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SF PERUSALS

Molière

TARTUFFE

or THE IMPOSTER

Freely adapted by

MILES MALLESON

with a Prologue taken from

L'IMPROMPTU de VERSAILLES

Samuel French — London
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TARTUFFE

Produced at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, by the Bristol Old Vic Company, on February 21st, 1950, with the following cast of characters :

(*in the order of their appearance*)

MADAME PERNELLE, Orgon's mother	*Edith Manvell*
ELMIRE, Orgon's second wife	*Frances Rowe*
DORINE, Mariane's maid	*Jessie Evans*
DAMIS, Orgon's son	*Emrys Jones*
MARIANE, Orgon's daughter	*Dorothy Tutin*
CLEANTE, Elmire's brother	*David King-Wood*
FLIPOTE, Mme Pernelle's maid	*Jill Welchman*
MONSIEUR ORGON, a rich merchant	*Wensley Pithey*
VALERE, bethrothed to Mariane	*Julian Randall*
MANSERVANT TO TARTUFFE	*Timothy Heale*
TARTUFFE	*George Coulouris*
LOYALE, a bailiff	*John Moffatt*
AN OFFICER	*Denis Cannan*
1ST SERGEANT	*Kenneth Dight*
2ND SERGEANT	*Timothy Heale*

The Play directed by Allan Davis.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

THE PROLOGUE.—The Stage of the Theatre du Palais Royal, 1664.
THE PLAY.—The House of Monsieur Orgon, Paris, 1663.

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(See also page ii)

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The Characters of the Prologue are the Actors and Actresses who perform Tartuffe, and the Parts they could play are—

1st Actor	Valere
2nd Actor	Damis
3rd Actor	Monsieur Orgon
1st Actress	Flipote
2nd Actress	Mariane
3rd Actress	Dorine
Molière	Orgon, Cleante or Tartuffe
Mme Molière	Elmire
The Aristocrat	Loyale
Stage Manager	Officer
Court Official	2nd Sergeant
1st Stage Hand	1st Sergeant
2nd Stage Hand	
4th Actress	
Louis XIV	

TARTUFFE was first performed before Louis XIV at Versailles in 1664. In order to appease clerical circles the King forbade future performances of the play ; but five years later he permitted it to be acted in public. Since that time TARTUFFE has been played consistently on the Continent, though seldom in England.

The rhyming couplets are by " Sagittarius."

TARTUFFE

PROLOGUE

SCENE.—*The stage of the Theatre du Palais Royal, Paris.* 1664.

When the audience enter the theatre, the CURTAIN *is up and the scene for "Tartuffe" is not yet set. An indeterminate back-cloth is loosely hung back stage. Two large flats or wing pieces stand down* R. *and down* L. *with their backs showing to the audience. Loose lines hang from the flies. A set of rostrum steps, facing up stage, stands* R.C. *A table, covered by a rich cloth, and littered with papers, stands* L.C. *A high-backed armchair, draped with a large green velvet curtain stands* R. *of the table. A small stool stands close to, and down* L. *of the table. A large ornate plush and gilt stool stands on the forestage below the proscenium down* L. *On the table there is a large gilt inkstand with a quill pen standing upright in it. The table, the armchair* R. *of it, and the steps are illuminated with a side shaft of amber light from* L. *The rest of the stage is only dimly lit. Along the footlights are a row of seven shades concealing the candles used at the period. If practicable, the stage box* L. *should be unoccupied and the front of it decorated with fleurs-de-lis.*

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play.*)

As the house-lights are lowered, the 1ST STAGE HAND *enters* R. *He is dressed in a white shirt and black breeches with black shoes and stockings. He carries a broom and proceeds to sweep the stage. As he gets above the armchair,* MOLIÈRE *enters up* L. *He carries a play script in which he is engrossed. The* 1ST STAGE HAND, *intent on his work, nearly collides with* MOLIÈRE.

1ST STAGE HAND (*aghast*). Monsieur Molière !

(*He turns and exits hurriedly* R. MOLIÈRE *moves to the table, picks up the quill and makes an entry in the script.*)

MOLIÈRE (*closing the script and placing it on the table*). There ! My part finished. The others had theirs this morning. I've had so little time. (*He picks up a watch from among the papers on the table, and looks at it.*) And Great God ! Look at it—look at the time. (*Excitedly.*) They're late ! Late, late, late—late, today of all days. (*He puts the watch in his pocket.*)

(MADAME MOLIÈRE *enters* R., *moves to the armchair and sits. She carries a script.*)

MME MOLIÈRE (*from her seat ; calmly*). They're not late.

MOLIÈRE. Not late ! Do you know what time they were called for ?

MME MOLIÈRE. Yes.

MOLIÈRE. D'you know what time it *is ?*

MME MOLIÈRE. Yes.

MOLIÈRE. Quarter of an hour after they were called. And you say they're not late.

MME MOLIÈRE. They're here.

MOLIÈRE (*with a wild gesture*). Here ! Here ? Then am I blind ? Are my eyes affected ? If they're here, I can't see 'em.

MME MOLIÈRE. They're in the theatre.

MOLIÈRE. Where ?

MME MOLIÈRE. In the green room.

MOLIÈRE. And what doing ?

MME MOLIÈRE. Holding some sort of indignation meeting.

MOLIÈRE. And what about ?

MME MOLIÈRE. Need you ask ?

(*The* 1ST ACTOR *enters up* R. *He carries a script.*)

MOLIÈRE. Oh, there you are.

1ST ACTOR. Good afternoon, Monsieur Molière.

MOLIÈRE (*very coldly*). Good afternoon..

1ST ACTOR (*moving to* R. *of* MME MOLIÈRE). Good afternoon, Madame Molière. (*He turns and moves* R.)

MME MOLIÈRE (*very affably*). Good afternoon, Monsieur du Croisy.

(*The* 2ND ACTOR *and* 1ST ACTRESS *enter down* R. *They carry scripts.*)

1ST ACTRESS. Good afternoon, Monsieur Molière. (*She perches herself on the steps* R.C.)

(*The* 2ND *and* 4TH ACTRESSES, *the* 3RD ACTOR *and the* STAGE MANAGER *enter* R. *They all carry scripts.*)

MOLIÈRE (*coldly*). Good afternoon.

1ST ACTRESS. Good afternoon, Madame Molière.

MME MOLIÈRE. Good afternoon, Mademoiselle Du Parc.

3RD ACTOR (*sitting on the upstage side of the steps*). Good afternoon, Monsieur Molière.

MOLIÈRE. Good afternoon.

(*The* 2ND ACTRESS *eases up* R. *The* 2ND ACTOR *stands up* L. *of the* 1ST ACTOR, *who is down* R. *The* 4TH ACTRESS *stands above the armchair. The* STAGE MANAGER *crosses up* L. MOLIÈRE *is above the table.*)

Ladies and gentlemen, you're late.

(*The* 3RD ACTRESS *enters down* L. *She is noticeably affected in her*

speech and manner. She carries a script, and flutters hurriedly across to the 2ND ACTOR.)

3RD ACTRESS (*as she crosses*). Oh, am I late ? (*She kisses the* 2ND ACTOR, *then stands up* L. *of him.*)

2ND ACTOR. Darling !

MOLIÈRE. If you please, we'll start our rehearsal at once.

2ND ACTOR (*moving* C.). But Monsieur Molière——

MOLIÈRE. Yes ?

