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No. 231.

THE BLUFFERS,

OR

DUST IN THE EYES

A Comedy in Two Acts

ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

R. M. GEORGE

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THE BLUFFERS; OR DUST IN THE EYES

CAST.

M. MALINGEAR*Doctor*
 MME. MALINGEAR
 EMMELINE*Their daughter*
 SOPHIE*Their cook*
 ALEXANDRINE*Their maid*
 UPHOLSTERER*Their "little seventeen"*
 FOOTMAN*Their neighbor's*
 M. RATINOIS*Confectioner, retired*
 MME. RATINOIS
 FREDERICK*Their son*
 ROBERT*Their uncle*
 JOSEPHINE*Their maid*
 FOOTMAN*Their neighbor's*
 CHEF*From Chevet's*
 A NEGRO BOY IN LIVERY

SCENES.

FIRST:—*Home of MALINGEAR. On the Parc du Petit Bonnet-Rouge. A May morning.*

SECOND:—*Home of RATINOIS, near the Parc de la Tulipe-Noire. A June evening.*

COSTUMES.—*(Those not specified are conventional.)*

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M. MALINGEAR. Pompous man of middle age, grey hair combed back, ruddy cheeks, comfortable paunch. *In first act*, cutaway coat, white or fancy waistcoat, full striped trousers, light grey spats, cane, gloves, derby hat. He carries a medicine chest. *Second act*, same with black frock coat very full-skirted, high hat, gold-headed cane.

MME. MALINGEAR. *First act*, comfortable morning dress, garden hat. *Second act*, evening dress, strikingly trimmed with gold.

M. RATINOIS. *First act*, cutaway coat, light waistcoat, striped or checked trousers, spats, high hat or derby, light grey, dark tie (first entrance) large white tie (second entrance). *Second act*, long brown housecoat, small brown skull cap with tassel; changes to frock coat.

MME. RATINOIS. *First act*, smart street costume, reticule, lorgnette. *Second act*, pretty house gown; changes to evening gown with train, over-trimmed with striking colors.

ROBERT. Corduroy coat with belt, black leather leggings, long military cape with brilliant lining, wide black soft hat, all old but comfortable. Tortoise-shell spectacles with heavy rims.

THE BLUFFERS;

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ACT I.

SCENE:—MALINGEAR'S home, living room. Entrance front—R. leads to kitchen and back of house; entrance L. opens into waiting room and leads to street; entrance U. R., a latticed door leading into garden and showing vine-covered trellis in sunlight without. The room is furnished simply. U. L., piano with a landscape in oils over or near it. Small sewing table down right. Extreme front right, desk with doctor's diploma hanging over it. The curtain rises on an empty stage. A bird is singing in the sun-lighted trellis seen through the lattice door, U. R.

(Enter MADAME MALINGEAR, a pretty woman of near forty, from the kitchen, R. She comes in quickly, crosses to lattice door and throws it open. The bird stops singing. MME. MALINGEAR goes to piano, takes her work-bag and crosses toward sewing table, near C. Her actions indicate that she is a positive woman and that she has just settled a little matter in the kitchen. She pauses at the sound of a rattle of dishes off stage, then sits and begins sewing, right of table.)

(Enter SOPHIE, a very independent cook and general

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servant. She comes in R., stumps across back of MME. MALINGEAR and takes her position left of table before speaking.)

SOPHIE. Then I'll not get the fish, madame?

MADAME M. (*evidently weary of this discussion*) No—I'm sure the doctor has no money to spend for extras. And be sure the round steak is nice and tender.

SOPHIE. And for vegetables? (*tauntingly*) Spring peas are in market now.

MADAME M. (*trying to face her down*) You ought to know by this time that such early ones have no taste. Get a cabbage for stuffing.

SOPHIE. Just like last week—(*sneering*)

MADAME M. (*doggedly*) Yes——

SOPHIE. And the week before——

MADAME M. Sophie! (*after an eloquent pause*) When you come back from market, bring me your account book. I'll check it up.

SOPHIE. (*flippantly*) All right, madame. (*Exit R.*)

(*Enter MALINGEAR, L. He is carrying a little medicine chest which he places on the desk at extreme front R., crossing quickly.*)

MALINGEAR. Hello, there! Don't get up, wifey—it's only me.

MADAME M. (*surprised*) Well, I didn't hear you go out? Where have you been.

MALINGEAR. (*in grandiose manner*) O, I've just been out seeing my patients.

MADAME M. (*scoffing*) Your patients! Don't try to tell me. The only patients you have are the people who get hurt in front of your own door and can't get away from you. Patients? You! The idea!

MALINGEAR. (*sitting down triumphantly*) Don't

believe me, do you? Well, this morning about six o'clock some one came for me. I was here—they called—I went. I have a patient.

MADAM M. He must be a foreigner.

MALINGEAR. No. He's a Frenchman.

MADAM M. Well, this is the first time in two years that anyone has thought of disturbing you.

MALINGEAR. (*proudly, rising and strutting across stage*) Hem! I'm getting started.

(*SOPHIE enters R., bonnet and shawl on, carrying market basket. She crosses after MALINGEAR and goes out L. with her nose in the air.*)

MADAME M. (*scornfully*) Getting started? Well, at fifty-four, it's high time you were. Now, you listen to me. It's diplomacy you need. You have the most ludicrous conception of your profession——

MALINGEAR. (*taking a step toward her*) What!

MADAME M. Whenever, by chance, heaven sends you a patient, you begin by reassuring him. You tell him: "It's nothing at all. It's only a matter of a few days."

(*He crosses slowly, rubbing his chin; then suddenly confronts her as though about to settle her argument, but ends in a weak sputter. This indicates his manner throughout the play.*)

MALINGEAR. (*sputtering*) Why should I frighten him.

MADAME M. If you do it your way, it always seems that you have cured only a trifle—a chilblain. I know how some of your colleagues do—real doctors. (*he sits abruptly*) When they approach a patient, they don't just say: "It's merely a matter of two days!" They immediately tell him: "This will be long (*imitating grave manner*) very long"—and

then they proceed to call in some one else in consultation.

MALINGEAR. What do they gain by that?

MADAME M. It is a courtesy which the colleague is eager to return the next week—and that is the way to start a practice.

MALINGEAR. (*rising*) Not for mine. (*crosses L.*)

MADAME M. You with your good nature have lost all your patients little by little. There was only one left to you—the last—a fine man——

MALINGEAR. (*ruminating*) Ah! Monsieur Dubourg—our neighbor, yes.

MADAME M. He had swallowed a needle without suspecting it. You treated him for two weeks—very good—That was progress. But one fine day you had the foolishness to say to him: “My dear Monsieur Dubourg, I don’t understand your sickness at all.”

MALINGEAR. (*first angrily, then helplessly sputtering*) Well—and when one does not understand——

MADAME M. (*in confidential manner, leaning forward*) When one does not understand, one says: “It’s appendicitis.” Oh, if only I were a doctor.

MALINGEAR. (*crossing R., back of her, and putting up hat and gloves*) What a quack you would be!

MADAME M. (*sighing*) Happily Providence has given us twenty-two thousand francs’ income from my dowry and we don’t have to depend upon your practice for our daily bread.—But what did you say was the name of this person who came for you this morning?

MALINGEAR. (*a little embarrassed*) It was—it was a young man——

MADAME M. Belonging to a good family?——

MALINGEAR. Yes—(*hesitating*) he *belongs* to a good family.

(ALEXANDRINE enters L., three letters on tray.)

ALEXANDRINE. Good morning madame; good-day, Monsieur. The morning letters, Monsieur.

MADAME M. I'll take them.

(ALEXANDRINE exchanges glances with the Doctor. Then gives letters to MADAME M. and goes out L.)

MALINGEAR. (*timidly*) I thought, perhaps—perhaps there was—

MADAME M. Yes, there is—(*with meaning*) And there's money in it.

MALINGEAR. Oh, no, no—

MADAME M. Money, I say. Malingear—You have been borrowing money.

MALINGEAR. O dear no—no, love—here, take it—it's the four thousand francs. (*while protesting that there is no money he opens the envelope and takes out the notes*)

MADAME M. And for what?

MALINGEAR. Did you not have the parlor furniture done over? Did I not say, "That is very nice." But the upholsterer is going to come to collect his bill to-day. (*she takes the money, puts it in the drawer and then turns facing him*) Now love—

MADAME M. This patient—who is he. (*she rises and faces him*)

MALINGEAR. (*crossing from corner front R. to position up*) How curious you are! He is a coachman—

MADAME M. (*in disgust*) A coachman?

MALINGEAR. But he belongs to a good family—he was kicked by a horse.

MADAME M. Kicked by a horse! O-oh!

MALINGEAR. It was a carriage horse, my love.

MADAME M. A coachman! Congratulations! Tomorrow they will want you for the horse.

MALINGEAR. Hm! Joke as much as you like. I

am mighty glad I took care of the poor fellow; while talking to him I learned something.

MADAME M. What. (*seeing from his manner what it is*) What sort of thing.

MALINGEAR. People are gossiping about us.

MADAME M. About us? (*crosses quickly to him*) What could they say?

MALINGEAR. Not about us, (*pause—Impatience on part of wife*) but about this young man who comes to practice music every day with our daughter.

MADAME M. (*surprised, looking about*) Monsieur Frederick?—whom we met last summer at the sea shore?

MALINGEAR. They say he is a suitor for our daughter Emmeline. Last evening in the janitor's quarters they even fixed the date of the marriage.

MADAME M. Ah! Dear me! (*worried*)

MALINGEAR. You see sometimes it's good policy to doctor coachmen.

MADAME M. What can we do?

MALINGEAR. We must cut to the bottom, (*with determination. Striking full armed into hand*) of it. Certainly Frederick is very nice, very affable—and all that—

MADAME M. He is charming? (*positively*)

MALINGEAR. And it's very decent of him to come and tickle our piano keys seven times a week. But he *must explain himself*. (*hands snap*) It is time, —high time! Brrr! (*business with coat collar*)

MADAME M. What?

MALINGEAR. Emmeline is sad—she doesn't eat enough now-a-days.

MADAME M. I wonder if I ought to get the doctor. (*pondering R.*)

(*Business with chain.*)

MALINGEAR. The doctor? Well, I like that! What about me?

MADAME M. Ah, yes! That's right. (*aside*) He's hopeless—A doctor should never practice on his own family

MALINGEAR. Yesterday while Monsieur was singing a duet with her, I (*following R.*) intercepted some looks—v-e-r-y loving!

MADAME M. (*sitting down and smoothing out her dress with air of satisfaction by desk R.*) I admit I have thought of him for Emmeline.

MALINGEAR. How funny—same here. This young man pleases me very much and if he is of a good family—(*across table, knee on chair R. C.*)

MADAME M. But he doesn't announce his intentions.

MALINGEAR. (*crosses and poses L. of C.*) Be tranquil! (*looking at watch*) It's time for him now. If you watch—You will see him coming soon with his little music roll under his arm. (*perceiving FREDERICK*) There he is!

(*Business of playing on piano keys.*)

(*Enter FREDERICK center with music roll under arm.*)

FREDERICK. (*bowing*) Madame.—Monsieur Malingear. (FREDERICK C.)

MALINGEAR. (*bowing*) Monsieur Frederick.

FREDERICK. How do you do, this morning?

MADAME M. Very well, thank you.

MALINGEAR. Couldn't be better.

MADAME M. (*low*) Speak to him.

MALINGEAR. (*low to his wife—sitting on table C.*) Yes, as soon as I get a good chance.

FREDERICK. I don't see Mademoiselle Emmeline. Can she be ill?

MALINGEAR. No—but——

FREDERICK. (*opening music roll, at piano L. putting up hat and cane*) I have brought her a new

ballad—a charming title—"The Last Farewell Kiss."

MADAME M. (*coughing*) Hum.

MALINGEAR. (*to his wife*) Yes. (*aloud*) Monsieur Frederick, you are a fine young man, and you won't object to what we ask,—my wife and I—a five minutes' interview? (c. *He crosses and takes small chair from wall L., setting it out U. L. C.*)

FREDERICK. With me! (*at a sign from MALINGEAR he sits down*)

MALINGEAR. Monsieur Frederick, you have too much good sense to not understand that your constant visits at a house——

EMMELINE. (*entering from the right. She is a sweet little girl with high voice*) Good morning, Papa!

MALINGEAR. (*low*) Sh—my daughter.

(FREDERICK rises.)

MADAME M. (*she turns still seated*) Weren't you saying, Monsieur, that this ballad was all the rage?

MALINGEAR. Who is the composer?

FREDERICK. (*unrolling the piece*) It's by a Swede.

EMMELINE. Oh,—What's the name of it.

FREDERICK. (*showing it*) "The Last Farewell Kiss."

(*Business—all together at c. Each one takes the music in turn, from his neighbor to the left. It passes down the line quickly from FREDERICK to MADAME MALINGEAR who throws it on chair right. EMMELINE is alone now at c.*)

MALINGEAR. (*quickly taking it from FREDERICK he goes up*) Of a mother——

MADAME M. (*the same*) to her son leaving for the war.

EMMELINE. (c.) Oh! what a long title?

MADAME M. Emmeline, (*pause—EMMELINE is two steps nearer door c.*) I have left my thread on the table in the sewing room,—go get it for me, Emmeline!

(EMMELINE *pauses to look at FREDERICK.*)

EMMELINE. Yes, mother. (*she leaves L.*)

(FREDERICK *sits down again.*)

MALINGEAR. (*to FREDERICK—coming down abruptly*) I was telling you that your constant visits to a house where there is a young daughter may seem strange to certain people.—And just this morning one of my patients—a—a—

MADAME M. (*quickly*) A banker.

FREDERICK. (*high note, offended*) But, Monsieur, I am sure my conduct has always been—

MALINGEAR. Perfect—I know it—But you know the world is quick to misinterpret—

EMMELINE. (*re-entering*) Here's your thread, mother. (*she drops it over her mother's shoulder into her lap, and is about to sit down when she discovers the music. Before she can read the title her mother gets it from her.*)

(FREDERICK *rises. MALINGEAR takes music, puts under arm.*)

MALINGEAR. (*changing his tone*) That's a very pretty subject for a ballad—this mother kissing her son—whom she may never see again—good bye.

They walk up, MALINGEAR engaging him.)

MADAME M. It's beautiful.

MALINGEAR. (c.—FREDERICK L.) Pretty enough to be painted. (*engages FREDERICK L.*)

MADAME M. Emmeline, I have broken my embroidery needle, see if you can find me another.

