

MONSIEUR DE POURCEAUGNAC

by

Moliere

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Monsieur de Pourceaugnac

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Persons Represented

MR. DE POURCEAUGNAC. ORONTE, father to JULIA.

ÉRASTE, lover to JULIA.

SBRIGANI, a Neapolitan adventurer.

FIRST PHYSICIAN.

SECOND PHYSICIAN.

AN APOTHECARY.

A PEASANT.

A FEMALE PEASANT.

FIRST SWISS.

SECOND SWISS.

A POLICE OFFICER.

TWO INFERIOR POLICE OFFICERS.

JULIA, daughter to ORONTE.

NÉRINE, an intriguing woman, supposed to come from Picardy.

LUCETTE, supposed to come from Gascony.

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The scene is in Paris.

MR. DE POURCEAUGNAC.

ACT I

SCENE I.--ÉRASTE, A LADY SINGER, TWO MEN SINGERS, several others performing on instruments, DANCERS.

ERA. (to the MUSICIANS and DANCERS). Carry out the orders I have given you for the serenade. As for myself, I will withdraw, for I do not wish to be seen here.

SCENE II.--A LADY SINGER, TWO MEN SINGERS, several others performing on instruments, DANCERS.

LADY (sings).

Spread, charming night, spread over every brow
The subtle scent of thy narcotic flower,
And let no wakeful hearts keep vigil now
Save those enthralled by love's resistless power.
More beautiful than day's most beauteous light,
Thy silent shades were made for love's delight.

FIRST SINGER.

Love is sweet when none our wills oppose;
Then peaceful tastes our gentle hearts dispose;
But tyrants reign, who gave us birth and life.
Ah! love is sweet when love is free from strife.

SECOND SINGER.

All who strive 'gainst love must fall;
Perfect love will conquer all.

ALL THREE.

Let us love with an eternal ardour!
Let parents frown, and try in vain to cure,
Absence, hardship, or cruel fortune's rigour
Will only strengthen love when true and pure.

First entry of the BALLET.
(Dance of the two DANCING MASTERS.)

Second entry of the BALLET.
(Dance of the two PAGES.)

Third entry of the BALLET.
(Four SPECTATORS, who quarrelled during the dance, now dance, sword in hand, fighting all the while.)

Fourth entry of the BALLET.
(Two SOLDIERS separate the combatants, and dance with them.)

SCENE III.--JULIA, ÉRASTE, NÉRINE.

JUL. Oh dear, Éraste! take care that we are not discovered. I am so afraid of being seen with you; all would be lost after the command I have received to the contrary.

ERA. I see nobody about.

JUL. (to NÉRINE). Just keep watch, Nérine, and be careful that nobody comes.

NER. (going to the farther end of the stage). Trust me for that: and say all you have to say to each other.

JUL. Have you thought of anything to favour our plan, Éraste? And do you think that we shall succeed in breaking off that marriage which my father has taken into his head?

ERA. We are at least doing all we can for it, and we have ready many schemes to bring such an absurd notion to naught.

NER. (running towards JULIA). I say, here is your father.

JUL. Ah! let us separate quickly.

NER. No, no; don't go; I made a mistake.

JUL. How absurd you are, Nérine, to give us such a fright!

ERA. Yes, dear Julia, we have plenty of stratagems ready for the purpose; and, in accordance with the permission you have given me, we will not hesitate to make use of every means. Do not ask me what it is we are going to do; you will have the fun of seeing it, and, as at a comedy, it will be nice for you to have the pleasure of being surprised without my letting you know beforehand what is going to take place. This is telling you that we have many schemes in hand for the occasion, and that our clever Nérine and the dexterous Sbrigani have undertaken to bring the affair to a successful issue.

