

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

SCENARIO OF ACT II

Thirty years has elapsed since the close of the First Act. Gainsborough, a successful portrait painter nearly at the height of his fame, is living at Schomberg House, Pall Mall, one of the most fashionable quarters of the town. His vital passion is for his art. His love for his wife and children is secondary to this, and though he feels for them a warm affection it by no chance bubbles up to fever heat. He expects them to be contented with a domestic life and the society of the musical friends whom he invites to his house. Mrs. Gainsborough tactly acquiesces in this idea, but the two daughters Margaret and Mollie are anxious to get into society.

After his love for painting Gainsborough's greatest passion is for music. He is a fine but not a highly trained performer and instead of trying to perfect himself in the mastery of one instrument, he is attracted by any instrument he hears finely played and regardless of cost at once tries to buy it from its owner, hoping that he may speedily learn to play it to equal advantage. He has spent hundreds of pounds on this hobby and accumulated sufficient musical instruments to stock a full sized orchestra. Mrs. Gainsborough tries to



check this hobby as a needless extravagance, and her efforts result in considerable friction between them. In order to avoid this Gainsborough tries to smuggle his purchases into the house surreptitiously. Another source of conflict between them is that Gainsborough has an eye for a pretty woman, and is prepared on slight provocation to indulge in an ardent flirtation with one. His passions however are rarely moved. He is more interested in recording the emotions of his amorettes in his pictures than in responding to them. An unexpected ~~trait~~ ^{trait} is that he has a great sense of his own dignity in certain matters. Thus though he takes no interest in politics nothing would induce him to give a vote for the Whigs and though he may allow musicians to make a butt of him, he will not allow his sitters to dictate to him how they shall be painted.

The first scene of the Act opens in the entrance hall of Schomberg House. An election is on at Westminster. The Duchess of Devonshire, the leader of the Whig Society, has been assiduously canvassing the voters in the Whig interest, even buying their votes with kisses. She is sitting to Gainsborough for her portrait now nearly finished and enters the hall to go to Gainsborough's studio. As she does so she encounters William Pitt descending from it. He politely twits her with her inability to induce Gainsborough to promise his vote for the Whigs. She is piqued by his chaff and determines to make another effort to secure the vote, this time assailing the artist through the social ambitions of his wife and daughters.

Directly Pitt has gone she gives James, the footman, a guinea to bring Mrs. Gainsborough into the hall without telling her that the Duchess wants to see her. He does this by knocking a vase off the mantel piece, the crash of which brings Mrs. Gainsborough and the two girls hurrying out from their room. The Duchess takes the responsibility of the mishap upon herself, explaining that her nerves are all of a twitter, for she is not only sitting for her portrait and canvassing at the Westminster election, but she is also getting up a grand political ball for her husband the Duke. The Gainsboroughs, more especially the girls, express their interest in it.

Whereupon the Duchess says: What a pity it is that Mr. Gainsborough is such a stalwart Tory. If he would vote for the Whigs only once, she could have the pleasure of inviting Mrs. Gainsborough and the two girls to the ball but being a great Whig function it is impossible to ask any avowed Tories there. The girls declare that their father is not a strong politician and say that they will try to secure Gainsborough's vote for her. The Mother though eager that they should go to the ball is doubtful about their success.

As the Duchess leaves the hall to go upstairs Miss Ford enters and demands to see Gainsborough. Mr Gainsborough says she can't. Her husband is booked with sitters all day. Miss Ford explains that Gainsborough wants to buy her harp and she has decided to let him have it. May she leave it ~~at~~ in the hall, before Mr G can deny her she calls in from outside Joe Gubbings the waterman bearing the harp. Mr G is furious, the house is so filled with musical instruments ^(trunk) that her husband never plays that there is scarcely room to move about. She calls up James who pushes off Joe with the harp while Mr Gainsborough almost shoves out Miss Foyle. The latter is furious and says that she will let Mr Gainsborough know how she has been treated.

SCENE IIGAINSBOROUGH'S STUDIO ON THE 1st FLOOR.

The Duchess having gone upstairs is giving what should be the final sitting for her portrait. Turning the conversation to politics apropos of Pitt's portrait which stands on an easel near by, she again canvasses for Gainsborough's vote, holding out the ball as an inducement. But Gainsborough says that he has no desire that his daughters should be lifted out of their proper sphere and become Society butterflies nor does he approve of women interfering in politics. The Duchess, furiously angry at being snubbed, takes her revenge by criticising the portrait. She declares it is more like her grandmother than like her and decides the fault is in the hat. She thinks it will be better if the hat is removed. Gainsborough explains that this will ruin the picture. The Duchess persists. Her milliners and dressmakers alter her costume according to her wishes, why should he not do the same. Gainsborough becomes as angry as the Duchess. He declares Her Grace is too hard for him, fills a brush with dark brown pigment and paints over - not the hat but the Duchess's face. She is mad, for she really likes the portrait extremely, and rates him for spoiling it, but he finishes her discomforture by explaining he will turn it into a fancy picture by substituting the face of his housemaid which will be quite as effective as her own, and bows her out of the room.