EMMELINE. Yes, mother. (*aside*) That's twice she's sent me away. (*her father looks over his shoulder at her*) Oh! there must be something up. (*she disappears* R. FREDERICK *sits down*)

MALINGEAR. I was saying to you that the world is quick to misinterpret, (*stopping business of "kissing boy farewell" and throwing music on piano*) the most natural acts, the most innocent—but it is the duty of a father to have these vague rumors cut short by a clear frank explanation. (*crosses c.*)

MADAME M. (*low to MALINGEAR*) Fine!

MALINGEAR. We expect only a straightforward answer from you. (*sits on table*)

FREDERICK. (*rising*) Let me thank you, first of all, Monsieur Malingear for having placed the matter on grounds which uncertainty alone prevented me from entering. I feel no embarrassment now in telling you that I love Mlle. Emmeline, and that the happiest of my dreams would be to win her hand.

MADAME M. (*aside*) I suspicioned it.

MALINGEAR. (*rising relieved*) Well, that's clear! May I ask a few questions, now?

(*Crosses R. and sits in chair.*)

FREDERICK. About my family? About my profession? Quite willingly. I am a lawyer. (*left of c. table, sits positively*)

MALINGEAR. (*astonished*) Eh! What! Excuse my astonishment but during the two months it has been my pleasure to know you, you have always been beating my piano.

FREDERICK. I'm a lawyer, all right.

MALINGEAR. Practising?

FREDERICK. No—but I'm beginning. I have few clients as yet.

MALINGEAR. (*sympathetically, extending hand along table and patting boy's hand*) I can understand that. I think none the worse of you for it.

(MME. MALINGEAR *examines music on piano.*)

FREDERICK. As for the rest, my position is independent. My father, a former merchant, has retired from business with a comfortable fortune.—I am an only son.

MADAME M. (*aside, satisfied. Clasping her hands U. R. looking for EMMELINE*) Ah!

FREDERICK. (*rising*) The fact is I have not thought it right to hide from my parents the love I have for Mlle. Emmeline, and I hope that before long my father and mother will make you a visit which will put a stop to all misinterpretations. (*crosses L. as MME. MALINGEAR comes down toward her husband*)

MADAME M. (*low to husband*) He speaks so convincingly. (*she sits at his right*)

MALINGEAR. (*to wife R.*) He's a lawyer. (*to FREDERICK L.*) Monsieur Frederick, Madame Malingear and I shall look forward with very great pleasure to the visit of which you speak.

FREDERICK. Ah! Monsieur.

MALINGEAR. (*repelling him*) But, till then, we must ask you as a favor to suspend your visits. (*passes him and quickly brings hat and cane*)

FREDERICK. (*astonished*) What! (*appeals to both—first M. then MME.*)

MADAME M. (*rising*) For appearances, Monsieur Frederick, for appearances!

MALINGEAR. (*claps hat on FREDERICK's head*) You will return in a few days—officially—Wait a minute, here is your music. (*hands him music roll which he has put on piano*)

FREDERICK. Very well, since you demand it. But what shall I do in the meantime?

MALINGEAR. Look around the law courts a little. That will distract you.

FREDERICK. Oh! not the courts! Oh, I don't

know what I shall do. (*down by footlights waving coat tails L. or to M. R. C.*)

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) What if he should become district attorney! Wouldn't it be fine to be the father-in-law of the district attorney!

FREDERICK. (*C.—Then advancing toward MALINGEAR in leaving*) Please tell Mlle. Emmeline that—(*shouting*) I love her, I adore her—I live for her alone and while there is breath in my body, I—

MALINGEAR. (*hastily, accompanying him to door L., although he had started him up*) Yes!—Yes! Not so loud. (*they leave L.*)

(EMMELINE *half in R.*)

MADAME M. He is a fine young man. (*looking off L.*)

EMMELINE. (*entering R.*) Oh, yes, indeed he is a fine young man, and I'm certain to be happy with him.

MADAME M. (*astonished*) What! What are you saying there? how do you know?

EMMELINE. (*confused—coming down*) I overheard a little. I really didn't mean to, mother. When I was looking for your needle which had dropped near the door—

MADAM M. Looking for my needle! Don't you know it's wicked to listen at keyholes?

EMMELINE. Oh, please don't scold me! I will tell you a secret. (*they walk together to chair*)

MADAME M. (*pleased but suspicious*) A secret?

EMMELINE. Yesterday when you left the room to scold Sophie for breaking that cut glass dish, Frederick told me his mother was going to come here to-day.

MADAME M. (*excited*) To-day?

EMMELINE. Yes, she's going to pretend she has

come to talk about the 4th floor apartment. She wants to see us before they make the demand.

MADAME M. (*matter of fact tone*) Thank goodness the *parlor's* done!

EMMELINE. And the Father, Monsieur Ratinois is going to come to consult Papa.

MADAME M. (*suspicious*) Is he sick?

EMMELINE. No indeed! Just a pretext to meet us. Now don't you tell—not a soul. It's a secret. (*goes to looking glass R., humming lightly*)

MADAME M. Don't worry.

MALINGEAR. (*entering L.*) Charming fellow! Lots in him!

MADAME M. (*low to husband*) Malingear. (*crosses to him L. they come R. together with exaggerated air of consultation*)

MALINGEAR. What?

MADAME M. (*low*) Don't repeat this—It's a secret. Madame Ratinois is coming this morning under the pretext of talking about the 4th floor apartment.

MALINGEAR. The dev—! I mean the deuce!

MADAM M. That's better! Her husband is coming too—to consult you.

MALINGEAR. Hm! Then it's the interview. (*attitude—hands in pockets*)

MADAME M. They want to know us before going further. It's quite natural.

ALEXANDRINE. (*entering L.* Madame, there is a lady who wishes to speak to you about the 4th floor apartment.

(*All are front R. They turn with exaggerated animation.*)

MADAME M. It's she!	} (They scatter.)
MALINGEAR. It's her!	
EMMELINE. Oh, joy!	

(ALEXANDRINE *starts out.*)

MADAME M. (*excitedly*) Wait! (*to ALEXANDRINE*) Quick! my hat with the flowers! My evening hat!

ALEXANDRINE. One second! (*disappears R., walks lopsided*)

MADAME M. (*to EMMELINE*) Take off that apron. Heavens! how sloppy your hair looks. I'm going to do it over for you.

MALINGEAR. (*aside, astonished, L.*) What the devil's gotten into her.

ALEXANDRINE. (*entering. Business of catching a moth miller*) Here's the hat.

MADAME M. (*sitting*) Put it on me. You see how busy I am. (*ALEXANDRINE puts hat on mistress' head while she fixes her daughter's hair, who is on her knees before her. To ALEXANDRINE*) Further back.

MADAME M. (*to MALINGEAR*) Malingear, a pin!

EMMELINE. (*shaking her hands*) Papa, a pin!

MADAME M. Hurry up.

MALINGEAR. (*takes pin from lapel of coat and brings it over*) There.

MADAME M. (*finished*) There! Bring her in. (*ALEXANDRINE leaves R. Low to husband*) Mind now, don't use any slang before this lady.

MALINGEAR. Why?

MADAME M. (*disgusted*) Oh! It's common,—it's vulgar! (*to her daughter*) Emmeline, go to the piano, head back and sing some runs. (*goes with her to piano*)

EMMELINE. (*at piano*) Some runs?

MADAME M. Go ahead!

(EMMELINE *sings runs. MADAME M. composes herself in armchair—embroidery in her hand. Steps heard outside and MADAME RATINOIS*

enters L. First begins to pull off gloves with elaborate laziness. ALEXANDRINE brings her in and goes out L.)

MADAME M. (*smoothly to EMMELINE*) Enough, my child, we have a visitor. (*she rises*)

MADAME R. I beg a thousand pardons. I fear I have come at an inconvenient time. Is it to Monsieur—the Doctor Malingear that I have the honor of speaking?

MALINGEAR. (*bowing. Goes up*) Yes, Madame.

MADAME R. I have come to look at the 4th floor apartment.

MADAME M. Be so good as to have a chair. (*c. Takes off her hat and lays it with elaborate care under MME. R's nose*)

MADAME R. (*she and MADAME M. and MME. R. —center*) You are too kind, Madame. I'm afraid I've come at a bad time. I have interrupted Mademoiselle. (*turning*)

EMMELINE. (*deprecatingly*) Oh! Madame!

MADAME R. (*to MADAME M.*) Mademoiselle is your daughter?

MADAME M. Yes, Madame.

MADAME R. (*aside*) Frederick was right. She is very nice looking. (*sits down*) I see Mademoiselle is a musician.

MADAME M. A pupil of Caruso's.

MALINGEAR. (*astonished*) Hein!

MADAME R. Ah! Caruso is her teacher?

MADAME M. We are just waiting for him.—Waiting, only waiting.

MALINGEAR. (*to wife*) Waiting, only—wai— say, what tune's this you're singing?

MADAME M. (*quickly*) A piece from Carmen. (*to MADAME R.*) My husband asked my daughter what she was singing. It's a piece from Carmen.

(*she motions to MALINGEAR, who sits down at L. He crosses L. and sits*)

MADAME R. (*aside*) This house is on an expensive scale. It's much better than ours.

MADAME M. I believe in having only the best masters. So when Emmeline commenced painting——

MADAME R. (*to MALINGEAR*) Ah! Mademoiselle paints also?

MALINGEAR. (*embarrassed*) Yes.—So it seems. Oh! ask my wife. (*rises and goes up*)

MADAME M. (*showing a picture hung on the wall R.*) What do you think of this little landscape?

MADAME R. (*rising*) An oil painting!

MADAME M. (*rising*) She amuses herself daubing at things like that.

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) Now, isn't that just a little bit too much!

EMMELINE (*aside*) How in the world did mother get these ideas into her head! (*rises and crosses toward father U. R.*)

MADAME R. (*examining picture*) So life-like! so fresh! You'd think this had been done by a master!

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) Well, I guess yes! That's a Lambinet and only cost me two thousand francs!

MADAME R. Very beautiful, very finely educated! And the apartment—is it empty? (*they sit down, MME. R. L., MME. M. U. R.*)

MADAME M. It will be rented by the quarter. Monsieur Malingear will have it decorated. (*to her husband*) Isn't that your plan, my dear?

MALINGEAR. (*angrily*) The idea!! (*suddenly remembering and calming self*) The idea which the architect submitted is a good one and I shall carry it out. (*crosses toward MME. R. Pulls c. chair further back*)

MADAME M. Don't forget that small drawing room. It's in pretty bad condition.

MALINGEAR. You shall choose the furnishings yourself. (*to MME. R. Then passes EMMELINE, motions her warningly with finger*)

EMMELINE. (*astonished, aside*) You, too! Are father and mother both mad?

MADAME R. And what will the rent be?

MALINGEAR. Four thousand francs. (U. R.)

ALEXANDRINE. (*entering L., very astonished*) Monsieur! why—why there's a gentleman here to see you and he's a patient, too. (*aside*) Oh, I'm so excited!

MALINGEAR, MADAME M. and EMMELINE. *Aside. They take a step toward each other*) The Father. (*they rise. MADAME R., suspicious, goes up, then returns C. and sits down*)

MADAME M. (*recovering herself*) A patient! Well, what's there so extraordinary about that?

ALEXANDRINE. Holy Gee! it's the first time——

MADAME M. (*quickly*) That this gentleman has been here? (*she sits down with deliberation*) Very good, but let him wait his turn. He can't get in ahead of the people who are waiting. (*writing on paper at desk and giving it to ALEXANDRINE*) Give him this number—number sixteen. (ALEXANDRINE leaves. MADAME R. looks satisfied. Sits a little back of MME. M., who rattles on)

MALINGEAR. (*aside, proudly*) Hasn't that wife of mine the brains, though? (U. R. then front L., fussing intentionally with watch chain)

MADAME R. What a practice!

MADAME M. My husband hasn't a minute to himself. In the morning he has his operations at the hospital,—he returns at noon. He almost always eats standing—Then the office hours begin and that keeps him busy till three o'clock——

MALINGEAR. But, my dear wife——

MADAME M. (*interrupting*) I tell you, you will

kill yourself! After that come the calls to the four corners of Paris.—Finally, in the evening he returns, tired, worn out—Do you think he rests himself? Not he! He writes away at his great work which will be read at the open meeting of the Academy of Medicine. They are awaiting it.

MALINGEAR. (*protesting*) But, my wife—

MADAME M. (*quickly*) Let them wait for it! My dear, you are not at the orders of these gentlemen. (*confidentially to MADAME R.*) It's a paper on the thoracical affections. Magnificent subject.

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) She should have married a painless dentist—not me!

MADAME R. (*to MALINGEAR*) What a life! and don't you take any recreation?

MALINGEAR. (*uncomfortably. Still standing up*) Oh, my wife exaggerates.

MADAME M. (*breaking in on him*) Twice a week—in the winter—we give a tea to our friends.

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) Fine! (*crosses front R.*) Dinner parties and theater parties next!

MADAME M. Tuesdays and Saturdays we have music. We receive the principal artists in Paris. My husband looks out for their health—free of charge—You understand?

MADAME R. What! for nothing!

MADAME M. (*apologetically*) Oh—artists. But these gentlemen regard it a pleasure—I may even say a duty to frequent my drawing room. Really, they are very nice people, very nice!

MALINGEAR. (*aside, disgusted*) Oh. Fiddle-dee-dee!

EMMELINE.

MME. R.

MME. M.

MALINGEAR.

MADAME M. I certainly hope, madame, that if

you locate here, you will do us the honor of being present at our little parties.

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) She's inviting her!

MADAME R. (*rising*) What! Madame. You are a thousand times too kind. (*turns about with lorgnette*)

MADAME M. You are leaving, madame?

MADAME R. Yes, but I hope to return soon! I should be very happy, believe me, to have regular intercourse—more intimate—with a family as distinguished, as respectable,—as yours. (U. R.)

MADAME M. (*bowing*) Madame. (*calling R.*) Baptiste! Baptiste!

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) Baptiste? Who the deuce is Baptiste?

MADAME M. (*to husband*) Have you sent the valet on an errand?

MALINGEAR. (*astonished*) The valet! Me! No! (*aside*) We never even had a male servant. (*front L.—then U. L.*)

MADAME M. These people are never around when one wants them. (*calling*) Alexandrine! Alexandrine! (*to MADAME R.*) I beg a thousand pardons, madame. (ALEXANDRINE *appears L.*) Escort madame to the door.

