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Goldoni.

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GOLDONI.

1707—1792.

THE life of Goldoni, written by himself, is, as well as his comedies, a school, not of crabbed philosophy, but of Italian manners, in their gayest, lightest guise. At a time when it is hoped that a change is taking place in the system of society in that country, resulting in a great degree from the concourse of English, it is interesting to observe what they were anterior to the French revolution, and to remark the state of the Italians before they awoke to the sense of their oppression, or, rather, while oppression was in exercise only of the first of its effects — the demoralisation of its victim, before the second stage of its influence, that of producing a noble and impatient disdain of servitude.

Carlo Goldoni was born at Venice, in the year 1707, in a large and good house, situated between the bridge of Nomboli and that of Donna Onesta. The Venetians, who, when on land, spend their lives in running up and down the bridges that cross the canals, make them the chief land-marks of their directions. The family of Goldoni came originally from Modena. His grandfather, while studying at Parma, formed an intimacy with two Venetian nobles, who persuaded him to accompany them to Venice; and the death of his father rendering him soon after independent, he established himself in the native city of his friends. He had an employment under government, and was sufficiently rich, but not at all economical. He loved the drama; comedies were played in his own house; the most celebrated actors and singers were at his orders; and he was for ever surrounded by a concourse of theatrical people. His son had married a lady of the

Salvioni family, and resided with his father. Carlo was born in the midst of all the bustle and hilarity attendant on a predilection for actors and acting: his first pleasures were derived from plays; his first recollections were of histrionic gaiety; and his future life retained the colouring imparted by the amusements of his early years.

He was the delight of the family. His mother devoted herself to his education, and his father to his amusement. He made a puppet theatre for him, and, with two or three friends, drew the cords and acted plays to the boy's infinite delight. But a change soon came over this holiday life. His grandfather died, in 1712, from the effects of a cold, caught at an assembly. His extravagance had dissipated his fortune; and, from abundance and luxury, the family fell into the narrowest circumstances. The prospects of the father of Goldoni were dark. He had no employment and no profession, and his inherited property was all sold or mortgaged. In the midst of this distress, his wife gave birth to a son: this added to the solicitude of the father; but, unwilling to be the prey of useless gnawing cares, he set out on a visit to Rome, for the sake of diverting his thoughts. His wife remained at home with her sister, and two sons. The second, never a favourite, was put out to nurse; and she devoted herself to Carlo. He was gentle, obedient, and quiet. At the age of four he could read and write and say his catechism; on which they gave him a tutor. He grew to love books, and made progress in grammar, geography, and arithmetic; but the old instinct survived, and plays were his favourite reading. There were a good many in his father's library: he pored over them at his leisure hours, copied the passages that pleased him most; and, incited by a noble hardihood, at the age of eight, wrote a comedy. Some laughed at it; his mother scolded and kissed him at the same time; while others insisted that it was too clever to have been written by a child of his age, and that his tutor must have helped him.

Meanwhile his father, instead of returning after a short visit, remained four years at Rome. He had a rich friend there, who received him cordially, lodged him in his own house, and introduced him to Lancisi, physician and private attendant to Clement XI. He attached himself warmly to Goldoni, who was clever and agreeable, and sought to advance himself. Lancisi advised him to study medicine. The advice was taken. After attending lectures and hospitals for four years at Rome, he took his doctor's degree; and his patron sent him to Perugia to exercise his profession. He became in vogue in this town: if he were not the best physician in the world, he was an agreeable man, and quickly gained the esteem and friendship of the first families. Thus fortunately situated, he resolved to have his son with him. He does not appear to have thought of inviting his wife also; and the mother and child were separated, to the deep grief of the former. Carlo quitted Venice for the first time, in a felucca. He disembarked at the mouth of the Marecchia, and it was proposed that he should continue his journey on horseback. Carlo had never seen a horse except at a distance: he was frightened when placed on the saddle, confused when told to hold reins and whip; but, as the novelty wore off, he made acquaintance with this new and strange animal, and fed him with his own hands.

On arriving at Perugia he was placed at school. His first trial by the masters, for the purpose of judging what progress he had made in Latin, was infelicitous; he became the ridicule of his companions; his masters conceived a slight opinion of his abilities; his father was in despair, and Carlo fell ill from mortification. The holidays drew near, when it was usual for the scholars to present a Latin composition, as a specimen of their powers, on which their advancement to a higher class was determined upon. Carlo had no hope of any such promotion. The day came: the master gave out the theme; the pupils wrote. The boy summoned all his powers; he thought of his honour, his father, his

mother ; he saw his companions look at him and laugh ; rage and shame animated him to redoubled exertions ; he felt his memory clear—his thoughts free : he finished, sealed, and delivered his paper before any of his comrades. Eight days after, the school was assembled—the decision announced : Goldoni had the first place—his translation was without a fault. He now received compliments on all sides, and his father was desirous of rewarding him. He was aware of his love for theatricals, and shared it. He assembled a company of young actors in his own house, and erected a theatre. A play was got up, in which Goldoni took the part of *prima donna*, and was much applauded ; but his father told him that, though not devoid of talent, he would never make a good actor, and after experience proved the justice of his decision.

