this haven 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 *march* (also with flower - slower)

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

LADY March (cont'd)

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 all masked 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 (serenading 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 immortalise.
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
approaching 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)

DUCHESS (natural voice) ^{Sir} ~~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 ~~are~~ to be sponsor to their betrothal. ^{Sir}

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 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 Minuet D'Amour. (The Prince dances with the Duchess, Betty with Beechmaster) Ladies and 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 heinous 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 tonight.

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.

CHORUS The first of May.

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

CHORUS The rise of the sun.

GAINS Wil~~ling~~ the sil'vry night away.

CHORUS Night away.

GAINS With mirth and ~~dancing~~ music ^{dance} and song.

CHORUS 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 place while Gainsborough goes back
to his friends)

CHORUS Advance.

FISCHER Sing out the merry Roundelay.

CHORUS The Roundelay.

FISCHER Away has gone the winter cold -

CHORUS The winter cold -

FISCHER Its sombre garb of drab and ~~gold~~ ^{gray} -

CHORUS Drab and ~~cold~~ ^{gray} -

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 ~~S~~hrills.

CHORUS Its music ~~S~~hrills.

GAINS Each note with poignant passion blent.

CHORUS Passion blent.

GAINS As every lovers heart it thrills.

CHORUS

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
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 *all over with black.*

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 tomorrow.

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 to 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.

MUSICIANS (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.

*This alteration is inserted as
otherwise Miss Foyle never mentions
black*

MUSICIANS 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 Pavilion.

END OF SUPPER PARTY

The Prince and Gentlemen all very merry.
He is singing a rollicking song and they are listening
in easy attitudes and joining in with glasses and cheers
and singing.

CHORUS Hurrah -

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

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

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

CHORUS (with Prince)
Our ~~grudes~~ and feuds are forgotten ~~grudges~~
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?

MARQUIS We can expect her any moment now.

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

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'd 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. 'Twill be monstrously entertaining to watch Her Grace handle the situation.
- EQ. (entering and enjoying the commotion)
Sir, I have brought Mr. Gainsboro'.
- PRINCE Gentlemen - not a word more now for the present.
- ENTER GAINSBOROUGH.
- The Prince rises - all rise.
- PRINCE (jovially to G.) Gentlemen, we welcome Mister Gainsboro'. (All bow)
- GAINS 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, Good Lud, 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.

PRINCE Ah! Mr. Gainsborough, now is the moment.

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

DUCHESS (Solo)
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 is hooked at last.
He won't be able to dangle after my Molly now.

CHORUS,)
DUCHESS) Now the sun is shining
&) Let's have no repining
BETTY) 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 ^{the same} ~~my full~~ ^{as} priviledges from a
new made bride.

Molly lifts her veil and Gainsborough
sees it is his daughter. He is quite
over come.

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)

GAINS (big-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.

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

DUCHESS) (ladies joining in later)
and) Molly what a beau you've got
BETTY) 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, with other sounds intermingling - the ladies prepare to leave the pavilion. Lord Beechmaster and Aspen get into conversation with the Duchess.

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.

This gives the show away. The crux of the situation is that the court thinks that they cannot be removed.

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 adieu taking.

DUCHESS (going towards Gainsborough who disengages himself from the gentlemen) I congratulate you 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.

about the Duchess

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?

DUCHESS Dare?

BETTY Huh!

GAINS I demand an explanation.

DUCHESS The only explanation you
deserve is a horsewhipping.

(During this scene between the
Duchess and Gainsborough, Lord
Beechmaster and his cronies
have been fashioning a quib wh-
ich now causes the laughter.

"He made the Duchess' face so

black

That she could only cry alack"

BEECHM. 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 tomorrow 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
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)

Lord Beechmaster who has been watching this curious scene suddenly begins to write again & presents what he has written to the Prince - who is highly amused & half reading & half by memory recites the following to Gains

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. A glass of wine is the best solace.

GAINS (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 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. (Laughter)

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

CH. Sweethearts?

ASPEN Aye, aye.

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. 15

CHORUS Let each one toast his sweetheart,
His sweetheart that shall be,
~~For~~ whether she be a lowly maid
Or maid of high degree. 18

ASPEN It may be she has black eyes,
Or may be they are blue,

ASPEN (cont'd)
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. Here's to the serving maid

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.

(playing up to him)

B. 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.& B. (together)

The serving maid of England

la, lala,

To the serving maid

Gainsborough throws his glass down and goes out of the pavilion in a blaze of temper - rather unsteadily.

The Gentlemen ~~T. and B.~~ laugh heartily.

(QUICK CURTAIN)

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ACT III
Scene I

Duchess' Boudoir.

FREDA (Tidying the room etc). Is Your Grace going 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

Missus Fisher, Your Grace.

DUCHESS (To Freda) 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? *disapproved of my action*

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~~ *He* ~~twitted 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, (disdainfully) would not deign to grant my prayers. It's ~~deplorable.~~~~

MOLLY I'm sure he never said anything of the kind. *(Very earnestly).* ~~You know it's not true.~~ *It sounds like Miss Foyle*

DUCHESS *What?* ~~(After a pause) Who else could have known about the portrait?~~ *James?*

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

DUCHESS *James told me he caught her quizzing the spoilt portrait!*
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.

Betty
DUCHESS Molly thinks it might ~~be Miss Foyle.~~ *have been 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, 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.

BETTY
Insolent man who called you Queen of Spades that name alone is proof of his vile slanders. The inventive minx.

MOLLY
The picture will be alright. It breaks my heart to contemplate 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 arguing with you - I'll leave you to your maid you mad creature risking your reputation for an impudent lying paint-dauber.

DUCHESS (Severely)
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 indecisions)

(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 that grievous blow
to 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 1st SCENE III 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 Oh 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 worm 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 and 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 interfered 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 this?
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 splotter
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
GAINS

I - am - here -
(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

Buy 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).

PRINCE

But this is very delightful. To find the Queen of Beauty gracing Mr. Gainsborough's studio -

DUCHESS

) Your Royal Highness

GAINS

) (Bowing)

(The Courtiers are peering about. Mr. 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 to-day; 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).

But you have used it with masterly effect!

(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 movement 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! ~~Georgiana!~~
(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. (p) Damn that Foyle girl, (f) superb.

LADY M. (to women)
(p)

Bray, donkeys, bray -

TEN Glorious indeed -

LADIES Devastating extatique, unique -

TEN Won't 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 Your 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. (very happy), 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,
He dared return her love again
For those transpired by Cupid's 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.