MADAME R. (*crossing from U. R.*) Madame,—Monsieur,—Mademoiselle. (*ceremonious exit U. L.*) MALINGEAR *bowing profusely U. L.*)

MALINGEAR. Thank goodness she's gone at last! (*comes up stage*)

EMMELINE. But mother,—why—what—explain—all this—

MADAME M. Now, you can put on your apron again and finish your sewing. Go, my child. (MME. *sits down again front R.*)

EMMELINE. Yes, mother. But I never made an oil painting in my life! (*leaves R.*)

MALINGEAR. Ah! come now! I haven't any sewing to finish so I hope you will explain——

MADAME M. What do you mean?

MALINGEAR. Why these—why all this batch of lies? Why in heaven did you tell this lady that Caruso was your daughter's teacher? Why we've never even seen him! (*sits c.*)

MADAME M. Should we announce her then as a pupil of Monsieur Dumb-brute-sky? The illustrious Professor Know-nothing?

MALINGEAR. You didn't need to name her professor. That's like this picture that you said Emmeline painted.

MADAME M. Well, what of it?

MALINGEAR. But it's a Lambinet!

MADAME M. It isn't signed, though.

MALINGEAR. Oh! that's a fine reason! And pray what will Emmeline say when after a few months of married life someone says to her "Make me a pretty landscape like that one over there—with cows in it?" What will she reply? (*drawing cow with cane in the air*)

MADAME M. That's quite simple. As a rule, from the time young girls get married they neglect the fine arts. Emmeline will say that the colors irritate her and she will renounce painting. That's all.

MALINGEAR. That's all! And me! How about my great work on the "Thoracical Affections?"

MADAME M. Oh you can say that it's at the printers— And that the first printing shop which burns down is——

MALINGEAR. And this immense practice which you have so kindly donated me?

MADAME M. (*sarcastically*) I was wrong. The first time this lady calls on us, I will reveal things in their true light. I will say: "Madame, I present to you monsieur the doctor Malingear—a dry fruit

of the Medical School. He only treats coachmen free of charge! Mlle. Malingear—she knows her three R's. Madame Malingear—who makes her own dresses and tenderly patches her husband's trousers!

MALINGEAR. It's no use to enter into these details and still more useless to string off all these lies. Do you want me to tell you *what I call this conduct?* (*important*) It's pride! It's vanity! You want to throw dust in their eyes!

MADAME M. (*resignedly*) It's true. I agree with you.

MALINGEAR. (*triumphant*) Ah—ha! (*change of attitude. He thinks he has her at disadvantage. She becomes persuasive. He gradually shows conviction*)

MADAME M. But I'm only doing what everybody else does. We all spend our lives throwing little pinches of dust in our neighbors' eyes. Else why do we dress up so finely? Why do people have diamonds, carriages, liveried servants? For other people to look at!

MALINGEAR. (*expostulating*) Oh, come now!—You can't put me there, anyway.

MADAME M. I can't, can't I? You obey this general rule without suspecting it. (*MALINGEAR is playing with his watch-chain*)

MALINGEAR. Me!

MADAME M. You remember that little chain of fine gold which you used to wear on your watch?

MALINGEAR. Yes. What about it?

MADAME M. It was so small—so little that you were ashamed of it. You would hide it under your vest.

MALINGEAR. So as not to lose it.

MADAME M. Oh, no! So as not to show it! You replaced it by another one—enormous! (*pointing*) There it is! You caress it,—you play with it,—you

show it off! You are proud of it! (MALINGEAR *must be playing with it at the moment and show consternation*)

MALINGEAR. What folly! (*rises abruptly*)

MADAME M. But you take good care not to say it is an imitation.

MALINGEAR. (*quickly looking around room*) Sh! —For goodness' sake keep quiet! (*stands front L.*)

MADAME M. It's dust in the eyes! You are just as bad as the other people.—Well—your daughter,—she is the little fine gold chain—very simple, very true, very modest.—Nobody pays her any attention, there are so few jewelers in the world. Let me decorate her a little with tinsel and then everyone will admire her. (*pointing to his chain*) As they do your great electroplated cable!

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) There's a lot of truth in what she says.

ALEXANDRINE. (*entering L.*) Monsieur!

MALINGEAR. Well?

ALEXANDRINE. That gentleman—number sixteen is getting impatient.

MALINGEAR. (*suddenly remembering*) Oh! Gee Whiz! I clean forgot him, poor fellow. Tell him to come in.

MADAME M. (*quickly*) No! not yet! He is sixteen. (*to ALEXANDRINE*) Tell him that the doctor is busy with number fourteen.

MALINGEAR. Ah,—I'm busy with number fourteen? So? (*to ALEXANDRINE*) All right. Tell him that. (ALEXANDRINE *exit L.*)

(*She re-enters L. and crosses—going out R. Laughs at MADAME M. when she understands what she's doing with money. First at table R. ALEXANDRINE following—then at table C. ALEXANDRINE grins, when suddenly MADAME M. looks*

at her, she dabs at cobwebs; then follow moth miller.)

MADAME M. (*rising*) Give me your purse.

MALINGEAR. My purse? Why? (*gives it up*)

MADAME M. (*putting the money around*) Ten Louis on this plate, three on the table—two on the piano.

MALINGEAR. (*astonished*) What are you doing there? (*he continues standing front L., but gesticulates*)

MADAME M. Why, don't patients leave the fees that way with all the famous doctors?

MALINGEAR. It's true! That's *their* dust.

MADAME M. (*hands on lapel*) Now, get at your desk! Look important—brusk. Don't talk much, you are busy. I leave you. Call number sixteen. (*coming back*) Don't forget there's nothing the matter with him! Don't deceive yourself.

MALINGEAR. (*seated at desk*) Be tranquil. (*exit MADAME M., putting on garden hat. She passes window during scene and knocks on door L.*) That wife of mine is pretty shrewd! (*calling*) Alexandrine, (*she enters*) call number 16!

ALEXANDRINE. (*entering R. and crossing to L. and opening door and calling*) Number sixteen! (*exit R.*)

RATINOIS. (*entering L.—aside*) At last I'm here! A three-quarter hour wait in the ante room!

MALINGEAR. (*without looking at him and writing*) Sit down.

RATINOIS. Monsieur, I thank you (*sits down—aside*) He's writing a prescription! This is a finely furnished room!

MALINGEAR. (*still writing and not looking up pauses*) Sit down.

RATINOIS. Thank you, I have. (*aside*) Oh, I

feel like an elephant. What shall I tell him is the matter with me!

MALINGEAR. (*putting down pen and turning*) Now! What's the trouble? (*curt—looking over glasses*)

RATINOIS. Monsieur, about a week ago—(*loud knocking at door at L.*)

MALINGEAR. (*calling. Walks up. Closes door with snap. RATINOIS stretches his neck*) Wait awhile, can't you? (*aside*) That's my wife knocking to make him think that there is somebody else waiting. (*writing*)

RATINOIS. (*aside*) Seventeen is getting impatient.

MALINGEAR. Go ahead. (*turning again from desk*)

RATINOIS. Monsieur, about a week ago—really *eight days*,—(*circumstantial lie*) I went to Saint Germain and back by the railroad. When I came home, my wife said: "How red you are!— Are you sick?" I replied to her,—“I am not positively sick, but I feel just so-so. I took a foot bath. It didn't do me any good. So here I am.

MALINGEAR. (*rising*) What do you feel?

RATINOIS. (*embarrassed*) Eh—ah—Heavens! All sorts of little things, sometimes on one side—sometimes on the other.

MALINGEAR. No headache?

RATINOIS. No.

MALINGEAR. Your stomach?

RATINOIS. Excellent.

MALINGEAR. Pains in the side?

RATINOIS. No.

MALINGEAR. Let me feel your pulse. (*feels pulse and counts with watch*)

RATINOIS. (*aside*) What a fine chain! I never saw one so big in all my life.

MALINGEAR. (*aside with satisfaction*) He's looking at my chain!

RATINOIS. (*aside*) You can see he's not the sort of doctor who has to run after his practice!

MALINGEAR. (*putting ear to RATINOIS' back*) Breathe. Hard—very hard! (*business tapping chest*)

RATINOIS. (*rising—aside*) I'm curious to see what sickness he's going to give me.

MALINGEAR. That's enough. I see very clearly what your trouble is.

RATINOIS. Ah! (*aside*) He's going to put leeches all over me!

MALINGEAR. My dear sir, you have absolutely nothing the matter with you!

RATINOIS. What! (*aside*) He's very wise! He's some doctor! (L.)

MALINGEAR. (*going to desk and writing. Suddenly*) However, I'm going to prescribe a little diet for you. (MME. M. is seen ushering him in with letter)

A FOOTMAN. (*in livery, entering up stage*) Monsieur.

MALINGEAR. What is it? (*aside*) Where the deuce did he come from?

RATINOIS. (*aside*) He has a footman!

THE FOOTMAN. (*presenting a letter on a silver tray*) A letter from Madame, the duchess of Humbugville.

MALINGEAR. (*taking letter, very much surprised*) For me! (*aside*) I don't know her! (*rises. Dismisses FOOTMAN*)

RATINOIS. (*aside*) He treats duchesses!

MALINGEAR. (*examining envelope and aside*) My wife's writing! (*down R. Standing. To RATINOIS*) You will permit me?

RATINOIS. Certainly, certainly!

MALINGEAR. (*aside, reading*) "Read this letter aloud." (*speaking aside*) I must read it. (*reading very loud*) "Dear Doctor, I owe you my life"—

(*looks over glasses and grins. Reading*) "Never can I repay you. Permit me to send you these 4,000 francs as a poor witness of my unspeakable gratitude."

RATINOIS. (*aside*) Four thousand francs! At one crack!

MALINGEAR. (*aside, putting bank notes in pocket*) These are the ones I gave her to pay the upholsterer.

RATINOIS. (*aside*) And he calmly puts them in his pocket. I'll bet his clothes are full of them! What a *fine* match for Frederick!

MALINGEAR. Ah, there is a postscript. (*reading*) "Naughty doctor, why won't you enter the Academy, since you have only to say the word. (*repeat. Only to say the word*)"

RATINOIS. (*with admiration*) Oh, say it! say it!

MALINGEAR. I'm not ambitious. (*knocking at the door at L.*) One moment! Wait!

RATINOIS. (*aside*) There must be loads of people out there! (*aloud*) I will be leaving.

MALINGEAR. (*taking paper from desk*) Here is your prescription. (*reading*) Bordeaux wine, Cutlets, Beefsteak——

RATINOIS. Why, that's a—a—that's a menu card!

MALINGEAR. (*gives him prescription and bows*) Monsieur. (*turns to desk*)

RATINOIS. (*aside—drawing purse*) I ought to give him ten francs.—No, that's too small beside the duchesses—— What a *fine* match for Frederick! (*Grin. Pause*) Bah, I'll leave him 20 francs. (*He puts them on plate on stand*) I don't believe he saw me! (*picks them up and rings them on plate*) Malingear bows—(*aside*) He saw me! (*comes up stage. The upholsterer enters L.*)

THE U. (*entering brusquely L.*) As last, I am here. Here I am.

MALINGEAR. Who are you? What do you want?

THE U. It's my turn. I am number seventeen.

MALINGEAR. (*astonished—aside*) What! a patient! a real one! (*going back—speaks slowly—in awe*)

RATINOIS. (*aside*) People struggle to get an audience with him!

THE U. (*to MALINGEAR*) Doctor, I have suffered for a long time from an affection—(*reaches for his bill in his inside pocket*)

MALINGEAR. Pardon me.—Just one moment and I will be with you.

RATINOIS. Doctor, I bid you good-day.

MALINGEAR. You will excuse me?

RATINOIS. Certainly. Don't disturb yourself. (*aside in leaving*) What a fine match for Frederick! Maybe it's too fine. Perhaps they wouldn't want to ally themselves with common, ordinary people like us! (*aloud*) Doctor, good-day! (*he opens door L. Footman enters and stands by door. RATINOIS stands bowing. Footman stands rigid. RATINOIS bolts for door and exits. Footman follows*) Thank you. Don't take the trouble. (*door closes*)

MALINGEAR. Now, you were saying that you have suffered for a very long time from an affection—

THE U. Oh, never mind about that now! (*presenting a paper*) Here is my little bill for doing over your parlor furniture.

MALINGEAR. What! my parlor furniture?

THE U. I am your upholsterer.

MALINGEAR. What do you say?

THE U. Your wife asked me to take the number seventeen. That's a pretty slick trick you were working there!

MALINGEAR. (*protesting*) I assure you that I don't know anything about any trick!

THE U. No harm done. There are tricks for all—trades. Why, I—

MALINGEAR. Monsieur, I beg you to believe me. (*aside*) My wife is getting me all tied up here.

THE U. There is my memorandum amounting to 4,000 francs.

MALINGEAR. Let me look at it.—Oh, heavens! A hundred and fifty francs for an arm chair!

THE U. That's at the very lowest price I can make.

MALINGEAR. And the ordinary chairs eighty! It's exorbitant!

THE U. What! You are trying to beat me down after the service I have just rendered you!

MALINGEAR. What service?

THE U. Why number seventeen. I was your little number 17.

MALINGEAR. (*impatient*) Oh! all right! receipt your bill. (*takes pen from desk and gives it to him*)

THE U. Certainly. (*signs on table*)

MALINGEAR. (*giving him bank notes*) Here is your money.

THE U. Thank you. (*while counting the money*) Doctor, if at some other time, you need anyone to hold a number, let me recommend to you my brother—an idle fellow.

MALINGEAR. What for?

THE U. He looks respectable and he will be very moderate in his charges. (*laughing to self*)

MALINGEAR. Come, come—you are paid. I'm not detaining you.

THE U. (*aside. Leaving*) All the same, he's a sly old rascal. (*exits L.*)

MALINGEAR. (*alone*) Certainly, Madame Malingear has made me play a most ridiculous role.

MADAME M. (*entering up. In garden hat with gloves*) Have you paid the upholsterer?

MALINGEAR. Yes—number seventeen.

MADAME M. Wasn't that a good idea?

MALINGEAR. (*sarcastically*) My compliments! You have made me seem like a quack to this man.

MADAME M. Well,—an upholsterer? (*she sits L. M. sits right*)

MALINGEAR. And then this great elephant in livery!

MADAME M. What! didn't you recognize him?

MALINGEAR. No.

MADAME M. He was the footman who belongs to the people on the second floor.

MALINGEAR. (*forgetting himself*) He was great! (*changing his tone*) But you have made me the laughing stock of the whole house. He will gossip.—That's inevitable.

MADAME M. Well, someone had to bring in the letter of the duchess's.

MALINGEAR. I haven't anything to say against the letter. It was all right. Well written—especially the last part, the postscript!