SCENE III

Gainsborough's Studio at night in complete darkness. The door softly opens and Mrs. Gainsborough steals in. Carefully closing the door behind her she wanders round the room with the candle looking among the pictures exclaiming: "Where is it? What can he have done with it? &c." While so engaged the door is opened very slowly and softly and a head appears. It is of Margaret (the painter's eldest daughter). Mrs. Gainsborough turns round, gives a scream; Margaret gives a scream, then they recognize each other. Mrs. Gainsborough explains that she heard Gainsborough leave the house and realizing that he was probably going to some of his musical friends and would be away half the night, she thought she would come into the Studio and see how he was getting on with the Duchess's portrait. She is worried about the portrait. It should have been finished that day and in the ordinary way Gainsborough would have asked her in to see it. Instead of which he came out after the sitting as cross as two sticks and when she asked about it merely said it was not finished and seemed so angry she dare not ask more.

Mrs. Gainsborough and Margaret begin searching for the picture again, when the door softly opens once more and a big pistol is thrust through and a man's hat appears. Mrs. Gainsborough steps back saying: "Good God a burglar" but Margaret laughs. "It's only Molly" she explains "she has got one of Father's horse pistols in case it turned out to

a real burglar." Whereupon Molly struts in holding a huge horse pistol in her hand and wearing one of her Father's hats and coats over her night gear. She begins playing with the pistol pointing it at the others but Mrs. Gainsborough stops her saying they must find the picture, while Margaret, despite her mother's protests, lights up all the candles in the room, saying that they will never find it in the dark. Molly assists in lighting up and then postures in front of a full length mirror to admire the effect of her costume. Mrs. Gainsborough and Margaret resume the search and discover the picture with its face turned to the wall. Each one take a side of the canvas and they wheel it round, propping it up against the wall. Then they step back to have a look at it while Mollie turns from the mirror and joins them. A simultaneous "Oh" of surprise and horror bursts from all three lips. Mrs. Gainsborough laments that Gainsborough must have mortally offended the Duchess and that she and her friends will never sit to him again; then she turns on the girls and says that it is all their fault by bothering about going to the ball. The girls indignantly protest. Then suddenly Mollie calls out she hears a footstep on the stairs. Mrs. Gainsborough ejaculates "It's your father. Let's put the picture back." She and Margaret hastily replace it with its face to the wall while Mollie adjusts her hat to a more becoming angle, then all three face the door.

The door opens and there appears not Gainsborough

but Miss Foyle. She and the three Gainsboroughs regard one another with equal astonishment. Then Mrs. Gainsborough demands who she is and what she is doing there. Miss Foyle explains she is there by appointment with Gainsborough. He is coming up the stairs and will introduce her and explain.

Mrs. Gainsborough retorts that a midnight assignation needs no explanation, and asks her to spare them the details lest they should offend the maiden modesty of her daughters.

Gainsborough enters and explains that the appointment had to be made after Miss Foyle's professional duties were over. He had persuaded her to bring her harp in order that he might try it.

The Gainsboroughs demand where is the harp? Whereupon Gainsborough calls out and there enters the tattered waterman, Joe Gubbings, bearing the harp. The Gainsboroughs shriek at being exposed in their night gear to male eyesight, but Gubbings urges that theres no harm, he's a family man and has brought up six children with nary a night gown between them, shirts and shifts were all he could afford.

Mrs. Gainsborough seizes the idea that Miss Foyle is selling the harp and concentrates her efforts to having it taken away again, attacking Miss Foyle on the subject while Gainsborough looks on moodily. While thus engaged the door opens again and John Christian Fischer (the King's Oboe Player) enters in his gorgeous scarlet uniform. (He afterwards married Mollie) The girls shriek again and

and Mollie retreats into a dark corner behind a full length picture on an easel. Fischer apologises for his intrusion. He had come along with his friends Gainsborough and Miss Foyle and being left outside in the passage thought they had forgotten about him. As for seeing the ladies in their night clothes, if they only knew how charming they looked they would adopt it as their ordinary costume. Mrs. Gainsborough is so occupied with getting rid of the harp that she hardly notices him. Gainsborough listens moodily to her and Miss Foyle; Margaret discovers a piece of silk hanging about one of the easels and drapes it artistically about her. Joe Gubbings stands still with eyes and ears taking in everything, while Fischer edges off to where Molly is standing and they indulge in an amorous flirtation behind the picture.