NER. Yes, we have indeed. Is your father crazy to think of entangling you with his lawyer of Limoges; that Mr. de Pourceagnac, whom he has never seen in his life, and who comes by the coach to take you away before our very eyes? Ought three or four thousand crowns, more or less--and that, too, upon the word of your uncle--to make him refuse a lover you like? Besides, are you made for a Limousin? If he has taken it into his head to marry, why does he not take one of his own countrywomen, and let Christians be at peace? The very name of Pourceagnac puts me in a frightful rage. I boil over with Mr. de Pourceagnac. If it were only because of the name, I would do anything to prevent the match. No, you shall not be Mrs. de Pourceagnac. Pourceagnac! Was ever such a name

heard of! [Footnote: Pourceaugnac equals pourceau, "a young pig," plus the local ending -gnac.] No, I could never put up with Pourceaugnac; and we will abuse the man to such an extent, and play him so many tricks, that he will have to return to Limoges, Mr. de Pourceaugnac.

ERA. Here is our cunning Neapolitan, who will give us news.

SCENE IV.--JULIA, ÉRASTE, SBRIGANI, NÉRINE.

SBRI. Our man has just come, Sir. I saw him at a place three leagues away from here, where the coach stops; and I studied him for more than half an hour in the kitchen, where he went down to breakfast, and I know him now perfectly. As to his appearance, I will say nothing about it; you will see for yourselves what nature has done for him, and if his dress is not the very thing to set that off. But as for his understanding, I can tell you beforehand that it is among the dullest I have met with for a long time. We shall find in him a fit subject to work upon as we like. He is just the man to fall into all the traps laid for him.

ERA. Is all that possible?

SBRI. Perfectly true, and I am skilled in the knowledge of men.

NER. (pointing to SBRIGANI). This is a famous man, Madam; and your affair could not be trusted to better hands. He is the hero of the age, for the wonders he has performed. A man who, twenty times in his life, has generously braved the galleys to serve his friends; who, at the peril of his arms and shoulders, [Footnote: Compare the "royal cautery" in 'The Flying Doctor'] knows how to bring to a successful issue the most difficult enterprises; and who is, in short, banished from his country for I don't know how many honourable actions he has generously engaged in.

SBRI. I am ashamed to hear the praises with which you honour me, and I could most justly extol the marvellous things you did in your life; I could particularly speak of the glory you acquired when you cheated at play that young nobleman we brought to your house, and won twelve thousand crowns from him; when you handsomely made that false contract which ruined a whole family; when with such greatness of soul you denied all knowledge of the deposit which had been entrusted to you, and so generously gave evidence which hung two innocent people.

NER. These are trifles not worth mentioning, and your praises make me blush.

SBRI. Then I will spare your modesty. Let us leave that aside, and speak of our business. To begin with, I will quickly rejoin our countryman, while you, on your side, will see that all the other actors in the comedy are kept in readiness.

ERA. And you, Madam, pray remember your part, that in order to conceal our aim the better, you are to affect to be quite perfectly delighted with your father's resolutions.

JUL. If it only depends on that, things will be sure to succeed.

ERA. But, dear Julia, if everything were to fail?

JUL. I will declare my real inclinations to my father.

ERA. And if he persists in his designs in spite of your inclinations?

JUL. I will threaten to shut myself up in a convent.

ERA. But if, notwithstanding all that, he wished to force you to this marriage?

JUL. Why, what would you have me say?

ERA. What do I want you to say?

JUL. Yes.

ERA. What is said when one loves truly?

JUL. But what?

ERA. That nothing shall force you; that in spite of all your father can do, you promise to be mine.

JUL. Ah me! Éraсте, be satisfied with what I do now, and leave the future alone. Do not perplex me in my duty, by speaking of sad expedients to which we may not be obliged to have recourse. Allow me to be led by the course of events.

ERA. Will....

SBRI. Sir, here is our man. Be careful.

NER. Ah! what a guy! [Footnote: Sbrigani and Nérine are merely the conventional rogues of the stage. Compare Mascarille, Scapin.]

SCENE V.--MR. DE POURCEAUGNAC, SBRIGANI.