2ND ACTOR. —you can't expect us to play this play this evening. We only had our parts this morning—I've only just read it through.

3RD ACTRESS. I was out shopping when mine came. I haven't even read it.

2ND ACTOR. The thing's impossible. You're asking too much.

2ND ACTRESS (*moving quickly between the* 1ST ACTOR *and the* 3RD ACTRESS). That's right. You speak for all of us.

(*The other actors and actresses agree ad lib. The* 2ND ACTOR *breaks to* L. *of the steps. The* 3RD ACTRESS *moves above the steps.*)

MOLIÈRE (*breaking down* L. ; *excitedly*). God save me from actors and actresses. (*He turns.*) What a crew to deal with ! (*He strides to* R.C. *and faces the group at* R.) Now, listen—the King isn't expected for some time yet. This new piece is quite short——

1ST ACTOR (*breaking down* R. ; *impatiently*). Ha !

MOLIÈRE. —none of your parts are long—mine's far the longest. Surely we can run through it now ; and give a performance. (*He moves* C.) A performance, let me remind you, ladies and gentlemen, that His Majesty has commanded of us.

1ST ACTOR (*moving down* R.C.). But how can we ? We don't know it.

1ST ACTRESS. We can't play what we don't know.

3RD ACTOR. I've been studying it since I got it this morning, but, frankly, I don't know a word of it.

2ND ACTRESS. I shall have to be prompted from beginning to end.

3RD ACTRESS (*moving down* R.). I'll have to have the lines in my hand the whole time, and read it—that's all.

1ST ACTRESS. I've precious little to say, but I won't promise not to dry up every other line.

2ND ACTOR. I'd give a week's salary to be out of it.

3RD ACTRESS. And I'd rather have a good thrashing any day. The King in front—and not knowing a word.

2ND ACTRESS. I should die of nerves.

MOLIÈRE. For God's sake what are you all grumbling about ? Nerves indeed ! What about *me ?*

1ST ACTOR. *You !* What have *you* to worry about ? You wrote it. It all came out of your head. At least it's not utterly new to you. You won't be in a cold sweat for fear of forgetting your lines.

MOLIÈRE. And is a mere slip of the memory all I have to be

frightened of ? D'you suppose it's an easy thing to write a play for an audience that doesn't want to be amused ? There they all sit—the critics included—determined to find fault.

2ND ACTOR. You shouldn't have undertaken it—with so little time.

MOLIÈRE. How could I help myself ? The King commanded it.

3RD ACTOR (*rising*). You should have thought of your own reputation as a playwright ; and ours as your company. (*He moves between the 2nd and* 3RD ACTRESSES.)

(*The other actors and actresses agree ad lib. The* 4TH ACTRESS *moves down* L. *of the table.*)

1ST ACTOR (*moving* L. *of the steps*). Of course. (*He moves up* R.C.) And begged, respectfully, for more time.

MOLIÈRE. Kings don't liked to be asked for more time. When they want a thing, they want it when they want it. They demand, of us, entertainment. To delay entertainment, destroys its charm. Yes—I did think of my reputation ; and yours. We are not only the servants of the King, but of the public. And I mean to show them that we're not only good servants, but good actors ; who can give them what they want, when they want it, where lesser people would whine for more time. So, if you please, we'll get to work. (*He moves above the table, turns and faces them.*) You all have your parts. (*He opens his script on the table in front of him.*) When we've been through it once, and you know the plot, if you can't manage the exact text, you can improvise as you go along. It isn't as if it were in verse ; but in very ordinary prose.

MME MOLIÈRE. Husband !

MOLIÈRE. Yes, wife ?

MME MOLIÈRE. Shall I tell you what I think ?

MOLIÈRE. Yes ?

MME MOLIÈRE. You should have written a comedy that you could have acted all by yourself.

(*The* ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES *are amused and there is some laughter. The* 3RD ACTOR *moves up* R. *The* 2ND ACTOR *moves to* L. *of the* 1ST ACTRESS.)

MOLIÈRE (*stung into retort*). Oh, hold your tongue, woman ; and don't be so silly.

MME MOLIÈRE. Hark at that, now ! Eighteen months ago he wouldn't have told me to hold my tongue.

MOLIÈRE. Oh, wife—not now, not now.

MME MOLIÈRE. Isn't it a miracle, ladies, how the simple ceremony of marriage completely alters us ? A lover looks at us, and sees one person ; then, as a husband, he looks again, and sees another.

MOLIÈRE. Please, please.

MME MOLIÈRE. If I could write, I'd write a comedy on *that*

subject. I'd make husbands ashamed of themselves. They're all the same—the difference in 'em before and after.

(MOLIÈRE *has a moment's struggle not to answer.*)

MOLIÈRE (*after a pause*). You all have your parts with you. (*He moves down* C. *To the* 1ST ACTOR.) Du Croisy, you play the part of a poet. Throughout, I want you to emphasize all the wrong syllables ; very slightly and almost diffidently—but enough to draw attention to yourself.

3RD ACTRESS (*moving to* R. *of* MOLIÈRE). Oh, Monsieur Molière, another of these affected parts ? Why will you give me affected parts ? You know I'm the least affected person in the world.

(*During* MOLIERE'S *next speech the* 1ST, 2ND *and* 3RD ACTORS *group up* R. *The* STAGE MANAGER *stands above the* L. *end of the table.*)

MOLIÈRE (*humouring the* 3RD ACTRESS). I know, I know, my dear. I do it so that you can prove what a fine actress you are—to be able to play against your own personality. (*He turns to the* 4TH ACTRESS.) And, in this piece, you're the kind of woman who, because she doesn't make love, thinks she can do anything else she likes. She is convinced that the finest qualities in anyone else are as nothing compared to her own chastity—about which nobody cares a *damn.*

(*The* 4TH ACTRESS *moves above the table, then up* C.)

(*He crosses below the* 3RD ACTRESS. *To the* 1ST ACTRESS.) And you —virtuous, too.

(*The* 1ST ACTRESS *rises and moves to* R. *of* MOLIÈRE. *The* 3RD ACTRESS *moves to the stool below the table and sits.*)

In your eyes the only sin is being found out—and that's the only one you never commit.

(*The* 1ST ACTRESS *resumes her seat on the steps.*)

(*To the* 2ND ACTRESS.) And you, Madame du Croisy.

(*The* 2ND ACTRESS *moves to* R. *of* MOLIÈRE.)

Yes, you're virtuous, too ; benevolent and charitable—but everything you say has a drop of poison in it ; and it really hurts you to hear your neighbours well spoken of.

(*The* 2ND ACTRESS *moves to* R. *of the steps. The* ARISTOCRAT *enters up* L. *and moves* C.)

And now, as the piece opens with you three ladies, and the poet . . . (*He sees the* ARISTOCRAT.) Oh, god help us !

ARISTOCRAT (*moving to* L. *of* MOLIÈRE). Ah, my dear Molière. I'm so glad I've found you ; and at work. How fortunate I am.

MOLIÈRE (*bowing ; with a very thin show of deference*). Monsieur.

ARISTOCRAT (*turning to* MME MOLIÈRE). And Madame Molière. (*With elaborate gallantry, he kisses her hand.*)

MOLIÈRE (*moving above the armchair, then above the table*). Plague take the fellow !

STAGE MANAGER (L. *of* MOLIÈRE). Who is he ?

ARISTOCRAT (*crossing to the* 3RD ACTRESS). And the beautiful and talented De Brieu. (*He kisses her hand, then turns and moves* R.C.)

