

G A I N S B O R O U G H

A Romantic Opera

in

3 Acts.

An episode in the life of
Thomas Gainsborough.

By

ALBERT COATES.

LIBRETTO by C. REGINALD GRUNDY.

C H A R A C T E R S

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH	..	..	The Artist
GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES	..	..	Afterwards George IV.
JOHANN FISCHER .. .. .	..	..	Oboe player to the Prince of Wales.
SIR THOMAS TOLLEY .. .. .	..	..	Leading supporter of Charles James Fox.
BEADLE			
JAMES .. .. .	..	..	Footman at Gainsborough's house.
LORD ELDERMERE .. .. .	..	..	Equerry to the Prince of Wales.
LORD ASPEN	Friend of the Prince of Wales.
LORD BEECHMASTER	Friend of the Prince of Wales.
MASTER OF CEREMONIES			

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GEORGIANA, Duchess of			
DEVONSHIRE			
MRS. GAINSBOROUGH	Wife of the Artist
MOLLY	Gainsborough's eldest daughter in love with Fischer.
PEGGY .. .. .	..	..	Gainsborough's younger daughter.
MISS FOYLE .. .. .	..	..	A Harpist
LADY BETTY FOSTER .. .. .	..	..	Intimate friend of the Duchess
FREDA .. .. .	..	..	Maid to the Duchess.

Lords and Ladies of the Court.
 Guests at Ranelagh
 Musicians and Canvassers.

ACT I

SCENE I

Front Sitting-room in Gainsborough's House

SCENE 2

Gainsborough's Studio.

ACT II

SCENE I.

The Grounds at Ranelagh.

SCENE 2.

The Royal Pavilion.

ACT III

SCENE I

The Duchess of Devonshire's Boudoir.

SCENE 2

Gainsborough's Studio.

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Act I - Morning
Act II - Evening of the same day
Act III - The following morning

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A C T I

SCENE I Front sitting-room in Gainsborough's house.

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 her things to be taken out) Now I must see the cook, nothing but worry and work.

(EXITS)

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 Johann. Oh, Peggy, what shall I do I love him so much.

PEGGY Have patience and all will be 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 M. a note)

MOLLY A note from 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. (EXITS)

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 is 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 I don't care. Tra la la la - Tra la la.

PEGGY Oh Molly be quiet. Suppose mother comes in. 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 I do?

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

MRS. G. (Breaking 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 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 let him finish her portrait, and ruin his future.

Knocking heard at front door.

MRS. G. Who can that be?

MOLLY Some hungry looking strangers.

MRS. G. Oh Lud! They look like 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.

EXIT JAMES.

VOICES (outside) Gainsborough.

MRS. G. This 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.

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 GAINS. perusing a book when he sees them he does not recognise them at once.

GAINS. At your service gentlemen.

GENT. 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.

GENTS. Hoorah!

GAINS. To what do I owe this friendly invasion?

MRS. G. I thought you were clients.

GENTS. **(winking at each other)** Ha ha ha. The Prince has requested us to invite you to help him to choose the Queen of the Ball at the Masquerade at Ranelagh tonight.

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.

MUSICS. And we drink to you, sir.

Knocking outside and voices calling.

CANVASS. Vote for Fox. Down with Wray.
(Outside)

JAMES **(entering in 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.

MUSICS. 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 to make a speech.

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

CHORUS On 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 Honourable Charles James Fox.

CHORUS We live and die for Charlie.

MUSICS. Who will always be the polyphonist of politicians.

SIR T. What's that you say?

GAINS. Gentlemen, Gentlemen.

MUSIC. 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.

MUSICS. Bullies - sly foxes.

CHORUS Come out and fight.

A fight nearly ensues. The whole Gainsborough family unite in stopping it.

GAINS. Gentlemen. Gentlemen. A good English ale that unites us all under the table.

CHORUS Ha, ha, ha, under the table.

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

CANVASS. He's had an apoplexy.

MUSICS. Not he - he's only drunk.

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

They prepare to carry Tolley out 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, and he - he's knocked over with scarce half a bottle.
- MUSC.** Down among the dead men.
- EXIT** Canvassers carrying Tolley.
- 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)**
- GAINS. and 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 time.
- MRS. G.** I have heard that before.
- GAINS.** (smiling) And possibly you may hear it again.
- MRS. G.** 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 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! (EXITS laughing heartily)

PEGGY (aside) Bravo father!

MRS. G. (fussily impatient) Peggy, get me my bonnet, I will go to the market myself this morning. (EXITS)

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 gesture,
MOLLY rushes to her.

MOLLY Please, Peggy, do help me!

PEGGY (Giving in) Yes, of course.

MOLLY (kissing Peggy and rushing to door) James, James!

JAMES (entering) 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's out.

ENTER FISCHER & PEGGY.

FISCHER And I - am here!