MADAME M. (*quoting*) "Naughty doctor"—

MALINGEAR. "Why won't you enter the Academy?"

MADAME M. "Since you have only to say the word." What did Monsieur Ratinios think of that.

MALINGEAR. He was keeled right over. But listen,—he looked at my chain! (*with evident satisfaction*)

MADAME M. Ah! didn't I tell you, we'd dazzle them—charm them both. (*she rises and takes off hat U. L.*)

MALINGEAR. And to-morrow—not later than to-morrow, we shall hear from them.

(*Enter* UNCLE ROBERT.)

ROBERT. (*entering U. R. He stands looking from one to the other*) Ah, you were expecting me?

MALINGEAR. No, not you. (*beckons him to be silent. But* ROBERT *does not notice*)

34 THE BLUFFERS ; OR DUST IN THE EYES

ROBERT. I was just passing. You got the money I sent you? Good! Here is the paper—will you please to sign.

(*Cross R., MALINGEAR sits, protesting.*)

MME. MALINGEAR. But I don't understand.

ROBERT. No. Women don't. (*he passes her and walks L.*)

MALINGEAR. (*to his wife*) I will explain to you. (*rising and waving paper*) Merely a formality. There. Until the first of the month. Good-day.

ROBERT. Not so fast. There is another little matter.

MALINGEAR. (*sitting*) Another matter?

MME. MALINGEAR. (*accusingly*) Malingear! (*to ROBERT*) Another little formality? (*sarcastically*)

ROBERT. Exactly. Your daughter!

MALINGEAR and MME. MALINGEAR. Emmeline?

ROBERT. Her marriage.

MME. MALINGEAR. (*getting angry*) How can that possibly concern you?

ROBERT. And do you think marriages concern only the parents? How about Emmeline? What does she say?

MME. MALINGEAR. Why she is only a child.

ROBERT. Exactly. Is she for sale?

MME. MALINGEAR. Why the idea! It's insulting—why—

ROBERT. Precisely! When parents conspire to marry off a daughter to a rich husband, that is insulting—to the daughter. You would not do that. What does Emmeline want? Shall we ask her?

MME. MALINGEAR. (*raging around stage—first to UNCLE ROBERT, then to MALINGEAR*) The idea! How dare you? How dare you interfere? Why, this is positively—Malingear! And I—I—her mother—

her mother! You shan't see her—you shan't—I never heard of anything like it! It's outrageous! I'll go and lock her in her room. She shan't have a word with you. For sale! For sale indeed! Is the man a lunatic? O, Malingear, Malingear. (*the last words heard off stage as she goes out L.*)

ROBERT. My nephew's mother-in-law. (*looking after her*)

MALINGEAR. Sir, you presume. I will return the money to-morrow.

ROBERT. Very good. We may count that as settled. (*puts down his hat*) Malingear, I am a rich man. I have worked for it—I am a lumber merchant—but I have it. There!

MALINGEAR. I will pay you to-morrow.

ROBERT. Ah! but riches does not buy everything. Happiness, happiness, my dear Malingear.—Now, your daughter—

MALINGEAR. (*rises*) I won't listen sir. (*Exit U. Enter EMMELINE quickly, R.*) Robert—If she loves Frederick, she shall have him.

EMMELINE. (*skipping*) I've found my work bag, mother! Oh, I (*she skips into ROBERT before she sees him*) why—I beg your pardon.

ROBERT. (*aside*) Um! Frederick's right. She is. (*to EMMELINE*) I sent for you.

EMMELINE. Me?

ROBERT. Sit down. (*she sits down quickly, half frightened*) Do you want to get married?

EMMELINE. (*rising quickly*) Oh, no sir, yes sir—(*sits*) No sir.

ROBERT. No sir, yes sir, no sir—Hum! Why do you say “no sir?”

EMMELINE. It's not customary, sir.

ROBERT. Not customary to want to get married?

EMMELINE. Not customary to let on, sir. (*rises*) I think I'd better—(*she looks at him*)

ROBERT. (*leading her back to chair*) There—
You will sit down?

EMMELINE. (*almost in tears*) Yes, sir—

ROBERT. And you are not afraid.

EMMELINE. O, no sir—not now, sir.

ROBERT. So you want to get married?
(EMMELINE *drops her eyes and puts her finger in her mouth*) No?—But if you did want to get married—what kind of a husband would you choose?

EMMELINE. O, sir, a very beautiful one—tall, and strong, and with the most wonderful brains—a lawyer—

ROBERT. I am a wood merchant—I am very rich. I made it all myself—

EMMELINE. O but this one is young—and handsome—O, sir, I hope you were not speaking to papa—because it will not do. I would rather die just like this.

ROBERT. But you would not do anything that your father did not wish?

EMMELINE. O, no, sir. I intend to make him *want* Frederick.

ROBERT. Ha! Quite so. Little minx. Good night. (*aside*) And so you shall—or I'm not Uncle Robert (*Exit*)

EMMELINE. What a nice funny old man.

MALINGEAR. (*re-entering R.*) Gone at last!
(*sees EMMELINE U. L.*)

(*His wife enters angrily L., passes EMMELINE and confronts husband.*)

MADAME M. (*rapping on the table c.*) Well, husband! I suppose—

MALINGEAR. Sh!—Emmeline!

EMMELINE. (*sweetly, waving work bag*) I've found it, mother.

MADAME M. (*severely*) That will do! You may

go! (EMMELINE, *very much abashed, is about to leave*) Malingear, I want a word with you.

MALINGEAR. (*squirming*) Not now—now, I'm very much occupied. (*sits hurriedly at desk down right and begins fumbling about for an excuse; his eye falls upon EMMELINE going out U. R.*) Oh, Emmeline, my love; aren't you going to give me a kiss. (*she comes quickly to him, kisses his bald head. His wife stands glowering L.*) Dear little girl! Your father has just had a lot of trouble for your sake.

EMMELINE. Trouble? Oh, Papa, what was it? (*she kneels at his feet*)

MALINGEAR. (*squirming under his wife's gaze*) I can't tell you what it was, but don't repeat this—(*he pinches her ear lightly*) It's a secret—

EMMELINE. Be tranquil! (*aside, confidentially to audience*) I bet it's about the marriage. (*aloud*) Oh, I won't make you tell me.

(MALINGEAR, *under cover of exchanging playful glances with his daughter is about to escape from the room, when his wife's voice arrests him suddenly.*)

MADAME M. Malingear! (*A momentary pause, which EMMELINE breaks*)

EMMELINE. Why papa, here's a button coming off your coat. Come here, come here—now just look at that!

MALINGEAR. Won't you sew it on for me. I'm sure your mother—

EMMELINE. Of course I will. I have some black cotton here in my bag. (*Bag is on piano—she skips and gets it; sits on piano stool*)

(MALINGEAR *takes off his coat, showing a large rent in the back of vest; his wife crosses toward him;*

he turns U. L. to EMMELINE, gives her the coat, and attempts to draw his wife into conversation.)

MALINGEAR. Ah, isn't she the fine girl though! (his wife turns her back on him, sitting near sewing table) No? (shrugs his shoulders as though cold)

MADAME M. (turning suddenly) Are you cold, Mr. Malingear, without your—

MALINGEAR. Oh, no, no, no, no, no! Let the child sew it. If I were Frederick, it would be when she was like this (pointing to EMMELINE bending over his old coat) that I'd love her best. (goes to her)

SOPHIE. (entering L. with basket full of groceries) Well—(she crosses in front of MADAME M. and plumps her basket down R., faces audience, with her back to her mistress) here I am—back from market. Cabbage rolls on the floor)

MADAME M. You've certainly taken enough time to buy out the place.

SOPHIE. Do you want to check up, Madame.

MADAME M. Yes, give me the book.

SOPHIE. Here it is! (takes it from basket and hands it over, without turning to face MADAME M.)

MADAME M. (going to desk and adding) On the 15th, "milk 15 cents, a rabbit 50 cents." (speaking) That's terribly dear.

SOPHIE. Madame, there was sickness among the rabbits this year.

MALINGEAR. A sickness?

SOPHIE. Yes, Monsieur.

MALINGEAR. I didn't know rabbits got sick.

MADAME M. (continuing) "Monsieur's suspenders 5 cents." (speaking) What! his suspenders!

SOPHIE. The buckle was broken and he had me get it fixed.

MALINGEAR. What would the duchess of Humbugville say if she saw this little family group!

MADAME M. (*continuing*) "On the 16th—a cabbage 18 cents." (*crying out*) Eighteen cents!

SOPHIE. It was the very best, Madame.

ALEXANDRINE. (*entering quickly L.*) Madame, —Here are some callers!

ALL THE FAMILY. (*jumping up*) Callers!

ALEXANDRINE. Monsieur and Madame Ratinois.

MADAME M. Them?

MALINGEAR. Already?

EMMELINE. What good luck!

(SOPHIE runs out L. with two of her packages.)

(ALEXANDRINE dusts piano leg.)

MADAME M. (*to ALEXANDRINE*) Tell them to come in. (SOPHIE screams off stage—runs in—drops packages C. ALEXANDRINE leaves. *To SOPHIE, giving back the book and pushing to door R.*) Quick! Get out of here! (*exit SOPHIE R.*)

MALINGEAR. My vest! (*puts it on quickly*)

MADAME M. (*to EMMELINE*) Go to the piano,—head back—and sing some runs!

MADAME M. Oh, Heavens! she forgot the basket! (*snatches the basket, runs around stage to hide it, ends by shoving it under table and pulling cover over it*)

(EMMELINE sings "Her sweet smile haunts me still." MONSIEUR and MADAME RATINOIS appear L. MADAME RATINOIS in full dress. MONSIEUR RATINOIS in dress coat with white tie and white gloves.)

(MALINGEAR stands U. R. stupefied—cabbage in his hand which he puts quickly under his coat.

MME. MALINGEAR down R., EMMELINE U. L.)

MADAME R. Madame!

RATINOIS. Doctor! (MALINGEAR *drops cabbage from under his coat*)

MADAME M. (to MADAME R.) What a happy surprise! Have you decided to take the apartment?

RATINOIS. We didn't come positively for that. (*aside*) Heavens, how rattled I am. (*business with collar*)

MALINGEAR. (to RATINOIS) Has your sickness become worse?

RATINOIS. Thank you, I'm getting on all right now.

(MALINGEAR *reaching for cabbage with his foot, trying to put it out of way.*)

MADAME R. We've come for something else.

MONSIEUR and MADAME M. (*feigning astonishment*) For something else? (MALINGEARS *exchange glances*)

EMMELINE. (*aside—dancing up and down eagerly*) The father has on a white tie! They are going to ask for me! (*They sit down. EMMELINE remaining sitting on piano stool with back to piano*)

RATINOIS. (*standing. He bows—then gulps—then bows—then gulps. Very rattled*) We have something we want to ask of you—something very— (*to wife*) you speak. (*he turns U. L., facing EMMELINE and stands stupefied*)

MADAME R. (*sitting L. of table*) Intimate and confidential.

EMMELINE. Mother, it's time for me to take my painting lesson.

MADAME M. Go, my child.

MALINGEAR. (*aside—proudly*) Didn't I say she was bright!

EMMELINE. (*bowing*) Monsieur! Madame!

(MALINGEAR *kicks cabbage out door.*)

MONSIEUR AND MADAME R. Mademoiselle!
(*exit EMMELINE R. She curtsies*)

MALINGEAR. We are alone. (*draws chair up to wife, down R.*)

MADAME R. (*low to husband*) Speak! Courage!

RATINOIS. (*standing down L., low*) It's no use.
—They'd never consent to it.

MADAME M. We are listening.

RATINOIS. (*very rattled*) Monsieur and Madame
—I am the father of—I have an only son—
Frederick—

MALINGEAR. We know him.

MADAME M. A charming young man! who sometimes honors our drawing rooms by visiting us.

RATINOIS. (*c.—wife to his L. Low to wife*)
Our drawing rooms!—You see they have many of them.—They would never consent.

MADAME R. (*low to husband*) Go ahead.

RATINOIS. This young man who is a lawyer could not know your daughter—your most honorable daughter—without longing for an alliance which would honor him—in honoring us—if he could enter into your honorable family which everybody honors!

MADAME M. (*showing feigned astonishment*)
What!

MALINGEAR. (*the same*) Is it possible!

RATINOIS. (*turning toward wife, and speaking low*) There! I told you so. *They'll* never consent.

MALINGEAR. Monsieur, I assure you that such a demand—made so suddenly—surprises us not a little.

RATINOIS. (*more downcast than ever*) Didn't I tell you—(*to his wife*) *They'll never* consent.
(*note change of emphasis*)

MALINGEAR. Marriage is a serious thing (*pompously*) and we must ask your permission to consult—to reflect—

MADAME R. Certainly! that is quite natural!

MADAME M. (*rising*) In a few days, we will tell you our reply. (*all rise and prepare for the curtain picture*)

RATINOIS. (*crosses quickly to footlights, extreme left*) They do not refuse. (*he holds this while his wife makes deep curtsey toward MADAME M., and DOCTOR MALINGEAR bows deeply. MADAME R. then goes quickly up and stands by piano. RATINOIS turns and bows to MADAME M. and the DOCTOR. Ah! Madame—Ah! Doctor! (RATINOIS then turns quickly to his wife U. L., claps his hat on back of head. He is talking to his wife. He joins her U. L. quickly)*) They do not refuse!

MADAME M. (*U. R. coming forward quickly to put her hand on her husband's shoulder*) How about dust in their eyes?