MOLIÈRE (*to the* STAGE MANAGER). One of our patrons. Always about the place——

ARISTOCRAT (*to the* 1ST ACTRESS). And the exquisite du Parc—lovelier than ever. (*He kisses her hand.*)

MOLIÈRE. —suffers from two complaints—more money than is good for him ; and back-stage-fever.

ARISTOCRAT (*turning to* MOLIÈRE). I've just come from a—certain house. It must be nameless, but you'd be surprised if you knew. Exalted ! A very high place. And there, I've been speaking up for you.

MOLIÈRE (*moving to* L. *of the* ARISTOCRAT). I'm sure I'm much obliged. And now, dear Monsieur, if you don't mind . . .

(*During the ensuing conversation between* MOLIÈRE *and the* ARISTOCRAT, *the* ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES *quietly re-group. The* 2ND ACTRESS *moves up* C. *to* L. *of the* 1ST ACTOR. *The* 1ST ACTRESS *rises and moves to* R. *of the steps. The* 4TH ACTRESS *moves to* R. *of the* 1ST ACTRESS. *The* 2ND ACTOR *moves below the steps and perches himself on them.*)

ARISTOCRAT. And you *need* someone to speak up for you. You do. That last play of yours, for instance ; about the hypocrite—what do you call it ?

MOLIÈRE. *Tartuffe.*

ARISTOCRAT. Yes, *Tartuffe.* It gave offence, my boy. In very influential quarters. I suppose you know it was only because of His Majesty's personal intervention that it was allowed at all.

MOLIÈRE (*leading the* ARISTOCRAT *down* L.C.). Indeed I know. I tried to show my gratitude in the last act.

ARISTOCRAT. And mightily pleased he was. I can tell you that. But you must stop it, you know. My dear fellow, you really must. This mischievous habit of writing real people into your plays.

MOLIÈRE (*stung into indignant protest*). I've never done such a thing in my life. Never. My dear good Monsieur, because it's the business of Comedy to reflect the faults and follies of the age, if I put a fool or a knave on the stage, and a fool or knave in the audience thinks he's looking at himself, what can I do ?

ARISTOCRAT (*laughing*). Well, I don't know how you think of them all. I suppose, soon, you'll be exhausted—run short of material, eh ?

MOLIÈRE (*breaking down* L.). Never ! (*He turns.*) While there's hypocrisy in the world ; and stupid credulity ; intolerance and

prejudice ; fawning sycophants, and miserly selfishness. While there are those who would burn incense before us when we're a success, and damn us to hell fire when we fail—and, and, and while (*he crosses to* R.) there are those who apparently have no business of their own, but spend their aimless time stopping other people getting on with theirs— (*he moves to* R. *of the* ARISTOCRAT) and now, Monsieur, if you'd be so kind . . . (*He moves above the table.*)

ARISTOCRAT. Oh, very well—if that's the way you feel about it. So I'll let them know you're ready to begin.

(*There are cries of protest ad lib. from the* ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES.)

MOLIÈRE. No, Monsieur, no. I beg of you.

ARISTOCRAT (*moving down* L.). That's all right, my dear Molière ; no need to thank me—a pleasure—a pleasure.

(*He exits down* L. *The* 2ND ACTOR *rises and moves up* C.)

MOLIÈRE (*quickly*). Quickly, now. (*He picks up his script.*) We shall have just time to run through it once ; and then—we can only do our best.

2ND ACTRESS. I'm so nervous, that rehearsal or no rehearsal, I can't do it.

MOLIÈRE (*moving* C.). What's that ?

3RD ACTRESS (*rising and crossing to* R.). Nor I.

1ST ACTRESS. Nor I.

4TH ACTRESS. Nor I.

(*The* 2ND ACTRESS *moves to the other* ACTRESSES, *and the four of them group down* R. *The three* ACTORS *group up* R.)

MOLIÈRE. Ladies ! (*He stares at them, aghast.*) I can scarcely believe my ears. (*He turns to the group of* ACTORS *with a gesture of despair.*)

2ND ACTOR. Nor I.

3RD ACTOR. Nor I.

1ST ACTOR. Nor I.

MOLIÈRE. But you can't do this to me. You can't !

(*The sound is faintly heard of a crowd cheering in the distance.*)

MME MOLIÈRE (*rising suddenly*). Be quiet !

MOLIÈRE. Eh ?

MME MOLIÈRE. *Listen !*

(*They all listen. The cheers grow louder and all look at one another in stricken horror. The* STAGE MANAGER *exits hurriedly up* L. *There is a short pause as the cheers grow still louder, then the* STAGE MANAGER *re-enters up* L.)

STAGE MANAGER (*excitedly*). Master ! The Royal carriage. (*He runs* C.) Drawing up to the front of the theatre.

MOLIÈRE. What am I to do ? What ? *I won't give in.* (*He moves to* R. *of the* STAGE MANAGER.) My friend, go to the King.

Meet him on the very steps of the theatre. He's a man of understanding. He knows the piece has been hurried. Beg him a moment's grace. (*He turns to the* ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES.) And we'll put up a show—Ladies and Gentlemen, have courage.

2ND STAGE HAND (*as he enters ; calling*). Monsieur Molière. (*He runs* C.) Monsieur Molière. The King. The King. He's in the theatre ! In the foyer. Coming up to the royal box.

(MOLIÈRE, *suddenly like an old man, drags himself to the stool down* L., *and collapses on it. The* STAGE HAND *moves below the table.*)

MOLIÈRE. I'm ruined—finished—all over. (*He sinks his head into his hands.*)

(A COURT OFFICIAL, *obviously a very important person, enters down* L. *The* STAGE HAND, *about to exit, bumps into the* OFFICIAL, *then exits hurriedly down* L.)

OFFICIAL (*moving below the table ; to* MME MOLIÈRE). Monsieur Molière ? Is he here ?

(*Unable to speak, the company all stare at the* OFFICIAL. *After a short pause,* MME MOLIÈRE, *in silence, points to* MOLIÈRE. *The* OFFICIAL *turns and looks at* MOLIÈRE *who, with his head still bowed in his hands, is unaware of him. There is another short silence.*)

MME MOLIÈRE (*timidly*). Jean.

(*There is another very short pause, then* MOLIÈRE *looks up and blinks vaguely at the* OFFICIAL.)

OFFICIAL. I am from the King.

MOLIÈRE. Oh, yes. (*He struggles to his feet.*) You—you come to tell me His Majesty is here ; and ready ; waiting for us to begin.

OFFICIAL. On the contrary. His Majesty has been told that the new play for which he asked, is not ready. He realizes that you have had less than the usual time for your preparations ; and he sends you word that he himself would prefer, if it so suits you, that you and your Company should perform for him your latest play, *Tartuffe*——

(*The* ACTORS *and* ACTRESSES *crowd forward. The* 2ND ACTRESS *rises.*)

ALL (*ad lib. ; excitedly*). *Tartuffe !*

MOLIÈRE. *Tartuffe !*

OFFICIAL. —with which, he bids me say, he is especially delighted ; as he considers that he himself plays so considerable a part at the end of it.

MOLIÈRE. Oh, God bless him, God bless him ; and God bless *you*. Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, we'll play *Tartuffe ;* and we'll act it as we've never acted before.

(*They all bow. The* OFFICIAL *exits* L.)

(*He turns to the company.*) Did you hear ? We're to play *Tartuffe.* To your dressing-rooms, and prepare.