MOLLY (flinging herself towards him) Johann!

JAMES Lord a 'mercy!

(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 guinea for your trinket.

JAMES (puts guinea to one eye) One eye still sees you.

PEGGY Roguish James.

MOLLY Roguish James.

FISCHER gives **JAMES** a second guinea.

JAMES 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.

ALL Dear, dear James!

JAMES Foolish, foolish, James!

PEGGY & JAMES EXIT. Business.

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 excitedly 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.
- 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. 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 embellished 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 Foyle'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) O, 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, and there we will give Mr. Gainsborough the surprise of his life.

FISCHER)
MOLLY) Your Grace!
PEGGY)

MOLLY looks perturbed.

For Quartette - next page.

END OF SCENE I.

Gainsborough may be a genius
but I'm not going to let him
have it all his own way.

I shall punish him for keep-
ing me waiting.

The visitors there will be
wearing all their orders

You must put on all your
best frills and furbelows

And walk very sedately like
this

The Duchess holds herself very erect and takes a step or two and the others imitate her.

And I will present you all
to the Prince

Remember you girls must make
very low curtseys, like this

The Duchess makes a very
low curtsey

Like this

I shall tell the Prince of
your engagement, and he may
do something very nice for
you at Ranelagh tonight

Curtseys again.

Father has no right to
separate me from Johann

I should like to punish
him for being cruel to
Johann

You will make him let
me marry Johann

That will be too wonder-
ful for words

It will be splendid

I shall wear my blue
and silver

It will be as good as
going to Court

Molly makes curtsey

Like this

Curtseys

He shall not prevent me
from marrying Molly

If Gainsborough were
not Molly's Father I
should challenge him

If Your Grace helps
us all will be well

Thank heaven I shall
not have to play in
the orchestra

I shall wear my court
uniform

I shall get a new sash
for it

When I get a lover I shall
not let Father interfere

Father always gets his own
way

Hurrah! I may meet a lord
there

Or even a Duke

I shall wear my green and
gold

Perhaps I shall impress
the Prince

Peggy makes her curtsey

Like this

Curtseys

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. (at door) 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 rhyme---

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.

GAINS A fig for that nursery rhyme, 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 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 fetch it at once.

GAINS (overjoyed) Ah! (rushes towards Foyle) (ENTER JAMES)
(Gains. changes his manner at once, coolly) Tell Mrs. Gainsborough I am ready for Her Grace.

JAMES Yes, Sir. (EXITS)

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 quickly)
No, a love kiss. (Gainsborough kisses her and she exits
After he has seen her to the door,
he turns to find the Duchess)

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 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.
- 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 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 subservience 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 realise 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

GAINS (cont'd)

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 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...
- 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 limmer. (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 can follow up your triumphs with them. You'll find them most complaisant sitters. Whenever I see my piggies at

Chatsworth 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 (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.

END OF SCENE 2, ACT I.

A C T II

SCENE I. RANELAGH.

A 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 on to 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 won't
He would if he could

BETTY But he can't
 She he don't

LADY M. (Also with flower - slower)

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

Ugh, I never tried to tell my own firtune 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. GAINS. 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 delestian 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 Duchess.

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 Gains. 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 to the Duchess) I have come to pay
 my homage to the Queen of Hearts. (low curtsey from
 the Duchess, The Prince bends over her)

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 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 Willing the sil'vry night away.
CHORUS Night away.
GAINS With mirth and dancing music 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 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 -
CHORUS Drab and cold -
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.

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.

BEECH 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!

BEECH 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.

BEECH 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!

BEECH A nine days wonder. (laughs)

ASPEN Quick to the Prince. (laughs, running off)

BEECH 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.

MUSICS. (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.

MUSICS. 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)

END OF SCENE 1 ACT II.

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
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
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 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 and 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's 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 It's 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.

GAINS (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

DUCHESS (cont'd)

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
& 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 privileges from a new made bride.

Molly lifts her veil and Gains 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 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 join in later)
&
BETTY 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 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.

BEECH. Was it not a charming scene. Your Grace need not wear black looks any longer.

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

BEECH 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 GAINS, who disengages himself from the gentlemen) I congratulate you on your role of the 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?

DUCHESS Dare?

BETTY Huh!

GAINS I demand an explanation.

DUCHESS The only explanation you deserve is a horsewhipping.

During this scene, Lord Beechmaster and his cronies have been fashioning a quip which now causes laughter.

"He made the Duchess face so black, that she could only cry alack!"

BEECH. 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 Gains.)* 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 at 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. *(Gains. 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 curtsy full of disdain and abhorrence for G. and forcing a smile for the Prince she sweeps out. Gains. 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.

CHORUS 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.

EXIT PRINCE.

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.

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

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

CHORUS Sweethearts?

ASPEN Aye, aye.

CHORUS 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 humble of 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.