MALINGEAR. Admirable. I am converted. (*very loud, to wife*) My dear wife, (*coming down front*) ask your maid to tell the butler to tell the coachman to harness up Dobbin and Dexter! (*striking an attitude, hand to chest, before the footlights, down R.*) I dine with the Duchess! (*he holds this attitude*)

MONSIEUR AND MADAME RATINOIS. With the Duchess! (*in admiration. They pass each other, MME. coming L., and her husband going R. He turns quickly, taking off his hat, in utmost surprise. They stand, facing the audience, overcome with admiration*)

MALINGEAR. (*swings around on right foot until his back is toward RATINOIS and wife; he then looks over his right shoulder, pointing with his right thumb to where they stand in astonishment*) There it goes (*MADAME M. turns and looks toward the dupes, in direction pointed to by her husband*) right in their eyes!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

ACT II.—*Living room. Home of MONSIEUR RATINOIS. The stairs may be omitted if impracticable, and replaced by a left entrance. Chairs to have slip-over covers on.*

SCENE:—*A pleasant room in the home of RATINOIS. In the back drop, two small latticed windows look out into the park. Over these windows, dainty yellow silk curtains to the sills give the room a cheerful look. Piano between the windows. To the right of the windows a door leading to park. To the left of the windows a door leading to dining room. (The windows may be omitted if back drop is not large enough.) A fireplace U. R. with fire ready for lighting. Door down right leading to library. Door down left leading to hallway. (In place of this door down left, a most effective entrance may be obtained by erecting a stairway along the left side-wall, leading directly away from the audience. The room is furnished simply. Pedestal front right with vase, to be broken during the act. Flowers on table C. Table U. R. Chairs with white slip-covers on. As the curtain rises, RATINOIS and his family are disclosed in a domestic scene. RATINOIS, in long robe and smoking cap is seated by table C., long-stemmed pipe in his hand. MADAME R., knitting a great woolen sock, is seated R. FREDERICK, at the table U. R., is busily working over a bunch of legal papers and tax receipts. The family has the air of having talked themselves out, each being now engrossed in his own affairs.*

The minute the curtain is up, JOSEPHINE, a trim little maid, enters smartly with the evening paper, which she lays on the table before M. RATINOIS. She is just in time to pick up MADAME R'S knitting ball on her way to the fireplace U. R. She closes the doors leading to the park, draws the portieres, stoops and lights the fire and goes out quickly the way she came. FREDERICK rises from his work and turns on the light over his head and sits again, impatiently. RATINOIS, who has been trying to get his pipe lighted, rises and walks to piano, where he finds more matches and repeats business of attempting to light it. Deep-toned, slow clock off right, strikes five; quick light chime up-stairs strikes five immediately after. RATINOIS clicks his watch shut and turns abruptly, addressing his wife and son.

RATINOIS. Do you want me to tell you what I think about it? (*evidently they do not*) Well, they'll never consent.

FREDERICK. (*without looking up from his work*) O, come now, Dad! What are you trying to tell us?

RATINOIS. Never you mind about this—you keep at your job there fixing those tax receipts. That's something you have to pay attention to when you are doing it. (*sitting again in his easy chair*) They'll never consent.

MADAME R. (*looking up from her knitting, and addressing FREDERICK, across stage*) I am very much afraid that your father is right.

RATINOIS. Of course I'm right. It's two weeks to-day since we made the proposal—and we haven't received any reply.

FREDERICK. (*counting over his receipts*) What's that prove?

RATINOIS. That proves that these people are too toney for us. Look at the style they live in.

FREDERICK. I didn't notice it.

RATINOIS. (*sighs*) I can understand that—a lover! You saw only the girl; but I saw the foot-man—six or seven feet! (*indicating height with hand*)

FREDERICK. (*continuing his counting up*) Aw-aw, ha, ha!

RATINOIS. Yes! Six or seven feet tall! Nothing escapes the clairvoyant eye of a father!

MADAME R. And the young lady takes lessons from Caruso!

RATINOIS. (*over his paper*) Well, she's rich enough to. (*then putting paper aside and entering into the discussion*) When one has a father who receives four thousand francs at one crack—O, I counted them—and who puts them in his pocket as calmly as if they were his spectacle case——

FREDERICK. (*losing count and beginning over again*) That's no reason.

RATINOIS. (*same business with paper*) Do you know who this man is—whose daughter you want to marry?

FREDERICK. O, he's a doctor. (*counting*)

RATINOIS. Yes a doctor—who has only to say the word to belong to the Academy of Sciences. If he would say the word—(*snaps his fingers*) Crack! He would be it! And his watch chain—Did you notice his watch chain?

FREDERICK. (*losing his count*) No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!

RATINOIS. (*over his specs, wheeling around abruptly*) You didn't notice it? And do you think that such a person would ally himself with the son of a former confectioner?

MADAME R. (*rising*) Why in the world do you always tell everybody that you used to be a confectioner?

(From this point MADAME R. dominates the scene.)

RATINOIS. (*boldly*) Why should I hide it? (*apologetically*) I don't tell everybody—(*then blustering*) but anyway I'm not ashamed of it.

MADAME R. (*crossing L. to FREDERICK*) My poor boy! I'm afraid you must give up all hope of this marriage.

FREDERICK. (*rises*) But they haven't refused mother—and she's the dearest little girl! You think their silence means——

RATINOIS. The silence of the great is a lesson to the small. (*changing his tone*) Don't forget the school tax.

(MADAME R. hangs sock on the piano and returns to R. FREDERICK comes C. and takes father's fountain pen from M. RATINOIS' pocket. Tries it, shakes it and returns to place U. R. at table during next speech.)

FREDERICK. When I called, the day before you made the proposal, Monsieur Malingear was very kind to me. He gave me advice about my career. He urged me to become a divorce lawyer.

RATINOIS. A good choice—one'll that pay.

MADAME R. (*standing U. R. and looking sympathetically at her son.*) And Madame Malingear said to you: "It's astonishing your mother never goes to the opera. I have never yet seen her there." (*comes down*)

RATINOIS. (*sadly*) And the next day I went and hired a box for the season. It's dear too at that theatre.

MADAME R. That's a momentary sacrifice. (*sits again*)

RATINOIS. O, I understand. When you desire to enter such a family *you do things right*. So when you called my attention to the fact that one cannot

go to the opera on foot, I was obliged to take a carriage by the month. That's very high-priced too.

MADAME R. It's the custom though.

RATINOIS. (*sitting low in chair, puts paper on table*) I'm not kicking. You *must do things right*—only, if I had been (*yawns deeply*) allowed to choose a theatre, I wouldn't have chosen that one.

MADAME. Why not?

RATINOIS. (*his eyes on the ceiling*) Because they always give the same play. We've been there four times! Four times to Rigoletto—It's in Italian too, and you can't understand a word of it.

MADAME R. You!

RATINOIS. No more yourself! You cried "Brava! brava!" very finely to make yourself noticed (*directly to her*) but I bet you can't tell me the plot.

MADAME R. I was applauding the music.

RATINOIS. I don't believe you! You got sleepy by the beginning of the second act.

MADAME R. I closed my eyes, but I wasn't sleeping. It was absorbed meditation!

RATINOIS. Rats! It was absorbed snoring!

FREDERICK. But father, we had the pleasure of seeing Monsieur and Madame Malingear—and their daughter!

RATINOIS. Yes, we bowed to them from our box; they bowed to us from theirs—and there you are! (*shrugging his shoulders*) One is to stand an infinity of R-r-r-igoletto for *that*? But really, (*rises and crosses abruptly left*) there's one thing against which I formally protest—

MADAME R. What's that?

RATINOIS. In order to make the Malingears think we know lots of society people, you make me bow to a whole crowd of people that I've never even seen.

MADAME R. What's the difference if they bow to you in return?

RATINOIS. Not all! Not all! The other day I passed a plenipotentiary minister—I made a movement to him like that with my hand (*military salute*)——

MADAME R. Well?

RATINOIS. Well, he leveled his eyeglass on me with a certain calmness—It was very disagreeable. (*He goes up*)

MADAME R. But it's for our son, mon ami.

RATINOIS. Hum! So it is. Yes. See here. You care for—for this little girl?

FREDERICK. (*in a voice breaking with tenderness*) I tell you—why Dad, you don't know how much I care. Yesterday, I was in the park. It was just at dusk and the moon was coming up on the lake. I was walking along in a sort of mood—(*father and mother exchange glances*)

MADAME R. A-ah! Poor boy!

FREDEPICK. My eyes were on the ground. I came into the light. I turned round a bleeding-heart bush, and there——

RATINOIS. (*laughing*) There was this little beauty.

FREDERICK. No—it was her track. There in the soft moist earth was a FOOT PRINT—just one—one pretty little footprint in the brown gentle earth among the tulips——

RATINOIS. Hum!

FREDERICK. O, I can't tell you how it made me feel! I longed to fall down upon my knees and press my lips to it—It was like finding the feather from an angel's wing. Ah, a fellow could follow that little footstep through the whole world—it'd never lead him far wrong.

RATINOIS. No—a tulip bed's just the place for footprints! (*he walks down trying to light pipe*)

FREDERICK. (*coming out of his reverie*) Heigho!

(*rises and picks up tax receipts*) Here are your receipts, father.

RATINOIS. (*putting them in pocket*) Thank you, my son.

(FREDERICK *turns to piano at once and sits and plays "Meditation" or sings a sentimental old ballad like "Her Sweet Smile Haunts me Still."*)

(*After playing very softly a few moments, FREDERICK sighs deeply and plays louder.*)

MADAME R. (*after exchanging glances with her husband*) What's that you're singing, love?

FREDERICK. (*plays louder and faster*) Don't you know, mother—? (*plays a few more bars, then breaks off abruptly and rises*) No matter.

(FREDERICK *goes to glass—primps—crosses L. and takes hat and cane—tries on hat before glass, etc. MADAME R. and her husband exchange glances. FREDERICK at last takes handkerchief from his pocket to dust his shoes.*)

MADAME R. Are you going out?

FREDERICK. Yes—I—I have an errand to do.

RATINOIS. Then take the carriage—it's hired by the month—we must use it.

FREDERICK. Sure you're not going to use it yourself?

RATINOIS. Who? Me? Never! Those two big rascals of horses who eat hay all day long—They cut up the lawn, too.

FREDERICK. But I don't believe I could take them where I'm going—er—that is—I—I'll be right back—(MADAME RATINOIS *has been crossing slowly toward door U. R., through which FREDERICK is going out. She is looking toward him expecting him to whisper his secret to her at the door*) Now, mother—I'm going—going—just going—(HE *claps his hat on his head and goes out quickly, U. R.*)

RATINOIS. Gone! He's going to look for beauty tracks.

MADAME R. I'm going to write to my dressmaker — (*crossing L*)

RATINOIS. What for?

MADAME R. (*ascending stairway L.*) To order a grand piano, you dear thing. (*exit L.*)

RATINOIS. (*alone*) I suppose that means more dress for the opera!!! And cut "Rigoletto" (*indicating extremely low dress*) Dresses! Hum! that's something else that people don't give away. We'll have a nice little pile of bills at the end of the month.

(*Enter UNCLE ROBERT U. R. He comes down to greet RATINOIS and sits down R. RATINOIS sits up L., crossing to this position after greeting UNCLE ROBERT.*)

ROBERT. (*entering rear*) Merry 14th of Je-New Years, Ratinois.

RATINOIS. (*rising*) What! It's uncle Robert! (*they shake hands*)

ROBERT. Everybody well?

RATINOIS. Yes. Frederick has just gone out.

ROBERT. And my niece?

RATINOIS. She's somewhere around. I'll go find her. (*crosses L.*)

ROBERT. No. Don't disturb her. I was just passing this way and thought I'd drop in. I can only stay a moment, though. Got to be at Bercy at six. I'm expecting a cargo of lumber. (*front right*)

RATINOIS. Always business! Don't you ever rest yourself?

ROBERT. Only when I have to. You see, Ratinois, when a person comes to Paris with only twelve cents in his pocket, and starts at the bottom of the ladder, he's got to be an early bird, and I've got the habit.

RATINOIS. I know, I know.—(*aside*) It's funny

but since I've been going in certain society, I find Uncle Robert common!

ROBERT. (c.) But I'm not proud on account of that! Because I say "a man is worth what he proves himself worth."—You, you used to be a confectioner.

RATINOIS. Sh!

ROBERT. I, I am a lumber dealer——

RATINOIS. Sh!

ROBERT. What?

RATINOIS. What's the use of saying that I used to be a confectioner, and proclaiming the fact that you are a lumber dealer!

ROBERT. I don't blush for my business. Find a better one if you can!

RATINOIS. Magnificent! It is magnificent!

ROBERT. Well, then?

RATINOIS. But everybody can't follow this—beautiful occupation!

ROBERT. No, certainly not.

RATINOIS. Well, when you cry "I, am a lumber dealer." It's as if you were saying to the others, "Imbeciles, you are not lumber dealers, you—and I, I am one." It's vain-glory!

ROBERT. Ah! if it's that, I'll keep quiet. (*drawing his watch*) Half-past five! Good-bye. You'll see me again soon! (*up at door*)

RATINOIS. (*astonished*) Ah!

ROBERT. To-day's your wife's birthday, the 22nd of April.

RATINOIS. Holy Smoke! You're right! I forgot all about it.

ROBERT. On my way back, I'll be passing by the flower market, and I'll buy her a Rubber plant. (c.)

RATINOIS. Yes! your annual surprise!

ROBERT. It's always a pleasure for me.

RATINOIS. You'll stay to dinner, won't you?—There'll be nobody else!

ROBERT. All right.—But no ceremony! (*at door*)

RATINOIS. Be tranquil! We wouldn't make any ceremony for you. Then, at six?

ROBERT. That suits me. By-the-way, about Frederick, aren't you ever going to get the boy married? (*c. again*)

RATINOIS. There is, perhaps, something under way.

ROBERT. Ah! something good?

RATINOIS. I'm afraid they're too toney for us!

ROBERT. A lumber dealer?

RATINOIS. No, indeed! O my no—not that. But the affair is not getting on—it's dragging.

ROBERT. We must liven it up. What if I should go and see the family?

RATINOIS. (*frightened*) No, thank you! (*aside*) What if he should meet the duchess!

ROBERT. You know what I told you! "I have no children, I am rich; on the day of the marriage, I will make a present, a fine present."

RATINOIS. Good Uncle Robert!

ROBERT. Well, good-bye. See you later. Mind, now, don't give away my surprise—the Rubber plant.

RATINOIS. Be tranquil! (*ROBERT leaves R. Alone, sitting in chair*) What a fine man! He adores Frederick and what's more he can afford to give him a whole silver service. (*thumping hand on chair arm*) Poor boy! They'll never consent!—We have flown too high,—it's a shame!

JOSEPHINE. (*entering R.*) A gentleman and a lady who wish to see you, Monsieur.

RATINOIS. What's their name?

JOSEPHINE. Monsieur and Madame Malingear.

RATINOIS. (*jumping up*) Them?—Oh, the dickens, the deuce—Wait. Where in himmel's my wife! (*to JOSEPHINE*) Don't let them come in yet! (*calling*) Constance! Constance!

MADAME R. (*entering on run*) Goodness' sakes, what's the matter?

RATINOIS. They are here!

MADAME R. Who's that?

RATINOIS. The father and the mother! What shall we do?

MADAME R. We must receive them—they have come to give us their answer!

RATINOIS. Themselves! You think so!