(*As they start to move, a fanfare of trumpets is heard off. Everyone on the stage stops, turns and gazes expectantly towards the stage box* L. *The box becomes illuminated. All the men make a low bow, and all the ladies, a sweeping curtsy.* LOUIS XIV *enters the box, moves to the front of it, acknowledges those on the stage, then retires to his seat in the box, and sits, almost unseen by the audience. From time to time, during the play, his hand, and the white lace ruffles of his sleeve, can be seen resting on the ledge of the box. The light in the box is switched off. The company exit, with the exception of* MOLIÈRE *and the* STAGE MANAGER.)

(*To the* STAGE MANAGER.) Set the stage.

STAGE MANAGER (*calling*). Set for *Tartuffe*—first Act.

(*The* 1ST STAGE HAND *enters up* R. *and moves quickly to the flat down* R.)

1ST STAGE HAND (*calling*). Set for *Tartuffe*—first Act.

(*The* 2ND STAGE HAND *enters quickly down* L. *and moves to the flat down* L. *The* STAGE HANDS *run their respective flats up* R. *and* L. *and then off. They re-enter quickly and the setting for "Tartuffe" proceeds, the* STAGE MANAGER *assisting and* MOLIÈRE *looking on. The* OFFICIAL *enters up* L. *and moves* C. *The back-cloth is raised, revealing the back-stage wall of the "Tartuffe" setting.*)

OFFICIAL. Monsieur Molière.

MOLIÈRE. Monsieur le Marquis ?

OFFICIAL. His Majesty desires me to inform you that he enjoys seeing the curtain go up more than anything in any play ; so would you please start your performance with the curtain down.

(*The side walls of the set are run into position.*)

MOLIÈRE. Of course, of course, at once. (*To the* STAGE MANAGER.) Have the curtain down. At once.

STAGE MANAGER (*moving* R.C. *and shouting upwards*). Hi, you, up there. Put the curtain down.

(MOLIÈRE, *the* OFFICIAL *and the* STAGE MANAGER, *stand, necks craned, so as to look straight up above their heads. Nothing happens.*)

(*He glances anxiously towards the Royal box, then shouts upwards.*) What's the matter up there ? Have you gone to sleep ? (*He gets flustered.*) I want that curtain down.

(*Still nothing happens. The* STAGE MANAGER *gives an agonized look towards the Royal box, then loses his head.* MOLIÈRE *and the* OFFICIAL *ease up* C.)

God have mercy ! Will you disgrace me ? (*With the loudest shout of which he is capable.*) *Can you hear me ?*

(*The* CURTAINS *start to fall.*)

Will you put that . . .

(*The* CURTAINS *hit the* STAGE MANAGER *and envelop him in their folds. He clears himself to the stage side of the* CURTAINS. *The orchestra, a harpsichord player and a flautist, enter the orchestra pit. They should wear the costume of the period. The* STAGE MANAGER *and the* 1ST STAGE HAND *enter the forestage from the centre of the* CURTAINS. *They carry lighted tapers with which they light the footlights. The* STAGE MANAGER *starts at the* R. *end, the* 1ST STAGE HAND *at the* L. *end. As there are an odd number of candles, they bump each other as they both turn to light the centre one. They glance apologetically towards the Royal box, then exit through the centre of the* CURTAINS.)

ACT I

SCENE.—*A room in the house of* MONSIEUR ORGON, *a rich merchant. Paris,* 1663.

The room is simply furnished but gives the impression of wealth, comfort and good taste. The floor at the back and sides is raised on a rostrum about four feet wide and nine inches high. Slender pillars rise from the edge of the rostrum to the ceiling. There are double doors back C. *opening on to the entrance hall and other parts of the house. A door* L. *leads to an inner room. A table, covered with a rich cloth that reaches to the floor, stands* R.C. *On the table there is a silver tray with a decanter of wine and two glasses ; and a tray with a silver coffee pot and one cup and saucer. A high-backed tapestry-covered armchair stands* L. *of the table. A tapestry-covered settee to match stands* L.C. *Two high-backed tapestry dining-chairs stand on the rostrums, one* R. *and one* L. *Two stools stand below the rostrums, one down* R. *and one down* L. *On the rostrum, against the back wall up* L., *there is a small table covered with a rich cloth to match the larger table.*

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play.*)

When the CURTAIN *rises,* MARIANE *is seated on the downstage side of the stool down* R., *and shares it with* DORINE *who is seated on the upstage side of it.* MARIANE, ORGON'S *daughter, and step-daughter to* ELMIRE, *is about twenty years old. She holds a cup and saucer and a small fan.* DORINE, MARIANE'S *personal maid, is a pert miss, a little older than her mistress. The off-the-shoulder bodice of her dress is cut, in the style of the period, as low as she dare wear it.* DAMIS, MARIANE'S *brother, a step-son to* ELMIRE, *is seated on the stool down* L. *He is a vigorous, headstrong young man of about eighteen. He holds a cup and saucer.* ELMIRE, ORGON'S *second wife is seated on the settee. She is about thirty years old, very beautiful, and superbly dressed in the latest fashion of the day.* CLEANTE, ELMIRE'S *brother, stands above the settee. He is about thirty-five, is a Doctor of Science and Law and is a " Progressive " of the time. He is the kind of man who never was young ; apt to be a bit pompous ; but there is comedy in his very earnestness ; and he is not only a thoroughly good sort, but very likeable. He holds a cup and saucer.* FLIPOTE, *maid to* MME PERNELLE *stands agape,* R. *of the table* R.C. *She wears her hat and cloak and holds gloves and a cloak for* MME PERNELLE. FLIPOTE *is somewhat gauche and lives in fear of her mistress's sharp temper.* MME PERNELLE, ORGON'S *mother is standing* C. *She carries a walking stick, more for the effect of emphasizing her remarks by rapping it on the floor, than for use,*

as she gives the impression of great vigour for her age. She is in a towering passion.

MME PERNELLE. I'm not going to stay here another minute. (*To* FLIPOTE.) Come along, come along, Flipote—stir yourself—don't stand there gaping—what a great gawk you are. (*She moves up* C.) Did you hear me? Come along. Let's get out of this house.

(ELMIRE *rises and moves to* L. *of the doors up* C. FLIPOTE *suddenly realizes she is being spoken to and scurries up* R.)

(*To* ELMIRE.) No, no, thank you. No need for any ceremony. There's not the least need to show me out. Not the least. Quite unnecessary. I can do that for myself.

(DORINE *takes the cup and saucer from* MARIANE.)

ELMIRE. But, Mother, why are you leaving us?
MME PERNELLE. Why!
ELMIRE. Yes. And in such a hurry.
MME PERNELLE. Need you ask?
ELMIRE. I *am* asking.
MME PERNELLE. Because I'm *displeased! Immensely* displeased!
ELMIRE. But, Mother, who with?
MME PERNELLE. Everybody.
ELMIRE. But what about?
MME PERNELLE (*moving down* C.). Everything. Nobody in this house has any regard for my wishes; nobody cares, the least bit, what I think; and none of you show the slightest respect.
DORINE (*rising and moving* R.C.). But, Madame . . .

(ELMIRE *moves to the settee and sits.* DAMIS *places his cup and saucer under his stool.*)

MME PERNELLE (*turning on* DORINE). And as for you, my girl, you're far too free with that tongue of yours; far too free for anyone in your position. The way you air your opinions! For ever chipping in to favour us with a piece of advice.