GAINS. gets up suddenly and
takes the centre from Aspen,
who is highly amused.

GAINS (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, la, la,
 To the serving maid.

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

T. and B. laugh heartily.

QUICK CURTAIN.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE 1. DUCHESS'S BOUDOIR.

FREDA (tidying room etc.) Is Your Grace going to sit for Mr. Gainsborough today?

DUCHESS (uneasily) No, I will not sit to Gainsborough.

FREDA looks curiously at her mistress who is very distressed.

A knock at the door.

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. Fischer up.

FREDA in meantime has brought a dress and put it on big chair.

FREDA I have brought Your Grace your brown dress.

FOOTMAN opening door.

FOOTMAN Missus Fischer, Your Grace. (EXITS)

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

FREDA Yes, Your Grace. (EXITS)

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 disapproved 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. He tells everyone, 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 unbearable!
- MOLLY** I'm sure he never said anything of the kind. **(very earnestly)** It sounds like Miss Foyle.
- DUCHESS** What?
- MOLLY** James told me he caught her quizzing the spoilt portrait.
- DUCHESS** Oh lud, that minx!
- MOLLY** We dislike her intensely, and think she is capable of anything.
- BETTY FOSTER ENTERS unannounced, (the privilege of an old friend,) she hesitates in the doorway in astonishment.**
- BETTY** Why do you have Gainsborough's daughter here after his vile slanders?
- DUCHESS** Betty!

- MOLLY** My father is no slanderer.
- BETTY** Who else could it have been?
- DUCHESS** Molly thinks it might 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 *(contemplating)* If I went early I could prevent him from showing it.

BETTY *(angry, 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. She is full of indecisions. At last she makes up her mind to act, and rings bell.

ENTER FREDA.

DUCHESS 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 hand the DUCHESS dismisses her and sits next to the costume which she pats occasionally.

SOLILOQUY.

DUCHESS

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 to 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 ACT III. SCENE I.

ACT III.

SCENE 2. GAINSBOROUGH'S STUDIO. GAINSBOROUGH in armchair with coat off, having restless sleep.

ENTER MOLLY and FISCHER, MRS. G. and PEGGY.

MOLLY Oh father - (Gains. starts up) The Duchess

GAINS (Still under the influence of sleep) Who's that?
Who's there?

MRS. G. (going close to him) Oh, Tom, do wake up, it's terrible!

GAINS What's terrible?

MOLLY I've just seen the Duchess.

GAINS Oh! (beginning to understand)

FISCHER 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!

FISCHER Judicious it will be, most wise!

MOLLY *(pleadingly)* Please, Father. Do put the portrait to rights.

GAINS *(looking at the portrait)* Ha, ha, ha. 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.

FISCHER *(fiercely)* Lady Betty is one dimn 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 rises and goes to the bell)* I shall tell James to say you are ill; and not to let anyone in.

GAINS. 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. (EXITS saying softly) God bless my soul, God bless my soul.

GAINS. (Sitting) You had better leave me.

MOLLY Oh, Father.

GAINS. I wish to be alone.

FISCHER Tom, my dear friend.

GAINS. (louder) I wish to be alone.

FISCHER (softly) Um Gotteswillen - Scandal - scandal.

Takes Molly and Peggy as far as door

MRS. G. Tom, you really must 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. GAINS. 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 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.

Stops suddenly struck by a new
idea.

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
Zounds! 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!

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?

ENTER JAMES very hurriedly,
and showing nervousness.

JAMES 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. G., Peggy and Molly.

ENTER THE PRINCE very jovially.

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

DUCHESS) (bowing) Your Royal Highness.
GAINS.)

The Courtiers are peering about.
Gains. 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 Mr. Gainsborough will let
me have a peep -

GAINS Your Royal Highness is sufficient master of the
Arts to make allowances for any shortcomings.

GAINS. invites the Prince to come
over to the easel on which the
picture stands, turned away from the
inquisitive eyes of the rest.

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. G., Molly, Peggy and Fischer 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 GAINS. cleaned the face. GAINS makes an involuntary movement to take it from the 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.

CHORUS (exaggeratedly) Oh, please, Oh, please, Your Grace.
 THE DUCHESS assents still doubtful
 of the portrait.

CHORUS Ah. Ah. (stop dumbfounded)

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

BEECH &
 BASSES (f) Wonderful. (p) Damn that Foyle girl. (f) Superb.

LADY M (to women) 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 Mr. Gainsborough to paint me one little
 fellow in, for your special benefit!

Smilingly she curtseys.

PRINCE laughs joyfully,

PRINCE Your Grace is truly bewitching.

PRINCE bows, kisses her hand. **EXITS.**

All the others bow and get out the best way they can. The **DUCHESS** slaps A. & B. on the shoulders with her fan as they slink out.

Mrs. G. (very happy), **MOLLY**, **FISCHER** and **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 transfixed 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.