MADAME R. Of course. (*to JOSEPHINE*) Bring them in. Oh! heavens! these chair-covers! (*runs R. RATINOIS knocks bric-a-brac off pedestal and breaks it*)

JOSEPHINE—*Runs L. and snatches off cover—starts out R.—when RATINOIS stops her by clapping his hands at her. He takes off dressing-gown and sends her up-stairs with it—MADAME R.—Snatches off cover and runs out L.—Comes in quickly crossing after JOSEPHINE—Runs hand along piano-keys as she passes—turns on stairs and points to sock on piano—RATINOIS dashes wildly to piano, and begins taking off piano cover—MADAME R. stops him—He has trouble with chair cover R.—puts his foot on it and tears it off—JOSEPHINE comes down stairs with coat—He puts it on—Spills water from vase on table C., all over himself and crosses stage wiping water from coat, limply exclaiming over and over "what a day," etc.*

RATINOIS. Yes, the chair-covers! take off the chair-covers! (*L. runs C. to table*) Help us! (*to JOSEPHINE*) Wait! They musn't come in yet! (*all three frantically rip off chair-covers*) What an event! What a day! (*RATINOIS pulls cover off table and has to fix it. He stands tearing his hair*)

MADAME R. Come, brace up! courage! and mind, now, don't use slang!

RATINOIS. Why not? (*leads him L.*)

MADAME R. Because they don't. (*to JOSEPHINE, who has thrown chair-covers in nearby closet*) Bring them in. (*JOSEPHINE leaves R.*)

RATINOIS. (*to wife*) Get at the piano,—sing some runs! (*she plays. Noticing chair in background with cover still on*) Ah! we have forgotten one! (*hurries to take it off.* MONSIEUR and MADAME MALINGEAR enter R. *Gets to piano*)

MADAME R. (*to MADAME M.*) Ah! dear Madam, how charmed I am to see you!

MALINGEAR. We are very much ashamed of ourselves. We have owed you a call for quite a while.

MADAME M. But the doctor is so busy—so very busy! (*simpers*)

MADAME R. Won't you sit down? (*they sit down. RATINOIS trying to get out of hiding place*)

MALINGEAR. (*pause*) Won't we have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur Ratinois? (*RATINOIS, who has remained in rear trying to hide chair-cover, finishes by stuffing it in wooden chest*)

RATINOIS. Here I am! I'm coming! (*MALINGEAR rises*) I was in my study. (*bowing*) Doctor—Dear Madame, (*shakes her hand and stands holding it*) may I inquire about your precious health?

MADAME M. I'm very well, thank you, except for occasional headaches.

MADAME R. Just like me—I'm distracted with headaches.

RATINOIS. Me, too, distracted with headaches! (*HE and MALINGEAR sit down*)

RATINOIS.

MALINGEAR.

MME. RATINOIS.

MME. MALINGEAR.

MADAME M. Shall we see you at the opera tomorrow?

MADAME R. Oh, indeed, yes! certainly!

RATINOIS. What's the show?

MALINGEAR. Rigoletto!!

RATINOIS. Oh, so much the better! so much the better!

MADAME M. I never get tired of that music!

RATINOIS. Neither do I! It almost lulls me to sleep!

MADAME R. And isn't that finale just ravishing?

ALL. Ah! charming, charming!

MADAME M. And the andante!

RATINOIS. Oh! It's glorious! glorious! glorious!

MALINGEAR. (*aside*) This future father-in-law certainly is a fanatic. I'm like my wife, I don't understand one blooming thing about music. (*moment of silence. Husbands and wives exchange glances*)

MADAME M. (*to husband*) My dear, we are taking too much of Monsieur and Madame Ratinois' time. (*MME. M. gives her husband a look*)

MADAME R. Not at all!

RATINOIS. I have nothing to do.—I have retired from business.

MALINGEAR. Ah! you were in business, then?

RATINOIS. Yes.

MADAME M. A steel man? (*MME. RATINOIS signals him to be quiet*)

RATINOIS. (*embarrassed*) No!—I—I was——

MADAME R. (*quickly*)—a refiner—My husband was a sugar refiner.

MALINGEAR. Ah! that's a fine business!

RATINOIS. (*aside*) Confectioner or refiner, it's sugar just the same!

MADAME M. (*aside*) The refiners are all millionaires! (*another silence—Then business of MME. M. trying to get her husband up by nods, etc.,—to husband aloud*) Doctor, you forget that we owe an answer to——

MALINGEAR. (*rising*) Oh! yes—so we do—yes—y-ee-s! (*posing*) Madame, and you, Monsieur,—about two weeks ago, you made a demand of us which flatters us as much as it honors us!—(MONSIEUR and MADAME RATINOIS *bowing*) Doctor!—Madame!

MALINGEAR. The inquiries which we have seen fit to make—doubtless as you too have made in behalf of Monsieur Frederick—and let me assure you, not of an inquisitive nature—have been such that as a result we have concluded that such an estimable union with your most esteemed son not only would please us but would honor us greatly in our estimation. (*panting—sits down—mops his brow*)

RATINOIS. (*rising—very much moved*) Doctor, I believe I am the faithful interpreter of the sentiments of Madame Ratinois,—and of my own—and of those of my son Frederick—a lawyer—when I say to you with an emotion—which you can understand—for it is that of a father—and you, Madame, are a mother,—when I say to you: Doctor, receive from this day the benedictions and the affectionate gratitude of a family—which—that—I will say more! of a family which—(*with effusion*) Anyway, won't you take dinner with us? (*they rise*)

MADAME M. (*surprised*) Eh!

MALINGER. What! To-day?

MADAME R. Oh, it would be charming!

MADAME M. Some other day—later!

RATINOIS. Such an honor would be a great happiness to us!

MADAME R. It will just be a family party.

RATINOIS. Won't you come, doctor?

MADAME R. Madame?

MALINGEAR. Well, then, since you urge us!—but on one condition——

RATINOIS. What?

MALINGEAR. That you make no ceremony for us.

RATINOIS. Be tranquil.

MADAME R. Our ordinary meal—nothing but our ordinary meal. (*she rings*) You permit me? (*low, to JOSEPHINE who enters L.*) Go instantly and get Monsieur Chevet's caterer. (*they come down front*) You know—Monsieur Chevet of that new million-dollar hotel, the—oh! you know where it is. (MADAME R. *leading her U. S.*)

JOSEPHINE. (*astonished*) He's awfully expensive, Madame.

MADAME R. Wouldn't he come to a house like this? Not if we paid him?

JOSEPHINE. I guess he'd come for me.

MADAME R. Quickly! quickly! (JOSEPHINE *leaves L. for her hat*)

MADAME M. (*C., crossing R. to MADAME R.*) It's understood that we won't dress up—for this?

MADAME R. We shall remain just as we are.

MALINGEAR. (*crossing L.*) Now, may I ask a few a few moments' interview with you, Ratinois?

RATINOIS. *Certainly!* I am entirely at your service! (*aside*) He called me Ratinois! What if we should get to calling each other by our first names!

MALINGEAR. (*facing audience*) We must talk over our little arrangements.

RATINOIS. (*aside*) The dowry!! (*aloud*) I hope we shall have no difficulty.—If you will trouble yourself to step into my study?—

MALINGEAR. (*they go to door*) After you, Ratinois.

(*Enter, JOSEPHINE, tying on bonnet.*)

RATINOIS. Certainly not! (*makes him enter first*) Ratinois. I don't dare to call him Malingear yet, leaving the "Doctor" off! (*they leave L. JOSEPHINE goes out U. S.*)

MADAME R. (*R.*) Oh! won't Frederick be the happy boy!

58 THE BLUFFERS; OR DUST IN THE EYES

MADAME M. Between you and me, I don't think this will displease my daughter a little bit!

MADAME R. The dear girl! I promise you to love her as if I were her own mother!

MADAME M. Shall we talk over a little how they shall start housekeeping?

MADAME R. Oh! quite willingly!

(MADAME RATINOIS *stands front R. facing L.*
MME. MALINGEAR *stands R. C.*)

MADAME M. (*coming forward and R.*) Day after to-morrow we will hunt up an apartment for them.

MADAME R. One on the first floor?

MADAME M. Oh, a first floor apartment is too low. A third floor one!

MADAME R. The third floor is too high. How about the second?

MADAME M. All right, then, a second. That's only a matter of five or six thousand francs. (*they sit down front R.*)

MADAME R. Let's call it six thousand francs.

MADAME M. (*taking a small card and pencil from her bag*) Wait, I'll write it down on this card. (*writing*) Rent,—six thousand francs.

MADAME R. Clothes. That's important.

MADAME M. It is— It's very difficult for a woman who goes in a certain world of society to dress on less than four or five thousand francs. That's what I spend.

MADAME R. (c.) So do I. Let's call it six thousand francs.

MADAME M. (*writing*) Clothes—6,000 francs. (*aside*) Certainly she isn't stingy!

MADAME R. (*aside*) I! who spent only 900 francs last year for my clothes and then Ratinois scolded me right royally!

MADAME M. The carriage! Do you think they can afford a carriage?

MADAME R. Certainly! (*aside*) If the dowry is large enough!

MADAME M. It's very disagreeable for a young lady to tramp along in the mud—especially with these hobble skirts they're wearing now-a-days!

MADAME R. Oh! it's impossible!—There are carriages for hire.

MADAME M. The cabs! Oh! don't mention those awful boxes to me!!

MADAME R. (*quickly*) I wouldn't think of mentioning them!

MADAME M. They are black!—and narrow!—

MADAME R. And dirty! I wouldn't get into one for all the world! (*aside*) I always go on foot!

MADAME M. I think that a nice little coupe—

MADAME R. With two pretty little horses.

MADAME M. And a pretty little coachman.

MADAME R. Let's call it six thousand francs.

MADAME M. (*writing*) Coupe, 6,000 francs. (*aside*) These refiners eat—gold! (*aloud*) Household expenses, table—

MADAME R. Let's call it six thousand francs.

MADAME M. (*writing down and then speaking*) It's enough. (*adding*) Six, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four. Total: 24,000 francs.—That seems all right to me. (*tosses the card on the table*)

MADAME R. It's not too much. (*aside*) They must be going to give an enormous dowry. (*they rise*)

MALINGEAR. (*entering L. followed by RATINOIS*) All right, then, Ratinois, you have my word.

RATINOIS. And you mine, Malingear. (*aside*) I've risked CALLING him that!

MALINGEAR (*to the ladies*) We are completely agreed.—(*crosses to wife*)

RATINOIS. Absolutely, MALINGEAR. (*aside*) again!

(MADAME M. and MALINGEAR *extreme front R.*)

MADAME M. (*low to husband*) How much?

MALINGEAR. (*low*) Hundred thousand.

MADAME M. (*aside, astonished*) No more!

(MADAME R. and RATINOIS *front L. C.*)

MADAME R. (*low to husband*) How much?

RATINOIS. (*low*) Hundred thousand.

MADAME R. (*aside*) Is that all!

MADAME M. (*low to husband*) *Let's go home.*
(*slowly*) I want to speak to you.

MALINGEAR. (*he makes haste, getting his hat U. R. quickly*) We must ask your permission to leave.—I have some patients to see. (*quickly*)

RATINOIS. The duchess? (*L. front*)

MADAME R. (*crossing U. R.*) Then we shall see you at six. (*to MADAME M.*) And above all, no dressing up!

MADAME M. Oh, that's understood. (*bowing*)
Madame—

RATINOIS. (*front L.*) Well,—see you later, Malingear. (*they leave R. To wife*) Ah! There's a good thing finished.

MADAME R. (*U. R. Holds position U. R. in anger—tense*) A hundred thousand francs! That's not serious!

RATINOIS. (*astonished*) What's that?

MADAME R. That's meanness! A hundred thousand francs! The idea!

RATINOIS. (*matter-of-fact—suave—wife is on verge of a storm*) But, I can't afford any more.

MADAME R. Can't help that! Our son has a profession. He must be set up in style! He is a lawyer.

RATINOIS. But, he never pleads.

MADAME R. He never pleads because he has no cases!

RATINOIS. That's right. (*after pondering—sud-*

denly) But, if he has no cases it's just the same as if he wasn't a lawyer!

MADAME R. (*vary the tone—sympathy first—determination—petulant anger*) The cases will come. He has the future before him. But, I can't see how you ever came to accept this figure!

RATINOIS. A young couple who have 10,000 francs' income are pretty well off.

MADAME R. (*moves u. toward table*) Yes, pretty well off "Easy Street."

RATINOIS. (*sarcastically*) You don't say so!

MADAME R. (*giving him the card from table*) Come, look at this.

RATINOIS. What is it?

MADAME R. An estimate of the children's expenses which Madame Malingear jotted down while you two were in there.

RATINOIS. (*reading*) Rent—6,000 francs,—Clothes, coupe—24,000 francs.—What does that prove? Can't this estimate be reduced? (*lays it coolly on table*)

MADAME R. Oh, if Mademoiselle Malingear were a simple young girl brought up on principles of order, of economy—like us—in short, an ordinary girl, all would be well.—But, a girl who takes lessons from Caruso,—who paints in oil, and who—wouldn't, I daresay, know how to sew a button on for her husband!

RATINOIS. It's true, that in a matter of—

MADAME R. She sings! She has been cradled in silk and lace all her life. She must have a swell apartment, a carriage, a coachman—There's nothing the matter with that, but, then, one must have a dowry—a large dowry!

RATINOIS. (*suavely, not looking at her*) Come,—don't bother! Frederick loves the little girl, and if you should speak of breaking off this marriage—

MADAME R. (*bearing down on him front L. and bringing the quarrel to a head*) It's not a question of breaking off! The Malingears are rich—very rich—people who have a footman!

RATINOIS. Yes, I have seen him. Seven or eight feet. (*indicating height with hands*)

MADAME R. Well, (*turns, shrugs shoulders and walks off L.*) let them give more. You must talk with the father again. He is going to come?

RATINOIS. Yes,—I guess I must speak to him again.

MADAME R. What! You don't seem to understand!

RATINOIS. (*he speaks rapidly now*) Yes! Yes! but it's difficult to say to a man,—the 100,000 francs which I give are enough—but yours are not enough. It's *very* difficult!

MADAME R. (*she speaks slowly now*) Bah! he is vain. You must prick his balloon. Take him by his pride. Offer to give something more yourself. *That* will get him going. (*extreme L.*)

RATINOIS. But we can't afford to go very far with only 17,000 francs' income. (*he crosses to her L. in supplication*)

MADAME R. Then propose to give a present (L.) some trifle. (*tosses her head and crosses R. leaving him with the burden*)

RATINOIS. A silver service! (*aside*) Uncle Robert's!

JOSEPHINE. (*entering*) Madame, here is the caterer.