(CLEANTE *moves and places his cup and saucer on the table up* L., *then returns to his position above the settee.*)

Good heavens, mercy on us! Instead of being a maid, you might be the family lawyer.

(DORINE *places the cup and saucer on the table* R.C., *then eases* R. *and stands above* MARIANE.)

DAMIS (*rising*). Yes, but Grandmother . . .
MME PERNELLE (*crossing to* DAMIS). And I don't want to hear anything from *you*. You're a fool! A fool, a fool.

(DAMIS *drops back on to his stool down* L.)

Three times a fool. A headstrong young fool. You always were—though it's your own grandmother saying it. The very first time I set eyes on you in your cradle, I said, " that child's a fool."

MARIANE (*rising and moving down* R. *of the table* R.C.). Grannie !

MME PERNELLE (*turning and moving to* MARIANE). Don't you grannie *me !* And you're no fool. Oh, no ! Quite the contrary. With that *demure* manner of yours. I never know what to make of it. There's always something going on underneath. You're sly !

ELMIRE. Mother, that's not fair . . .

(MARIANE *turns and moves down* R.)

MME PERNELLE (*moving to* R. *of the settee ; to* ELMIRE). And let me tell *you*, my child, that the way you're behaving, your whole demeanour in your own household, is utterly disgraceful. Your whole way of life is wrong. Wrong from beginning to end. You ought to be setting your stepchildren a good example ; instead of which, goodness gracious me, look at the example you're setting them. You're extravagant. Absurdly extravagant. *What's* it for ? *Who* for ? (*She indicates* ELMIRE'S *dress.*) All this get-up.

(MARIANE *sits on the stool down* R.)

Really, if I didn't know you better, I might think worse. You're not courting now. If a woman has only her husband to please, she's no need of such finery.

CLEANTE (*moving to* L. *of the settee*). But, Madame, if you'll allow me to remark . . .

MME PERNELLE. I will *not* allow you to remark. Monsieur Cleante, I've always regarded you as one of the family—and, of course, as my daughter-in-law's brother, you are. But if this was *my* house, I'd desire you never to darken my doors again. You're for ever laying down the law. Always telling people what they ought to do—quite intolerable. (*She starts to go.*)

DAMIS. Really, Grandmother, the way you scold us all, you might as well be Monsieur Tartuffe.

MME PERNELLE (*returning and sitting in the armchair* C.). Monsieur Tartuffe. I'm glad you mentioned *him.* I'm very glad to have a word with all of you about him before I go. And if you really want to know why I've lost all patience with the lot of you, it's because of the way you all treat him here. Dreadful ! To one as sensitive as myself, so humiliating. The way you all laugh at him; and not always behind his back ; sneer at him. I watch it every time I come to this house. I've watched it today —and it's more than I can endure ; for, if you only knew it— that man's a saint.

(*There is an immediate chorus of disapproval from the others.*)

DAMIS, DORINE, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLEANTE (*together*). (*Rising.*) A saint! (*He breaks* L.) I like that! / Him a saint! That's a good one! / Really, Mother! / Grannie, how can you? / Madame Pernelle, I must protest.

MME PERNELLE (*topping the clamour*). Goodness gracious me! What a tumult of ignorance one word of truth lets loose. I tell you—as near a saint as any of us are ever likely to meet this side of heaven.

DAMIS (*crossing to* L. *of* MME PERNELLE; *shouting angrily*). No, Grandmother! That's too much.

MME PERNELLE (*shouting at* DAMIS). Don't you shout at me.

(CLEANTE *sits on the stool down* L.)

DAMIS (*controlling himself dutifully, but with a very great effort*). I'm sorry, Grandmother, I beg your pardon. But, Grandmother, you don't understand. You don't have to live in this house—we do. After all, it was only a very short while ago, father first introduced him into the house; then, for a while, he came here all day every day; and now he's moved in. Living here. And, if you please, ordering us all about. Aren't we to have any lives of our own? Any amusement? Any friends even, unless this Tartuffe condescends to give his consent?

DORINE (*moving above the table* R.C. *to* R. *of* MME PERNELLE). It's quite right, Madame, what Master Damis says. If we were to listen to him, and *believe* him, we should think everything we did was wicked. He sees fault in everything.

MME PERNELLE. If he sees fault in *you*, my girl, he hasn't got far to look. Yes. All of you. If he "sees fault"—as the girl puts it—*he sees what's there.* God is all-seeing. A man of God sees further than most of us, remember that.

(DORINE *moves down* R. *of the table* R.C.)

Your father never did a wiser thing than to bring him into the house, and have him under the same roof as the rest of you. If only you could appreciate even a little of the truth that's in him.

DAMIS (*moving above the table* R.C.; *angrily*). Well, I hate him! (*He bangs with his fist on the table.*) I hate the sight of him. I hate him, I hate him, I hate him.

MME PERNELLE. Damis!

DAMIS. And that's the truth in *me*, Grandmother. He makes me as furious as we seem to make you. And I can tell you what's going to happen—I and that holy man are going to have a most unholy row. (*He moves angrily to the chair* R. *and sits, with his back half turned to the room.*)

DORINE (*moving above the table* R.C. *to* R. *of* MME PERNELLE). And he's a beggar, Madame; really; that's all he is. When the

master first brought him along, when I first set eyes on him, I noticed his feet on the carpet ; and his great dirty toes poking out at the end of his boots. And his old clothes, filthy, stinking, in rags, hanging about him like an old tramp's. And now ! Oh, what a change. (*She moves above the armchair to* L. *of* MME PERNELLE.) Fine clothes. The best bedroom. Waited on hand and foot. And interfering in everything from morning till night. Lording it over the household.

MME PERNELLE (*rising and moving to the doors up* C.). And you'll be the better for it, all of you.

DORINE (*easing above the table* R.C.). You may think he's a saint, Madame ; but, saving your presence, I think he's a disgusting old hypocrite.

MME PERNELLE (*stopping and turning*). May God forgive you, girl. What blindness ! What ignorance !

DORINE (*moving* R. *of the table* R.C., *then below it*). Why can't he bear even a visitor to come to the place ? I think he's jealous (*she indicates* ELMIRE) of Madame here.

ELMIRE (*more amused than angry*). Dorine !

DORINE (*moving to* R. *of the table* R.C.). Yes. Of all the fine gentlemen that used to come, a-visiting.

MME PERNELLE (*moving to* R. *of the settee*). Elmire ! How can you allow it ? How can you tolerate it ? Your daughter's maid for ever exchanging words with the family. And such words. Such insolence. (*She moves below the table* R.C.) If she were mine, she'd be out in the street before she knew where she was. (*She moves* C.) And about these visitors. I've told you before, you've entertained here on far too large a scale. And it isn't only I, and Monsieur Tartuffe, have noticed it.

(DORINE *moves and stands above* MARIANE.)

This house was becoming the talk of the neighbourhood—the rows of carriages for ever lined up outside the house ; the crowds of lazy, noisy servants, hanging about, waiting for their masters ; and inside, all " the fine gentlemen "— (*she indicates* DORINE) she's no fool, the baggage, for all her insolence, " a-visiting " as she calls it — (*she moves below the table* R.C.) hanging around Elmire.

CLEANTE (*rising and crossing to* L. *of* MME PERNELLE ; *indignantly protesting*). Really, Madame Pernelle, I must protest. You're speaking of my sister. Are you suggesting there's any harm in this ?