At length Mrs. Gainsborough forces Miss Foyle to consent to the harp being taken away and herself goes out of the door with a candle to light its progress down the stairs. Joe shouldering the harp very slowly dallies to hear what Gainsborough is saying to Miss Foyle. Gainsborough tells her that he will see her at the Masquerade at Ranelagh to-morrow and pay for the harp and will arrange later when it can be smuggled into the house. Joe walks off with the instrument, they following, then Fischer and Mollie emerge from behind the picture. He arranges with her to meet him at Ranelagh and pleads for a kiss, she keeping him off with her horse pistol, then he suddenly grasps her in his arms and despite blows with the pistol gives her a good hug and kisses.

SCENE IVRANELAGH GARDENS. MASKED FETE.

In the background of the scene is a long tent open to the front in which is a table laden with refreshments, about this are a number of masked musicians with their instruments. They include Miss Foyle with her harp and Fischer in his gorgeous red uniform with his oboe. In front of this is a wide stretch of grass, while behind and at the sides are trees intersperced with winding and badly lighted glades. Passing in front of the tent are a throng of gaily dressed masqueraders talking, laughing and flirting while a few loiter about watching the musicians.

Mrs. Gainsborough, Margaret and Mollie enter. Mrs. Gainsborough having been brought there by Mollie telling her that Gainsborough had arranged to meet Miss Foyle. Mollie points out the latter in the tent. Mrs. Gainsborough moves forward a step or two to make sure that it is her, and Mollie takes the opportunity to signal to Fischer. He signals back and moves out of the tent to a glade on the left while Mollie slides away in the same direction. Mrs. Gainsborough returns, finds Mollie disappeared and drags off Margaret to the right in search of her.

The Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Betty Foster attended by a party of gentlemen enter. The Duchess explains that she is glad she is masked. She is passé, the good looks she once had have disappeared, for only that day she has been



told that some gawky housemaid would make a more attractive portrait. The gentlemen protest that such an atrocious slanderer should not be allowed to live and hearing that he is an artist Lord Follyton, one of the party, says that he will challenge him. Just then Gainsborough, led by Joe Gibbings, enters. "There she is, harp and all, Mr. Gainsborough" says the latter "I'll carry it on my back to Pall Mall rather than your Honour should miss securing it."

The Duchess overhears what is said and knowing Lord Follyton to be a coward points out Gainsborough to him. The little man thinks that the others will support him accosts the artist to fix a quarrell on him. The Duchess keeps her other friends back. Gainsborough turns fiercely on Lord Follyton, who finding himself unsupported tries to back out. In the meanwhile honest Joe Gubbings having pointed out Miss Foyle to Gainsborough turns back to speak to two swell mobsmen whom he has brought to rob the artist of the money he has brought for the harp. He tells them that now is their chance. One goes to offer to be Gainsborough's second, the other remains with Joe and says that there is no hope of doing anything with all that crowd about them.

In the meanwhile Lord Follyton tries to back out of fighting and the Duchess who does not want a duel interferes to stop it. Gainsborough thanks the man who offered to be the second and makes his way to the tent and Miss Foyle. He is anxious to pay for the harp quickly because he has on him

not only the money for the harp but another five hundred pounds as well and wants to get home and place it in safety. But Miss Foyle cannot take it. She is playing on her harp and is determined not to receive the money with so many people looking on. He must wait until he gets into a quieter place. The other musicians recognize Gainsborough and one of them places a glass of liquor on the table for him. Gainsborough resolved to keep sober does not touch it. The Duchess's group are trying to get up a dance on the grass. One of the swell mobsmen hovers near the tent to watch Gainsborough, the other tells him the only way to get the money is to drug Gainsborough's liquor, Joe can do it because he can enter the tent without suspicion. Joe objects but being told that he will have his throat cut if he does not oblige slinks off towards the tent with a concealed bottle of dope, which has been trust into his hand. One of the musicians tells Gainsborough that everyone who enters the tent has to pay a forfeit either by playing a piece of music or singing a song. Gainsborough after protesting agrees to sing. In the meanwhile Joe, who has reached the tent, and while the artists attention is distracted pours the dope in his glass. Miss Foyle finishes her piece and Gainsborough rises taking a sip of the liquor before he begins. He gets through the first verse of the song but poorly and feels he is making a mess of it, so before beginning the second he empties the glass. He manages the first few lines, repeats himself, falters and then falls down senseless.