MADAME R. Bring him in. (JOSEPHINE *exit*)

RATINOIS. Constance, for goodness' sake, be sure to do the right thing! (*he goes U. L.*)

MADAME R. Be tranquil!

THE CATERER. (*entering and bowing.*) Madame—

MADAME R. Monsieur, we are going to have a dinner.

RATINOIS. (U. L. *Seated*) A *grand* dinner.

CATERER. How many people?

MADAME R. We are—(*thinking*) six.

RATINOIS. But have enough for twelve. We want to do things right. We are entertaining a great man—Doctor Malingear. You've doubtless heard of him.

CATERER. No, Monsieur.

RATINOIS. Ah, of course! he only treats distinguished people.

CATERER. Here is what I propose. (*writes on small pad while he is talking*) Two soups—"bisque"—and "a la reine."

RATINOIS. Truffles with them?

CATERER. No, Monsieur, there are no soups with truffles!

RATINOIS. What a shame!

MADAME R. Next?

CATERER. That's the first course—

(*Enter FREDERICK.*)

FREDERICK. Well, I'm back.

RATINOIS and MADAME R. Frederick!

(*FREDERICK is surprised at the rapturous greeting.*)

RATINOIS. (*rising*) Don't you know? They have come. (*comes down L. CATERER is between them*)

FREDERICK. Who? (*stands stupefied U. R.*)

RATINOIS. The Malingears!

MADAME R. The girl is pleased with you all right.

RATINOIS. And the father and mother too. All is arranged.

FREDERICK. Is it possible?

MADAME R. (*opening her arms*) Ah! My boy! (*they embrace*)

RATINOIS. (*opening his arms*) How about me?

FREDERICK. Good old dad! (*they embrace*)

CATERER. (*not knowing what to make of their*

actions and aside) I embarrass them! (*goes up stage and looks at a picture on wall*)

RATINOIS. I invited them for dinner this evening.

FREDERICK. Ah! what a good idea!

MADAME R. And we were just picking out what we wanted to have——

RATINOIS. And here is the caterer! Why where is he? (*calling very loudly*) Hey! Monsieur.

CATERER. (*coming to front*) Pardon me! (*MADAME sits front R. and writes*)

RATINOIS. (*to FREDERICK*) We were at the second course. You can help us. (*sits*)

CATERER. Second course—Rhenish carp from Chambourd flanked with truffles.

RATINOIS. (*patting stomach*) Ah! Fine (*front L.*)

CATERER. With shrimps curled like earrings.

RATINOIS. (*suddenly—slapping knee*) Oh! diablotin!

FREDERICK and MADAME R. (*shocked. CATERER politely surprised but silent*) What! (*FREDERICK putting up hat and cane. MADAME R. writing front R.*)

RATINOIS. I invited Uncle Robert! The earrings made me think of him!

MADAME R. *Him?* It's impossible!

FREDERICK. Why?

MADAME R. Why we couldn't have him sit down at the same table with the Malingears. (*they all crowd together jabbering—c.*)

FREDERICK. "Why not?"

MME. R. "Of course not."

RATINOIS. "It would never do."

CATERER. I embarrass them! (*returns to contemplating picture*)

FREDERICK. But he is my uncle! And a fine man!

RATINOIS. Yes, but he is not of our class of society. Anyway, he has a certain style of eating!—He puts his knife in his mouth!

MADAME R. And he serves himself from the dish with his fork! (*leaving* FREDERICK C.)

RATINOIS. And he drinks wine in his bouillon. That may be good for the stomach but it's awful to look at!

FREDERICK. That's not a reason. (C. MME. *returns to* FREDERICK *soothingly during sarcastic speech of* RATINOIS)

RATINOIS. Now, look here! (C.) We are not going to spoil the looks of this fine dinner we are stinting ourselves to give by having him here. (*pauses in this speech and gestures*) What do you suppose Uncle Robert would do if he got up against Rhenish carp from Chambourd! (*turns*) With truffles! It would look like a dish of cabbage! Do you want us to have cabbage?

MADAME R. We'll have him to-morrow instead. (*turns back and goes to her, writing.* FREDERICK *to piano*)

RATINOIS. To eat the leavings. *That's all right.* Let us continue—after the carp? (*looking for the caterer*) Where is he now? (*calling loudly*) Hey! Monsieur!—he's always going off!

CATERER. (*returning*) Pardon me. (C.)

RATINOIS. After the carp? (R.)

CATERER. The entree: fillet of beef broiled with fresh peas—

RATINOIS. With truffles?

(FREDERICK *is drifting toward piano, showing anger.*)

CATERER. If you want them.

RATINOIS. Certainly!

CATERER. The roast! Chinese golden pheasant. (*sarcastically*) With truffles!

RATINOIS. Fine! (*to FREDERICK U. R.*) Can you imagine uncle Robert in the face of a Chinese golden pheasant? He certainly would be flabbergasted. (*FREDERICK plays at piano*)

CATERER. For a side dish, I should suggest truffles a la Lucullus—disguised—but you already have very many truffles. (*front L.*)

RATINOIS. No difference! No difference!

MADAME R. Serve the truffles a la Lucullus—Ratinois! Ah! (*sitting U. R.*) I dined once at a house where they changed the knives and forks with each course.

CATERER. That's done everywhere now.

MADAME R. But I only have two doz. knives and two doz. forks—and I think one or two of the forks are lost.

RATINOIS. Well, then you needn't change mine.

FREDERICK. Nor mine! (*hits high note then higher then higher note*)

MADAME R. Nor mine!

CATERER. We will wash them as we proceed.

RATINOIS. That's a good idea! Now, how about the dessert? (*leaning forward awkwardly*)

CATERER. For a centerpiece, I should propose a structure of pastry.

RATINOIS. Something very high!

CATERER. It is a Nankin tower, built of pineapples and on top of a cake, and the tower surmounted by a Chinaman made of spun sugar.

MADAME R. Ah, that would be fine! (*rubs hands and sits back*)

RATINOIS. What do you sell those for?

CATERER. Sixty four francs.

RATINOIS. Ah, sugar things! I'm up on them,—since I used to be a—

MADAME R. (*quickly*) Very well, we'll see.—We will think it over.

CATERER. It will be ready whenever you wish it. Besides this, there will be an ice of course.—And which brand of champagne do you prefer “Moet” or “The Widows?”

MADAME R. “The Widow’s?”

RATINOIS. What widow’s?

CATERER. The widow Cliquot. It’s the very best.

RATINOIS. And what do you sell *that* for?

CATERER. Twelve francs. The “Moet” is only six.

RATINOIS. Very well. We’ll see—we’ll think it over.

MADAME R. Have dinner at six, sharp.

(MADAME R. *counting up, and planning* R.)

CATERER. Rest easy, Madame. (*starts to leave*)

RATINIOS. (*calling him back*) Ho! Monsieur Caterer.

CATERER. Monsieur?

RATINOIS. There’s another important dish whose name I’ve forgotten. It comes at the very last.—It’s warm water with peppermint in it that you drink.—

CATERER. Those are Finger bowls.

FREDERICK. You don’t drink them! (*to audience, defiantly*)

RATINOIS. (*astonished*) What! I drink them!

CATERER. (*leaving, aside*) Well, these *are* common people. (*disappears U. L. into study*)

RATINOIS. Well, I guess we’re going to have a nice little dinner! People will talk about it!—but I *drink* them. (*more defiantly to audience, crossing L.*)

MADAME R. We’ve forgotten the most important thing of the whole business!

RATINOIS. What’s that?

MADAME R. (c.) The Malingears have a footman. We’ve simply got to have somebody in a livery.

RATINOIS. That’s true.

FREDERICK. What for?

RATINOIS. We've got to do things right.

MADAME R. (*aside*) The people on the first floor have gone away and left their servants in charge.—If I (*rises*) could—(*aloud*) come, Frederick, I need you. I have some things I want you to do. (*picks him up*)

FREDERICK. All right, mother. (*they both leave L.*)

RATINOIS. (*aloud*) A Livery! We only have Josephine—we couldn't put *her* in one! (L.)

ROBERT. (*entering R.*) Here I am!

RATINOIS. (*surprised*) Uncle Robert!

ROBERT. I'm ahead of time, but I've brought an appetite.

RATINOIS. (*aside—ironically*) A lucky chance!—I must find a way to dis-invite him without getting him sore.

ROBERT. On the way, I stopped at Lesage's and bought a pie.—I left it with Josephine.

RATINOIS. Ah! good Uncle Robert.

ROBERT. The Rubber plant will come, in a little while.

RATINOIS. Oh, goodness! It just occurs to me—

ROBERT. What?

RATINOIS. Tell me frankly, I invited you to dinner, didn't I?

ROBERT. Certainly.

RATINOIS. I was sure of it.

ROBERT. Well?

RATINOIS. It's impossible! We are dining out tonight. My wife just reminded me of it.

ROBERT. Ah! that's annoying!

RATINOIS. It's at the Blanchard's. Can't get out of it. They have received some game from a friend in the country.

ROBERT. I understand.

RATINOIS. Then you're not angry?

ROBERT. Of course not! And that pie?

RATINOIS. We'll eat it to-morrow. We are counting on you.

ROBERT. All right. Good-bye. Have a good time.

RATINOIS. Till to-morrow.

ROBERT. (*coming back*) I have an idea! I have something I want to say to Blanchard. I'll drop in and take a cup of coffee with you.

RATINOIS. (*aside*) Oh! the devil!

ROBERT. Till this evening! (*exit R.*)

RATINOIS. This is a fine fix! He won't find us at Blanchard's and then won't there be a row!

FREDERICK. (*entering with books and stereoscope U. L.*) Here's what I bought.

RATINOIS. What did you get?

FREDERICK. This is a photograph album,—mother said to put it out on the table where it's sure to be seen.—They'll think we know these people.

RATINOIS. That's a good idea! (*turning over the leaves*) The President, Jack Johnson, Roosevelt, Andrew Carnegie, Edmund Rostrand, Paderewski.

FREDERICK. (*showing him a small box*) This is for you.

RATINOIS. What is it? A chain?

FREDERICK. Yes, a watch-chain.

RATINOIS. Gee—blamed if it's not bigger than Malingear's! (*attaches it to watch*) Magnificent! It will have a superb effect!

FREDERICK. It's only an imitation, but you don't need to say that.

RATINOIS. (*indignantly*) Imitation! (*after reflecting*) After all when imitations seem to be the real thing—they are no longer imitations! (*a tall servant in livery enters L. with two lighted lamps—to FREDERICK*) Who is that fellow? Do you know him?

FREDERICK. No!

RATINOIS. (*to the servant who puts lamp on mantel piece*) My friend, where are you from?

SERVANT. I'm the servant of the people on the first floor.

RATINOIS. Ah. Very well. (*to FREDERICK*) She's commanded him! He is superb, though. (*looking admiringly at the servant who leaves*) But not so tall as Malingear's. (*a noise of a carriage without*)

FREDERICK. (*running to the window*) A carriage! It's them!

RATINOIS. And my wife isn't here! (*calling L. up-stairs*) Constance! Constance!

(*The door at R. opens and a little negro in livery enters—announces.*)

THE NEGRO. Monsieur—madame and mademoiselle Malingear.

RATINOIS. (*aside*) A negro! Well, I'm blamed! How these women can pull the strings and get anything they want beats me! (*going to meet the MALINGEARS*) Madame, Mademoiselle.

FREDERICK. (*bowing*) Mademoiselle Emmeline. (*leads her U. S. She looks timidly toward mother*)

MADAME M. (*low to husband*) They have a negro! Have you noticed?

MALINGEAR. Yes! These refiners can afford anything!

(*RATINOIS crosses front L. still shaking his head over the negro—glances up the stairs as if about to call his wife, then turns suddenly.*)

RATINOIS. (*to MADAME M.*) Oh, madame! (*shaking head sorrowfully*) I'm sorry!

MADAME M. What's the matter?

RATINOIS. We agreed not to dress up—and you

have made yourself so ravishingly beautiful in that dress that our little dinner will seem entirely unworthy!

MADAME M. Oh, all this is very simple.

(The men look on with hands upraised. The women eye each other like cats.)

RATINOIS. My wife isn't dressing up for this and I'm sure she will scold you! Here she is! *(seeing the toilet of his wife, composed of different colors and very conspicuous)* Holy cats! A rainbow!

MADAME R. *(coming down the stairs)* Dear, good madame! How sweet you look! *(fan business)*

MADAME M. (c.) We were so eager to be with you. *(aside)* What a combination of colors! It's criminal! *(aloud)* What a pretty dress!

MADAME R. It doesn't begin to compare with yours! *(aside)* A dress with gold all over it! What poor taste!

FREDERIC. *(who has been trying to coax EMMELINE out)* Mother, shall we go into the drawing-room?

MADAME R. Certainly. *(FREDERICK rushes out eagerly with EMMELINE—others follow slowly)*

RATINOIS. More chicken tracks. They——

MALINGEAR. *(low)* Yes.

MADAME R. *(low to husband)* Keep Monsieur Ratinois here and speak to him about the dowry!

RATINOIS. *(low)* Be tranquil.

MADAME R. *(indicating door of drawing room)* Madame! *(they leave R. Thinking they are following FREDERICK and EMMELINE)*

RATINOIS. (L. *aside*) Now we are alone. It's not easy to get at this affair!

MALINGEAR. (R. *aside*) How the deuce can I get started!

RATINOIS. (c. *approaching him*) My dear Mal-

ingear, it certainly is kind of you to have accepted our little dinner!

MALINGEAR. (c. *They lean over the table*) You put it so nicely!

RATINOIS. Oh, it's because I like you!

MALINGEAR. Same here, that's why we came.

RATINOIS. (*shaking his hand*) Good Malingear!

MALINGEAR. (*the same*) Excellent Ratinois!

(*They pose.—Then R. leads M. L., and drops him L. C.*)

RATINOIS. By the way, don't you think we settled that question of dowry rather suddenly? (*they sit down at table at L.*)

(*Turning suddenly and pointing his finger. He is near piano U. L.*)

MALINGEAR. Yes—very suddenly. (*he crosses quickly to table L.*) You spoke of a hundred thousand francs. (*he sits*)

RATINOIS. That's just a figure which I mentioned—off-hand—but that needn't bind you.

MALINGEAR. I thought the same—a great refiner—

RATINOIS. (*he sits*) And you, a famous doctor—who receives 4,000 francs at a single crack.

MALINGEAR. Who? Me?

RATINOIS. I counted them!—Wait, I am disposed to make a sacrifice—I will give the silverware!

MALINGEAR. (*astonished*) Ah!

RATINOIS. And you?