MME PERNELLE. Oh, no, no, no ! Beyond the ridiculous extravagance and the unnecessary display, I'm quite willing to admit it's all quite innocent.

CLEANTE. I should hope so.

MME PERNELLE (*moving to* R. *of the table* R.C.). But people talk.

(FLIPOTE *moves nervously to* MME PERNELLE.)

(*She snatches her gloves from* FLIPOTE.) And it's much better not to give them any cause.

(FLIPOTE *assists* MME PERNELLE *to put her cloak over her shoulders, then stands staring open-mouthed,* R. *of her.*)

CLEANTE. But, Madame, you can't stop people talking. Not the talking sort. A gossip is a gossip ; whatever happens. And will always find matter for gossiping ; even if most of it has to be invented. (*He moves above the table* R.C.) So the only thing is to get on with our own lives, as well-balanced as may be between work and play ; and as full and happy and useful as we can make them, and leave the talkers—to talk.

MME PERNELLE (*easing below the table* R.C.). Oh, very fine, very correct, very high-minded, Mr Lay-Down-The-Law.

(FLIPOTE, *still agape, moves in to* R. *of* MME PERNELLE.)

But for all your fine sentiments, I say it again—my son never did anything more farseeing than to take this man of God into the bosom of his family. If only his family could learn some of the *real* virtues —unselfishness and love, and gentleness and kindness. (*She catches sight of* FLIPOTE.) Don't stand gaping at me like that, you great gawk. (*She slaps* FLIPOTE'S *face.*) Take that. Off with you.

(FLIPOTE *scurries across below* MME PERNELLE, *then runs up* C.)

(*She moves threateningly up* C. *after* FLIPOTE.) Get along. Quick.

(ELMIRE, MARIANE *and* DAMIS *rise.*)

See my carriage is ready for me.

(FLIPOTE *exits hurriedly up* C. MME PERNELLE *follows her off, escorted by* ELMIRE, MARIANE *and* DAMIS. *As* MARIANE *passes the table* R.C. *she puts her fan on it.* CLEANTE *is left with* DORINE.)

CLEANTE. I'm afraid she'll have to climb into her carriage without *my* assistance. I don't feel very gallant towards that old lady. What a fuss about nothing. And what a blind infatuation for this man Tartuffe. (*He pours out a glass of wine for himself.*)

DORINE. And that's nothing to the way the master carries on about him. Nothing at all. Monsieur Cleante, if you could hear him. (*She moves to* R. *of the table* R.C. *and stacks the cups and saucers on the tray.*) If you could see them together. It beats everything. You wouldn't believe. And Monsieur Orgon used to be such a sensible gentleman. Shrewd as a monkey, in business—take my word for it—and as hard as nails ; but for all very kind and considerate here in the house.

(CLEANTE *moves to the armchair, sits, and sips his wine.*)

But ever since he brought this Tartuffe home with him, well, if you ask me, he's gone clean out of his mind. Calls him " brother ", and

pays far more attention to him than he does to his own family—to his own children, or to his wife ; (*she moves to the table up* L. *and collects the cups and saucers from it*) tells him all his private affairs ; asks his advice on every detail ; is for ever loading him with presents. (*She carries the cups and saucers from the table up* L. *to the table* R.C. *and puts them on the tray.*) It's just as if he had a mistress. Only then, perhaps, he'd be a bit more discreet about it. (*She stands above the table* R.C.) As it is, he sits him at the head of the table, and gloats over him while he eats—and he stuffs down as much as the rest of 'em put together—gives him all the best bits, and when he chokes and hiccoughs and belches, pats him on the back and says—" God bless you." (*She pauses.*) To speak plain, Monsieur Cleante, the master is just a complete fool over this Monsieur Tartuffe. (*She moves* R. *of the table* R.C., *then below it.*) Every word he utters is an oracle, and everything he does—a miracle. (*She crosses to the stool down* L. *and collects the cup and saucer from underneath it.*) And Tartuffe himself ! Oh, he's a clever one—I'll say that for him. (*She crosses to the table* R.C. *and puts the cup and saucer on the tray.*) He doesn't miss much. He squeezes everything there is to be got out of it. (*She moves below the table* R.C. *to* R. *of it.*) Money ! He's always touching the master for money. (*She moves above the table* R.C.) And with his hands full and his pockets bulging, turns on us and preaches at us.

(MARIANE, ELMIRE *and* DAMIS *enter up* C. *They are laughing together.* CLEANTE *rises, moves to* L. *of the table* R.C. *and puts his glass on the salver.*)

ELMIRE (*moving to the door* L.). A final oration from the steps of her carriage.

DAMIS (*to* CLEANTE). You were lucky to have missed it.

(DAMIS *and* MARIANE *whisper together for a few moments.*)

ELMIRE. As they drove out, they met my husband's carriage driving in.

CLEANTE. Monsieur Orgon ? Oh, then I'll wait. I should like to see him.

ELMIRE. So should I. (*To* DORINE.) Will you tell him, Dorine, I'm in my room ?

(*She exits* L.)

DAMIS (*moving to* L. *of* CLEANTE). And, Cleante—— (*he pauses and motions to* MARIANE).

(MARIANE *moves to the door* L. *and exits.*)

—you might sound him about my sister's marriage to Valere. (*He leads* CLEANTE *down* L.C.)

CLEANTE. What's this ? Sound your father about Mariane's marriage to Valere ? But I thought it was all arranged.

(DORINE *eases up* R.)

DAMIS. So it is. Or so it *was*. All arranged. Everything. And now he talks about putting it off.

CLEANTE. Your father ?

DAMIS. Yes.

CLEANTE. Talks about putting it off ? What's he say ?

DAMIS. I don't know. Nothing much ; nothing definite ; but he's suddenly so evasive about it.

CLEANTE. Evasive ?

DAMIS. I can't help suspecting for some reason or other, Tartuffe is opposed to it.

CLEANTE. Tartuffe again ! You can't mean that ?

DAMIS. If you could only find out. Mariane loves Valere ; and he loves her ; and it would break both their hearts . . .

DORINE (*suddenly*). Here's Monsieur Orgon.

(DAMIS *moves quickly to the door* L. *and exits.* MONSIEUR ORGON *enters up* C. *He wears his travelling clothes, his hat and a scarf, and carries a stick and gloves.*)

ORGON (*moving to* R. *of* CLEANTE). Cleante ! But this is a happy surprise. (*He shakes hands with* CLEANTE.) I never expected to find you here.

(DORINE *closes the doors up* C., *then moves down* R. *and stands below the* R. *end of the table* R.C.)

CLEANTE. I was just going ; but I stayed to welcome you home.

ORGON. Good. Very good. One moment. (*He turns to* DORINE.) Dorine. (*He moves below the table* R.C., *takes off his hat and scarf and hands them to* DORINE, *along with his gloves and stick.*)

DORINE. Monsieur ?

ORGON (*to* CLEANTE). You'll excuse me. I'm anxious to know how things have been going while I've been away.

(CLEANTE *sits on the stool down* L.)

(*To* DORINE.) Well, Dorine—everything all right these last two days ? What's been happening ? How are they all ?

DORINE. Well, Monsieur, the first day you were away—the day before yesterday, Madame wasn't at all well. She was feverish, very feverish, from morning till night ; with a splitting headache.

ORGON. And Monsieur Tartuffe ?

DORINE. Monsieur Tartuffe. Oh, he's in bursting health. Getting fatter and redder every day.