Most of the musicians regard him as drunk. They cannot pay much attention to him however because the gong is sounding for their return to the Rotunda. Fischer comes hurrying back from one of the glades and goes direct to the Rotunda, while Molly who also reappears goes where she left her sister. Joe goes on ahead with Miss Foyle's harp and the other musicians are hurried off by call boys. Miss Foyle and one or two still remain, when the mobman who volunteered to be Gainsborough's second, steps up, declares that he is a neighbour of Gainsborough and as he is going home himself is willing to take him in his chariot. The other rogue coming up addresses him as Sir Charles. The other musicians thinking Gainsborough is drunk, consent. Miss Foyle knowing about the money he carries, feels sure that he is drugged and distrusts the swell mobmen. In despair she dashes off to the Duchess's party, who are still trying to dance and implores them to take charge of Gainsborough. The Duchess consents; Miss Foyle dashes back to find that one of the rogues, his back turned to her, has just succeeded in extracting Gainsborough's pocket book. She snatches it from him, his companion endeavours to get it back but the men, who have been following behind more leisurely drive the rogues away. She gets them to lift him up and carry him to the Duchess, giving the pocket book in her charge. He is just being carried off the stage accompanied by her when Mrs. Gainsborough and Margaret enter from the opposite side. They see Miss Foyle but do not realise that it is Gainsborough who is being carried away. Mrs.

Gainsborough scolds Molly for leaving them, the girl declares that she moved only a few steps away to speak to a friend and has been waiting there for ages and then changes the conversation by asking them Do they know that it was Gainsborough they saw. Mrs. Gainsborough looks wildly around in search of him but everybody who could throw light on the subject has disappeared, and she is convinced that he has been drugged and kidnapped by Miss Foyle, and the curtain falls on her denunciations of the woman.

ACT II. SCENE V.

A bedroom at Devonshire House, the curtains drawn over the windows, a bed in the middle of the apartment. Gainsborough is lying on it in a ruffled shirt, breeches and stockings. The rest of his clothes piled up on a chair by his side. He wakes, gradually rouses himself, sits up in bed with his hands pressed to his head bemoaning the horrible mornings after a binge. Then he tries to recall what happened last night, decided that he could not have been drunk, searches his pockets and discovers that his pocket book, watch and chain and money are missing, staggers up, huddles on his remaining clothes and rings the bell furiously.

Presently the Duchess enters in the mask and domino she wore upon the previous evening. He tells her of his losses. She cries what a rich man he is for he has forgotten to mention two crowns, three shillings, a sixpence and seven penny tokens. She produces the watch and money. Gainsborough demands what about the £630 in bank bills. She asks him does he mean the crumpled pieces of paper in his pocket money and explains her maid has used them for curl papers. Gainsborough swears, the Duchess teases him for some time and suggests the maid may not have torn them up yet. The maid (Lady Betty Foster in a housemaid's dress and mask) is summoned and eventually turns up and produces the notes and then leaves.

Gainsborough is so delighted that he presses some notes on the Duchess who declines but makes him promise to

paint a portrait of her exactly as she wants it. Gainsborough agrees but realizing that the girl has been having him on and in securing a portrait has obtained a greater gift than the money he offers, resolves to take a mild revenge, and putting his arm round her waist forces a kiss on her to seal the bargain.

The Duchess furious, throws off her mask and reveals who she is. She threatens to call her husband's grooms to whip him out of the house. Gainsborough pleads he erred in ignorance. Then he boldly declares that he is not sorry that her Grace's mouth is meant for kissing and she never looked so lovely as when his lips pressed hers. The Duchess declares that he is a humbug and indignantly reminds him how he painted out her face in the portrait and said that the face of his housemaid would do equally well. Gainsborough confesses that it was all a pretence, the paint he put on can be removed with a wet rag, he did it to save her portrait on which he had lavished so much care, from being spoilt. He eventually so prevails on the Duchess that she forgives him and after offering him a kiss to vote for her candidate, which he declines as being a desecration, she bestows a kiss on him without asking for a return.

ACT II. SCENE VI.GAINSBOROUGH'S STUDIO. MORNING.

Gainsborough dashes in, seizes the Duchess's portrait thrusts it on the easel, finds a rag and turpentine, and works away, rubbing the brown paint from the face. He exclaims, sotto voce, that the Duchess is coming after him as soon as she can change into her portrait costume.