MALINGEAR. Me? I offer a set of dishes.

RATINOIS. (*astonished*) Ah! (*crosses aside*) I must make him toe the mark! (*aloud*) Malingear, we must consider the increased cost of living! (*sits*)

MALINGEAR. That's right. And a person who used to get along comfortably on 10,000 francs' income finds himself pretty hard pressed nowadays.

RATINOIS. Yes—and we don't want our children to be hard pressed for money, do we?

MALINGEAR. Certainly not!

RATINOIS. And can you see your daughter, your dear daughter, obliged to count up to see whether she can afford a decent dress or some cashmere thing?

MALINGEAR. And your son, your only son, reduced to taking any little one-horse case that should come along?

RATINOIS. Oh! don't speak of my son. A man can always manage to get along somehow. But she—your child!—who is your joy, your darling—for you love your daughter very much, don't you?

MALINGEAR. Almost as much as you love Frederick.

RATINOIS. Yes—only don't let's speak of Frederick—Talk about Emmeline—She must lead a life of silk and gold!

MALINGEAR. Ah! Thanks for her!

RATINOIS. From which I conclude that the dowry must be increased.

MALINGEAR. That's exactly what I think.

RATINOIS. Well, then fix it yourself. I accept the advance.

MALINGEAR. I think that a hundred and fifty thousand francs—

RATINOIS. Ah! Malingear! That isn't enough!

MALINGEAR. Then let's make it 200,000.

RATINOIS. (*rising*) All right. I will give the silverware and you 200,000—(*walks up*)

MALINGEAR. (*rising*) What! It's you who are to give them! (*comes down L.*)

RATINOIS. Me? Certainly not!

MALINGEAR. Why me and not you? (*advancing*)

RATINOIS. Because a man in your position—who has a carriage, a box at the opera and a footman!—

MALINGEAR. But you have a carriage too, and a

box at the opera—and a negro—who costs more.
(*advancing*)

RATINOIS. Me! Me! It's not the same thing!

MALINGEAR. Certainly, you're not pretending to a luxury above your position?

RATINOIS. Not at all! My position is superb—My position is magnificent. (*advancing*)

MALINGEAR. Well then in all justice we must each give the same amount—each 200,000 francs. (*they turn—MALINGEAR L. RATINOIS R.—aside*) I have 22,000 francs' income—There are only 12,000 left.

RATINOIS. (*aside*) Himmel! I have 17,000 francs' income—that only leaves me seven! It's impossible. (*turns abruptly at end of R. speech*)

MALINGEAR. You hesitate?—For a miserable question of money?

RATINOIS. I don't hesitate. A hundred thousand francs more or less? What difference does that make to me? I offer 300,000! That's how *I* hesitate! (*advances*)

MALINGEAR. (*astonished*) What! 300,000 francs?

RATINOIS. (*aside*) I'll raise him till he backs out and then I'll slip out too. (*aloud*) You back out?

MALINGEAR. Not at all! I was thinking. I propose 400,000.

RATINOIS. It's not enough. 500,000.

MALINGEAR. It's not enough. 600,000.

RATINOIS. It's not enough.

ROBERT. (*enters with a Rubber plant*) What! 600,000 francs!

RATINOIS. (*aside*) Uncle Robert! I was just going to say a million!—I would have risked it! (*aloud—introducing him*) Monsieur Malingear, the—ah! the future father-in-law.

(*Slow with much business.*)

ROBERT. Yes—we have had some business together.

RATINOIS. You what?

ROBERT. (c.) O—just some little formalities.

MALINGEAR. We were speaking of the dowry.

ROBERT. (*setting down the Rubber plant c.*) What! And you are going to give 600,000 francs? (*bowing to him*) Ah! Monsieur! Let me congratulate you!

MALINGEAR. But, Monsieur Ratinois was going to give just as much!

ROBERT. What! you!

RATINOIS. (*embarrassed*) Naturally. (U. R.)

ROBERT. (*to RATINOIS U. R.*) My compliments! I didn't know you had that much altogether!

RATINOIS. That much! Of course I have that much! But when one finds himself up against a millionaire who makes demands——

MALINGEAR. Ah, pardon me, monsieur, I didn't demand—on the contrary, it was you who——

RATINOIS. Me? I proposed the silverware and then you started off on——

MALINGEAR. What! I started off?—I said I'd give a set of dishes and you replied coldly "Ah!" yes "Ah."

(*They speak coldly and walk apart.*)

RATINOIS. I replied Ah! Haven't I a right to? But not coldly.

MALINGEAR. Ah, pardon me, monsieur.

RATINOIS. (*coldly*) Pardon yourself.

ROBERT. Haven't you stopped scrapping yet?

(*Warmly and get together.*)

RATINOIS. Of course we've stopped—if you look at it that way—but I didn't reply coldly. (c. *positively*)

MALINGEAR. (*pugnaciously c.*) I beg your pardon!

RATINOIS. No, monsieur.

(ROBERT *raises hands helplessly and crosses up.*)

MALINGEAR. What, monsieur!

RATINOIS. Do you want me to tell you what I think you're trying to do?

MALINGEAR. You will do me the kindness.

RATINOIS. You're sneaking for a way to break this marriage!

MALINGEAR. What! sneaking!

RATINOIS. Sneaking! I don't take it back! But I who am an honest man——

MALINGEAR. No more than I!

RATINOIS. It's possible, but as I am not trying to sneak out, I say in short——

BOTH. (*they separate L. and R.*) Let's break!

ROBERT. (C.) Come! Don't get excited!

RATINOIS. Ba-a-ah! I'm not excited. (*aside with satisfaction*) It's all right! He's backed out!

MALINGEAR. (*aside with satisfaction*) It's all off now! He's backed out! (*sits*)

ROBERT. What! broken off? (*sadly to RATINOIS*) It's fortunate that your son doesn't love Mlle. Malingear isn't it?

RATINOIS. Doesn't love her!—Doesn't love her! Well, rather!—He's crazy about her. But what's that got to do with it?

ROBERT. (*to MALINGEAR*) And that Mlle. Emeline was only indifferently taken with Frederick?

MALINGEAR. Indifferently! (*sarcastically*) Well, yes, she does seem to like him a little,—but——

ROBERT. (*supplying his words*) But what's that got to do with it? Isn't that it?

MALINGEAR. Pardon me. I didn't say that——

ROBERT. (*bursting forth*) No, I won't pardon you! You are both of you vain as peacocks, proud as——

MALINGEAR. Monsieur!

RATINOIS. Uncle Robert!

ROBERT. I've held myself in for a quarter of an hour and I can't do it any longer!—You've both of you been trying for the last two weeks to dazzle each other! to deceive each other! to lie to each other——

BOTH. What!

ROBERT. Yes to lie to each other by promising dowries you couldn't begin to pay! Isn't it true? You've been parading around in feathers which aren't your own!

RATINOIS. But——

ROBERT. No "buts" to it! I've been talking with the servants. When I want to know anything, I ask the servants. That's *my* system.

RATINOIS. What could they tell you?

ROBERT. First, I met a negro in the kitchen—a negro hanging around the kitchen! It's not proper! And then your royal highness has rented a carriage by the month and taken a box at the opera! Ratinois at the opera! Piff!

RATINOIS. But it seems to me that a theatre——

ROBERT. Which bores you!

RATINOIS. (*indignantly*) Well!—what's that got to do with it?

ROBERT. I say it bores you!—and your wife too! —(*indicating MALINGEAR*) and Monsieur too!

RATINOIS. Oh! Well! Yes! I guess it's true! (*rises lamely and starts up*)

MALINGEAR. I swear to you that Italian opera— (*he is about to condemn it in the strongest terms*)

ROBERT. Then what do you rent boxes for?

MALINGEAR. It's my wife——

RATINOIS. It's the women——

ROBERT. (C. *Then U. R.*) You do it to make a stir, to be high-toned! sporty! To-day that's the fashion; you throw dust in each other's eyes, you "do

the peacock"—you swell—like balloons, and when you are all puffed up with vanity—rather than admit it—rather than say: "We are two good simple families—of the common people," you prefer to sacrifice the future, the happiness of your children—they love each other—but you say—"What's that got to do with it?" And these are fathers!—Good-night! (*starts to leave*)

RATINOIS. (*holding him back*) Good uncle Robert, wait! (*much moved*) Uncle Robert,—You haven't wit, you haven't education, (*hitting self over heart*) but you've got this!

MALINGEAR. Oh! Yes!

(ROBERT *puts his hat down again.*)

RATINOIS. (*very much moved*) You have moved me very much,—you have upset me. You have shown me I'm a father who ought to be kicked out of the window. (*indicating MALINGEAR*) *And you too!* (*change of tone*) But it isn't my fault,—It's my wife's! She'll have to answer for it to me! (*softening*) And I swear to you if ever—if ever on any account you see me faltering on the way which—that—on the way—that—which—(*suddenly*) Anyhow won't you dine with us? (U. R.)

(*Enter MADAMES, RATINOIS and MALINGEAR, MME. EMMELINE and FREDERICK L.*)

RATINOIS. ROBERT. MME. MALINGEAR.
MALINGEAR. MME. RATINOIS
EMMELINE. FREDERICK.

MADAME R. (*facing ROBERT and MALINGEAR, not seeing her husband U. R.*) Well, gentlemen, are you going to leave us alone forever? (EMMELINE and FREDERICK *cross quickly to stairs*)

RATINOIS. Ah, here's my wife. Woman! come here!

MALINGEAR. (*severely to wife*) Woman! come here!

(*They advance a few steps each toward husbands.*)

MADAME R. What!

MADAME M. What's the matter?

RATINOIS. (*to wife*) Wicked mother! All puffed up with vanity! But it's the fashion now!

MALINGEAR. (*to his wife*) You "do the peacock." (*imitating* UNCLE ROBERT)

RATINOIS. You swell up like balloons! (*RATINOIS takes position front R. and imitates* UNCLE ROBERT)

MALINGEAR. You don't care a straw for sacrificing the future, the happiness of your children!

RATINOIS. For they do love each other—but you say—"What's that got to do with it?"—And these are mothers!—Good-night! (*puts on* ROBERT'S *hat, which is too large*)

MADAME M. What's got into you? (*crosses to front L. extreme, taking her husband*)

MADAME R. Explain to me—(*catching* RATINOIS *as he is about to reach door up*)

RATINOIS. (*with vehemence*) Go to your knitting—for you knit my socks yourself (*stalks across in front of wife and takes position front R.*)

MALINGEAR (*the same*) And my wife, too, Monsieur! (*leaves wife front L. and crosses C.*)

MADAME R. What! You? Madame? (U. R.)

RATINOIS. Yes! Down with these pretenses! down with the masks! I'm Ratinois,—former confectioner—not a refiner!

MALINGEAR and MADAME M. What? (*MALINGEAR recoils from him, joining wife L.*)

MADAME R. But, my dear—(*advancing half way toward him*)

RATINOIS. Leave me alone. (*indicating wife*) She used to be cashier of "the Sign of the Silver

Pestle." We give a hundred thousand francs' dowry to our son. (c)

(RATINOIS *poses c. then drops back r.*)

MALINGEAR. In my turn! (c.) Malingear, a doctor without practice!

MADAME R. What!

RATINOIS. But, the duchess!

MALINGEAR. I only had one patient this last year.—a coachman—free of charge! We give a hundred thousand francs to our daughter! (*drops back L.*)

ROBERT. (c.) In my turn! Robert, wood merchant, come to Paris with 12 cents in my pocket. I give a hundred thousand francs' dowry to my nephew.

FREDERICK. (*advancing*) Ah, Uncle Robert!

EMMELINE. Good Uncle Robert!

RATINOIS. (*striking himself over the heart*) He has this!

(FREDRICK *returns immediately to stairs. They have the following positions:*)

MADAME RATINOIS

UNCLE ROBERT

MONSIEUR RATINOIS

CATERER.

FREDERICK

EMMELINE

M. & MME. MALINGEAR

(*Bell rings and immediately CATERER enters U. L.*)

CATERER. Dinner is served!

ROBERT. (*starting out*) Come! To Dinner!

RATINOIS. One moment!

ALL. What!

RATINOIS. I have ordered a crazy dinner—I'm ashamed of it. Six courses of truffles!

ALL. (*reproachingly*) Oh, Ratinois!

MALINGEAR. And you the father of a family!

RATINOIS. Maybe I could get Monsieur Chevet to take them back?

ALL. Oh no! CATERER *turns away with a gesture of refusal*)

ROBERT. I'm opposed to that.

(JOSEPHINE *enters, carrying the pie* UNCLE ROBERT *brought. She crosses from the right to a position down center and stands with the pie raised aloft.*)

JOSEPHINE. And here's the pie-eye!

RATINOIS. Then, let's eat it—It shall be our punishment. Shall we dine? (JOSEPHINE *puts pie on table c. and goes L.*)

(ALL *start toward dining room and begin chattering at once. See cues below. CATERER comes forward along left side making eyes at JOSEPHINE. JOSEPHINE turns toward dining room. CATERER gets pie and follows. Two serving maids enter U. L. and stand one on each side of door. MALINGEAR turns and shakes finger at EMMELINE on stairs. Then calls his wife's attention to her daughter. FREDERICK and EMMELINE come forward in an argument, EMMELINE leading the way. They follow after the CATERER and JOSEPHINE. RATINOIS crosses to his wife, then returns down c. and bows deeply across stage to the MALINGEARS. MALINGEAR leaves his wife and crosses to MADAME RATINOIS. RATINOIS crosses to MADAME MALINGEAR.*

(*The chatter will be effected by using following lines, repeating them over and over.*)

CATERER. (*to JOSEPHINE*) Ahem!

JOSEPHINE. O, you men!

MALINGEAR. (*to wife*) Our daughter!

MADAME MALINGEAR. She's all right.

FREDERICK. (*to EMMELINE*) But, it was your footprint!

EMMELINE. No! no!

RATINOIS. (*to wife*) Be sure to do things right!

MME. RATINOIS. You!

RATINOIS. (*crossing c. and bowing*) Madame! Monsieur!

MALINGEAR. (*crossing to MME. RATINOIS and laughing at M. RATINOIS*) He thought I would never consent!

MME. RATINOIS. Ha! ha! Naughty Doctor! (*imitating mock letter from the Duchess*) Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

MME. MALINGEAR. (*to RATINOIS imitating his speech*) The honor will honor our honorable family—Ha! ha! ha!

(*ALL the guests chattering at once, repeat the above lines over and over and begin to go off. They do not start off immediately. When the first ones are near dining room door and the others are beginning to be paired off, drop quick curtain.*)

CURTAIN.



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