MR. POUR. (turning to the side he came from, and speaking to the people who are following him). Well, what is it? What is the matter? What do you want? Deuce take this stupid town, and the people who live in it! Nobody can walk a step without meeting a lot of asses staring and laughing like fools at one. You boobies, mind your business; and let folk pass without grinning in their faces. Deuce take me if I don't knock down the first man I see laughing.

SBRI. (speaking to the same people). What are you about? What is the meaning of such conduct? What is it you want? Is it right to make fun like that of strangers who come here?

MR. POUR. Here is a man of sense at last.

SBRI. What manners! And what is there to laugh at?

MR. POUR. Quite right.

SBRI. Is there anything ridiculous in this gentleman?

MR. POUR. I ask you?

SBRI. Is he not like other people?

MR. POUR. Am I crooked or hunchbacked?

SBRI. Learn to distinguish people.

MR. POUR. Well said.

SBRI. This gentleman's qualities call for your respect.

MR. POUR. Perfectly true.

SBRI. He is a person of quality.

MR. POUR. Yes, a gentleman from Limoges.

SBRI. A man of intelligence.

MR. POUR. Who has studied the law. [Footnote: Compare act ii. scene xii.]

SBRI. He does you too much honour in coming to this town.

MR. POUR. Ay, indeed.

SBRI. This gentleman has nothing in him that can make you laugh.

MR. POUR. Certainly not.

SBRI. And the first who laughs at him, I will call to account.

MR. POUR. (to SBRIGANI). Sir, I am extremely, obliged to you.

SBRI. I am sorry, Sir, to see a person like you received after such a fashion.

MR. POUR. Your servant, Sir.

SBRI. I saw you breakfasting this morning, Sir, with the other passengers; and the grace with which you ate created in me at once a great friendship for you; and as I know that you have never been here before, and that you are a perfect stranger, I am glad I met you, to offer you my services at your arrival, and to assist you among these people, who do not always behave to strangers of quality as they should.

MR. POUR. You are really very kind.

SBRI. I have told you already; the moment I saw you, I felt an inclination for you.

MR. POUR. I am greatly obliged to you.

SBRI. Your countenance pleased me.

MR. POUR. You do me much honour.

SBRI. I read honesty in it.

MR. POUR. I am your servant

SBRI. Something amiable.

MR. POUR. Ah! ah!

SBRI. Graceful.

MR. POUR. Ah! ah!

SBRI. Sweet.

MR. POUR. Ah! ah!

SBRI. Majestic.

MR. POUR. Ah! ah!

SBRI. Frank.

MR. POUR. Ah! ah!

SBRI. And cordial.

MR. POUR. Ah! ah!

SBRI. Believe that I am entirely yours.

MR. POUR. I am greatly obliged to you.

SBRI. I speak from the bottom of my heart.

MR. POUR. I believe you.

SBRI. If I had the honour of being known to you, you would find that I am altogether sincere.

MR. POUR. I do not doubt it.

SBRI. An enemy to deceit.

MR. POUR. I feel sure of it.

SBRI. And that I am incapable of disguising my thoughts.

MR. POUR. It is exactly what I think.

SBRI. You look at my dress, which is not like that of other people; but I came originally from Naples, at your service; and I always like to keep up the way of dressing as well as the sincerity of my country. [Footnote: The Neapolitans had no great reputation for sincerity.]

MR. POUR. You are quite right. For my part, I was desirous of appearing in the court dress for the country. [Footnote: Mode de la cour pour la campagne.]

SBRI. Truly, it becomes you better than it does all our courtiers.

MR. POUR. Exactly what my tailor told me. The coat is suitable and rich; it will tell here among these people.

SBRI. You will go to the Louvre, no doubt?

MR. POUR. Yes; I must go and pay my court.

SBRI. The king will be charmed to see you.

MR. POUR. I believe so.

SBRI. Have you fixed upon rooms?

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