A knock on the door. Gainsborough thinking that the Duchess has stolen a march on him, swears, while plying the rag desperately. But it is Mrs. Gainsborough.

She demands "Where were you last night?" He says the story is too long to tell now, he is in such a desperate hurry. She reiterates her question. Gainsborough still working desperately, equivocates, says she will tell her everything later. She extracts from him that some friends took him with them as he was carrying a lot of money and they were afraid that he would be robbed. But that he was in no danger whatever, and he asks her to go as he is expecting the Duchess in a moment and she is distracting him. Mrs. Gainsborough, not satisfied, keeps repeating her enquiry and especially asks was he in any danger. He is swearing that he was not when there comes another knock at the door.

Both Gainsborough and his wife think it is the Duchess. James the footman enters holds the door open wide. Gainsborough bows, Mrs. Gainsborough curtseys, while James

announces in stentorian tones "Mr. Gubbings"

"No" says Joe entering "not Mr. Gubbings. I aint no Mister I'm plain Joe Gubbings, the waterman."

Gainsborough tells him he's damned plain, but what the devil does he mean by coming there and swears at James for letting him up. James explains that as Gubbings had assured him that he had saved his master's life from six footpads last night and was anxious to see if he had been injured he thought he had better let him up. Mrs. Gainsborough says reproachfully "Six footpads, and you told me that you were in no danger." Gainsborough denies it but Gubbings asks How could Gainsborough tell when he was lying on the ground drunk, not vulgarly drunk but genteely drunk like a lord. Gainsborough insists that he was not drunk but drugged and Gubbings says he wished he'd only been half as drunk as his Honour looked. There is a regular squabble, Gainsborough wanting Gubbings thrown out, Mrs. Gainsborough wanting him to remain so that she shall hear what actually happened while Gubbings lies like a Trojan about his own prowess. They are in the midst of this when the Duchess enters unannounced and hopes that she is not interrupting a family conclave. The Duchess explains that it was really Miss Foyle who rescued Gainsborough whereupon Mrs. Gainsborough loses all interest in the matter. Joe is about to be thrown out as an imposter, but hinting that he has a recollection of the liveries of the carriage in which Gainsborough is carried off he is dismissed with a guinea and a threat of hanging if

he should turn up again.

The Duchess and Gainsborough are left alone. Gainsborough puts in the few finishing touches that the portrait requires and then says what a pity that the Duchess is not a model. The Duchess says that the time she has allowed for her sitting is not nearly expired, so he can make sketches of her during the remainder of the time and he must treat her exactly as he would another model. Gainsborough does so and in his ardour of getting such a good model forgets who she is, calls her Georgie and tires her by keeping her too long in one position. The Duchess gets on her high horse, gives him a lecture on his treatment of women by casting them aside directly they have served his need but says that she will continue to give him her patronage and support. She has got thus far overriding all Gainsborough's protests and apologies when there is a knock at the door and a messenger from the King is announced. In walks the King's Master of the Horse (or some other important member of the Household) to say that His Majesty proposes to visit Gainsborough very shortly and he has come to announce his impending arrival. The Duchess is taken aback. Her patronage is not needed now. She suggests that she had better leave but the Master is sure that the King will be charmed to see her and compare her wonderful portrait with its original. The Duchess stays. The Master states that he thinks the King is desirous of commissioning portraits of all the Royal family, while thus engaged Mrs. Gainsborough steals up to see what is

happening and is presented to the Master. This leaves the Duchess and Gainsborough together for a few minutes. She complains that her patronage will not be needed now. By the power of his genius he is invulnerable and can scorn her profers if he so desires for what is a poor Duchess to a King and Queen.

He tells her that she too has a genius - a genius for being beautiful, he is not a slave to her rank but to her loveliness, the fame of her charms will last down the ages though all contemporary Duchesses may be forgotten. She blames him for dallying with a few susceptible hearts, how many hundreds has she caused to thrill without even knowing it. Again his arguments and compliments prevails. She cries "Forget the Duchess but remember the woman." As she is saying this there is the sound of hoof beats outside. It is the noise of the King's escort arriving. Mrs. Gainsborough and the Master hasten to the window to see His Majesty alight. Gainsborough dallies a moment or two with the Duchess then he has to leave her for the King is ascending the stairs. Gainsborough goes towards the door to receive His Majesty, the Master standing near by as though in attendance on him, the Duchess and Mrs. Gainsborough remaining unobtrusively behind. The door is flung open by James who, holding it back, announces "The King." Gainsborough steps forward with a bow, the Master with a still lower one remains in his and the Duchess and Mrs. Gainsborough curtsey in the rear.

CURTAIN.