ORGON. Poor man !

DORINE. And in the evening, Madame felt so poorly, and her head was so bad, that she simply couldn't touch anything at all at supper.

ORGON. And Monsieur Tartuffe ?

DORINE (*crossing to the chair* L.). Oh, *he* managed supper all right. (*She exchanges a look with* CLEANTE.) And most devoutly

ate a couple of partridges and half-a-leg of mutton. (*She puts* ORGON'S *hat, scarf, gloves and stick on the chair* L.)

ORGON. Poor man.

DORINE (*moving to* L. *of* ORGON). And she never closed her eyes the whole night ; sleepless with the fever ; I had to sit up with her till morning.

ORGON. And Monsieur Tartuffe ?

DORINE. After supper, he was filled with a divine drowsiness, and stumbled up to his bedroom ; and fell into his well-warmed bed—where he slept the sleep of the blameless, till we woke him up, with a tray of hot chocolate.

ORGON (*easing up* C.). Poor man.

DORINE. At last, we persuaded Madame to be bled ; and at once she was better.

ORGON (*turning*). And Monsieur Tartuffe ?

DORINE. In a wonderful exercise of sympathy, Monsieur, to make up for the blood Madame had lost, he drank two bottles of your best burgundy at breakfast. (*She crosses to* R. *of the table* R.C.)

ORGON (*moving down* R.C.). Ah, poor man.

DORINE (*picking up the tray with the coffee pot and cups and saucers*). So now I'll go and tell Madame (*she crosses below* ORGON *to the door* L.) how deeply concerned you were at his indisposition ; and how overwhelmed you are with delight at her recovery.

(*She exits* L.)

ORGON (*moving to* L. *of* CLEANTE). You know, I don't like that girl's manner. Curious ! She used to be such a sensible girl ; shrewd as they make 'em ; but so willing and helpful ; more of a friend than a servant. Very curious. She's changed.

CLEANTE. It's true she was laughing at you ; she was being very impertinent.

ORGON. Impertinent ! Laughing at me ! (*He sits on the settee.*) So she was. But why ? What can be the reason for it ? Have you any idea ?

CLEANTE. I have some idea.

ORGON. Tell me.

CLEANTE (*rising*). You said she'd changed.

ORGON. Not a doubt of it.

CLEANTE (*crossing below the table* R.C. *to* R.). I wonder which of you has changed most.

ORGON. What's that ?

CLEANTE. We're agreed she was laughing at you and being impertinent, but—forgive me, Monsieur Orgon—hasn't she at least some shred of excuse ?

ORGON. Excuse ! Please explain yourself.

CLEANTE (*moving to* R. *of the settee*). I will. But to do so, I must be frank.

ORGON. As frank as you please.

CLEANTE. These last few days, while you've been away, I've spent a good deal of my time here in your house. I've talked to my sister, and to your children.

ORGON (*dangerously*). What about ?

CLEANTE. About this man Tartuffe.

(*They confront one another. There is a very pregnant little silence.*)

ORGON (*more dangerously*). Continue, if you please.

CLEANTE. Monsieur Orgon, I must speak very frankly ; I should feel I was failing in my duty if I did not. You must pardon me . . .

ORGON (*interrupting*). Never mind that. Never mind all that—I'm waiting to hear what you've been saying to my family and what you have to say now.

CLEANTE. Surely you've done enough for him. You've rescued him from want ; you've taken him into your home—of course, that's *your* affair . . .

ORGON. It is.

CLEANTE. But to neglect everything else for him. Everything, and everybody. Not only your dearest friends, (*he breaks a step or two down* C.) but your own family.

ORGON (*rising ; with a touch of anger*). That's enough ! I'm sorry to cut short your " frankness " and your very misplaced " sense of duty ", but I don't wish to hear any more. (*He pauses.*) There's just one thing, my dear Cleante, that makes everything you are saying —meaningless. You do not know the man of whom you speak.

CLEANTE. I know the kind of man he is.

ORGON (*his anger mounting*). " The kind of man." What a ridiculous answer. Really, Cleante, how feeble ! " The kind of man." I said if you knew *him*. And if you did, as I know him, you wouldn't be speaking as you are. Oh, no. On the contrary, you would be lost in wonder at him.

CLEANTE. Oh, but I *am !* Believe me, Monsieur Orgon, I am !

ORGON (*slightly taken aback*). Oh, you are. (*He pauses.*)

(CLEANTE *sits in the armchair.*)

Oh, then I, too, can speak freely. (*A mood of exaltation comes upon him, which grows as he speaks.*) Tartuffe is a man—who . . . Ah ! (*He moves down* L.) How can I express myself ? A man—in short, a man—who lives up to his own teaching, and in so doing achieves *peace*. (*He moves* R.) A *detachment*, Cleante—from all those purposeless activities with which we occupy ourselves ; he looks down upon all the selfish busy-ness of our lives from another plane. (*He moves above the table* R.C.) And if one can follow his example, however falteringly, and be guided by his precepts, even a tithe of them, one begins to experience that same peace—which is beyond understanding. (*He moves above the armchair to* L. *of it.*) Yes, I

am changed, since I met him. He has taught me how all my affections were fixed upon earthly things ; he has loosed the ties of my heart that bound me to the vain things of this world. He has shown me how utterly without value in this fleeting mortal life are our dearest possessions, and now I could even see my mother, wife and children die and (*he snaps his fingers*) not care that.

CLEANTE. Beyond understanding indeed !

ORGON (*easing a little down* L. ; *the exaltation growing*). If you could have seen him, as I first saw him. Every Sunday he would come to the church and, with such humility, kneel down just in front of me. And by the very fervour of his praying, in some strange way, Cleante, would draw the attention of the whole congregation upon himself. (*He sits on the settee.*) And when I left the church he would follow ; and in the great porchway, as I went out into the open air, he would always be there, to offer me a few drops of the holy water. That's all he did. And although his whole manner was so humble, so self-effacing, yet it was impossible not to notice him, not to be impressed. And when I learned that he was a pauper—through his manservant—I began giving him a few trifling sums of money. And always—would you believe it—he wanted to give me back part of it. " It's too much," he would say, " too much ; I don't deserve such generosity." Of course, I refused to take it back ; and then and there, before my very eyes, he'd distribute it among the poor.

CLEANTE (*with a look at* ORGON). All of it ?

ORGON. No, no, no. That would have been too insensitive—to give away all my gift. No—the part that I had refused to take back. I have no doubt at all, my friend, that I have been guided from above to take him into my house. Since when, not only I, but the whole household, has been changed.

CLEANTE. So I gathered.

ORGON. He shows such a touching solicitude for our whole way of life. He's far more concerned about my honour than his own.

CLEANTE. Indeed ? And in what way ?

ORGON. Very gently he rebuked me for the number of visitors we had. He told me of all my wife's admirers—he's a thousand times more jealous for her than I am.

CLEANTE. I can't believe it ! What impertinence ! What arrogance !

ORGON. Oh, no. Oh, no. How little you understand. There's no arrogance in him. Rather a great humility. He accuses himself of sin over the merest trifle ; a mere nothing is enough to shock him. Why, the other day, he accused himself of killing a flea with too much anger, when he caught it while saying his prayers.

CLEANTE (*rising and breaking down* L. ; *impatiently*). Really, Monsieur Orgon, you can't be serious. (*He turns.*) You're joking. You're laughing at me. You can't really pretend that all this tomfoolery . . .

ORGON (*rising ; angrily*). *Tom-foolery !* (*Icily.*) And, pray, *what* tom-foolery ?

CLEANTE (*with a step towards* ORGON). All that you've been telling me. His turning up at church ; his kneeling down just in front of you ; his fervent praying ; his offering you the holy waters . . .

ORGON. Cleante ! Please ! Your words savour too much of free thought. I fear you're tainted with it. I'm very much afraid so. All this science of yours. I warn you—you'll bring down a dreadful punishment upon yourself.

(*They confront each other in fundamental conflict.*)

CLEANTE (*very angrily*). Really, Monsieur Orgon, if you are so righteously indignant when I seem to speak slightingly of fervent prayers and holy water, you must forgive me if I am not unmoved when you speak with such ignorant prejudice of science.

ORGON (*sitting on the settee*). Ignorant prejudice !

CLEANTE (*moving up* L. *of the settee*). Always the same intolerance. You want us all to be as blind as you are ; and if we try to see, we're free thinkers. (*He moves to* R. *of the settee.*) And, incidentally, Monsieur Orgon, all thought is free, or it is nothing. If we are not over-awed by ridiculous shams and elaborate hypocrisies, then you say we've neither respect nor faith in the things that really *are* sacred. (*He moves above the table* R.C.) But in the name of ordinary commonsense, can't you make distinction between hypocrisy and sincerity ; appearance and reality ; shadow and substance ? (*He pauses.*) I speak as if that were easy—I ought to know better. What strange creatures we all are. How little, and how seldom, do we appear to others as our real selves. What make-believe is in all of us. And how often do we over-act our parts, and spoil what is best in us, by over-doing it. (*He suddenly laughs at himself ; his anger spent.*) Oh, but forgive me. (*He moves down* R. *of the table* R.C.) I wander from the point ; I digress . . .

ORGON (*still angrily*). Oh, no, no, no. If you please, go on. Go on. I'm all attention. After all, I'm listening to a Doctor of Science, a man of great learning, to whom we all have to look up. All the knowledge of all the ages is in your head. Before such enlightenment, the rest of us are in darkness.

CLEANTE (*moving above the armchair*). Oh, please, Monsieur Orgon, please. I've angered you. I'm sorry. I assure you all my " great learning " amounts to is this—a very tentative knowledge of how to *try* and distinguish between the true and the false. Little enough, but upon it, all progress is founded. But enough of that—(*he leans over the back of the armchair*) one last word about Tartuffe. Your truly devout man is to be respected, revered if you will. Of course. But I know of nothing more odious than the man who uses, for his own ends, all those things that we hold most sacred ; indeed makes game of them ; buying honour and position by a lifting of the eyes. Making a fortune in this world by way of the

next. (*He moves* R. *of* ORGON.) You have warned me, Monsieur Orgon—now let me warn you. (*He moves above the settee.*) Such a heavy cloak of virtue is sometimes worn to conceal the vices beneath it. Then such men can be very dangerous ; faithless ; deceitful ; full of revenge.

(ORGON *shrugs his shoulders.*)

Yes, revenge—for it is not gratitude they feel towards their benefactors—no. But *envy*. And the more they receive, the more that envy twists itself into hatred. Then, they can blaspheme in deed, as in word ; and when it suits them, (*he leans over the back of the settee*) when their hour comes, when they strike, their very weapons have been fashioned from those things that are nearest, dearest, most precious to their victim. Oh yes, Monsieur Orgon, when they stab, they stab with consecrated blades.

ORGON. And now have you said your last word, dear brother ?

CLEANTE (*moving below the armchair*). I have.

ORGON (*rising*). Then, if you'll pardon me. (*He bows.*) Your humble servant. (*He turns and moves towards the door* L.)

CLEANTE (*with a step towards* ORGON). Monsieur Orgon ! Please !

(ORGON *stops and turns* L. *of the settee.*)

Let's drop this discussion. If I've offended you, I beg your forgiveness. There's quite another matter I have to mention.

ORGON. Yes ?

CLEANTE. It concerns my friend Valere—he is to be your son-in-law.

ORGON (*easing a little towards* CLEANTE). There was some such arrangement.

CLEANTE. But the arrangement was definite. I believe that is so.

ORGON. That is so.

CLEANTE. But these definite arrangements have been postponed ? Is that so ?

ORGON. For the time being.

CLEANTE. On behalf of my friend Valere, may I ask why ?

ORGON. That is a question which—which I cannot answer.

CLEANTE. Have you other plans ?

ORGON. That's possible.

CLEANTE. You are proposing to break your word ?

ORGON. I didn't say so.

CLEANTE. Monsieur Orgon, your solemn word, solemnly given. Valere dines with me tonight ; he knows that I have been here. He is sure to ask me of his—marriage. What am I to tell him ?

ORGON. What you please.

CLEANTE. But I must tell him what you intend.

ORGON. By all means.

CLEANTE. But what *do* you intend ?

ORGON. The will of Heaven.

CLEANTE. And what *is* the will of Heaven ?
ORGON. *Heaven* only knows.

(*He bows, turns and exits quickly* L. *The music starts softly for* CLEANTE'S *recitative.* CLEANTE *moves down* C.)

CLEANTE (*to the audience*).
What shall I tell Valere when I return ?
His heart, his eyes, his lips with fever burn.
" This marriage rests with Heav'n " ? Devout suggestion.
But what will Heav'n ordain ? Well, that's the question.

(*He bows. The* LIGHTS *dim quickly to Black-Out to indicate the passage of time. The music swells up. After a few moments the* LIGHTS *come up.* ORGON'S *hat, scarf, stick and gloves, and the salver with the decanter and glasses have been removed. A bowl of roses, with a few loose roses beside it, stands on the table* R.C. *As the dialogue starts, the music fades gradually away.* MARIANE *enters* L., *crosses to the table* R.C., *picks up her fan and moves to the doors up* C. *As she moves up* C., ORGON *enters* L.)

ORGON (*calling*). My dear.

(MARIANE *stops by the doors up* C. *and turns.*)

(*He moves up* C. *to* L. *of* MARIANE.) My dear.
MARIANE (*very surprised*). Father !
ORGON. Why so surprised ?
MARIANE. I—er . . . (*She breaks off with a little laugh.*) Oh—no matter.
ORGON. Please !
MARIANE. Well—you—you called my " my dear."
ORGON (*charmingly*). And why not ?
MARIANE (*moving above the table* R.C.). Well—you haven't—for some time.
ORGON. Absurd ! (*He pauses slightly.*) My dear, I— (*uneasily*) I want a word with you. (*He moves to* L. *of* MARIANE.)
MARIANE. Yes, Father ?
ORGON. I—er . . . (*He breaks off, hesitates, moves to the doors up* C., *opens them, peers off, then closes them and moves a step or two* C.)
MARIANE (*moving to* R. *of* ORGON ; *puzzled*). What is it, Father ? Is anything the matter ?
ORGON. No, my dear, no. Nothing the matter. Nothing at all. All in good time. I—er . . . (*He breaks off, hesitates, moves to the door* L., *opens it, peers off, then closes it and moves to* L. *of the settee.*)
MARIANE (*moving below the settee*). Something *is* the matter. What is it ? Are you looking for anybody ?
ORGON. No, my dear, no. Not exactly. Not exactly. I want to make quite certain we're not overheard. (*He moves above the settee to* R. *of it.*) There are some people in this house I don't trust —eavesdroppers.

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