The signora Goldoni bore her husband's absence very philosophically ; but she could not consent to continue separated from her son : she entreated her husband to return ; and, on his refusal, removed herself to Perugia. But, accustomed to the soft air of Venice, the climate of that city, placed on the summit of a hill, and surrounded by mountains, disagreed with her : other circumstances tended to disgust her husband with Perugia ; and, as soon as Carlo had finished his course of education at the school, they resolved to return to Venice. Passing through Rimini in their way, they were received kindly by a friend, who persuaded them to leave Carlo for the sake of his pursuing his studies under a celebrated professor. His parents embarked for Chiozza. Chiozza is a town twenty-five miles from Venice, built, like that city, upon piles in the midst of the sea ; it contains 40,000 inhabitants ; the population were divided between rich and poor ; the rich wore a wig and a cloak ; the poor, a cap and a capote. These last, who were fishermen and sailors, while their wives fabricated lace, had often more money than many individuals of the class named rich. The signora Goldoni took a liking to this place ; and her husband was averse to return to Venice till

his circumstances should have become more easy. To further this end, he was obliged to make a journey to Modena: he proposed to his wife to establish herself at Chiozza till his return; and she consented.

Carlo, meanwhile, remained at Rimini. He did not like his master, who, bigotted to rules and systems, wearied him to death: he escaped from him, to read Plautus, Terence, Aristophanes, and the fragments of Menander; and soon the incarnate spirit of drama arriving at Rimini, he was wholly turned from his abstruser studies. A company of actors made their appearance, and Goldoni became familiar with them: he went behind the scenes; joined in their parties of pleasure; and they, being all Venetians, were happy to find a countryman. One Friday it was announced that they were leaving Rimini, and that a boat was engaged to carry them to Chiozza. "To Chiozza!" said Carlo, "My mother is at Chiozza!"—"Come with us, then," cried the director. "Yes, come with us," cried the whole company, "come in our boat; you will have a pleasant passage; it will cost you nothing: we shall laugh, dance, and sing, and be as happy as the day is long." A boy of fourteen could scarcely resist so strong a temptation. His master refused leave, and the friends of his family interfered with objections. There was but one resource: Carlo put two shirts in his pocket, and hurried to hide himself in the boat. It made sail, and he was on his way to Chiozza. The light-hearted rambling life of strolling comedians was alluring beyond measure to a mirthful lad, who loved plays better than any thing in the world. The company consisted of twelve, besides scene-shifters, mechanists, and prompters; there were eight men servants, and four women, two nurses, a quantity of children, dogs, cats, apes, parrots, birds, pigeons, and a lamb. The prima donna was ugly, clever, and cross; the suicidal drowning of her cat diversified the time; and, after a prosperous and merry voyage, the whole cargo, with the exception of poor puss, arrived safe at Chiozza.

The signora Goldoni received her son with a mixture of gladness and scolding, which evinced no violent disapprobation of his truant disposition ; but he himself began to regret it, and to reflect seriously on the consequences, when he read a letter just received from his father. Business had taken Goldoni from Modena to Pavia. The governor of Pavia was named the marchese di Goldoni-Vidoni. On hearing of the arrival of a namesake in his town, he sent for him, and invited him to dinner. The governor belonged to one of the best families of Cremona ; but he considered that Cremona and Modena were not far distant from each other, and he had the whim of finding out and assisting a poor relation : he promised to get a presentation for Carlo to a college of the university of Pavia, and the father gladly consented to accept it. He set out to seek his son with this news, and found him sooner than he expected, and was by no means pleased at a scrape which promised little for his future steadiness ; but Carlo was penitent, and Goldoni loved actors, and was acquainted with several of this very company in question : so, good easy man ! he forgave the runaway, and accompanied him to thank the companions of his voyage.

Goldoni's fame as a physician had spread to Chiozza, and he found it worth his while to establish himself, and to enter upon practice there : while waiting for the presentation for the university of Pavia, he resolved to initiate his son in the rudiments of a profession which he intended him hereafter to pursue. He did not put him to the more difficult part of the medical science ; but made him accompany him in his visits to his patients, as the easiest mode of giving him a superficial knowledge. Carlo did not like this plan, though he was forced to submit. But passive obedience of will does not conquer the mind : with all his gaiety, the youth was subject to fits of hypochondria and low spirits, and under the paternal discipline he lost his appetite, and grew thin and serious. His mother easily ex-

tracted from him the cause of his dejection, and sought to bring a remedy. She represented to her husband, that the patronage of the marchese Goldoni could be of no possible service to their son in a medical career; while, on the contrary, if they brought him up to the bar, a senator of Milan could without difficulty open to him the road of fortune. She advised his going to study under an uncle at Venice, proposing to accompany him herself, and to stay with him till his removal to Pavia. Goldoni resisted for a long time, but at last he became aware that her representations were reasonable: poor Carlo listened to the discussion with tearful eyes and a beating heart; and his indisposition vanished as soon as his father's consent was given. Four days after, he and his mother set out for Venice. They were kindly received by signor Paolo Indric, who had married his father's sister; and Carlo found his home with him perfectly delightful. The study of law was infinitely to be preferred to his father's medical initiation at Chiozza; he fulfilled his duties with exactitude, and his uncle was satisfied with him.

Meanwhile he enjoyed his residence at Venice. "Oh! la triste ville que Vénice!" Madame de Genlis exclaimed, on entering the sea-paved city. Scarcely any but a French person would echo her exclamation; and *we*, who people the palaces and bridges with the shades of Othello, Desdemona, Pierre, and Belvidera, find a peculiar charm in its strange and beautiful appearance. There is something charming to the imagination in the wide-spread lagunes, in the palaces rising from the waves, the sea that flows through the streets, and the sombre-looking but luxurious gondolas: no picture, no description, can convey an idea of Venice, that is, of the impression made by its singular aspect, and the modes and machinery of daily life — dissimilar to those of every other city in the world. The young Goldoni, as a native, yet returning to it after so long an absence, was enchanted by the novelty of all he saw. His stay, however, was short; the presentation to a College at

Pavia arrived : he was forced to quit Venice ; and, after a hurried visit to Chiozza to join his father, they set out together.

1723. On arriving at Milan, several obstacles presented themselves to impede his entrance into the university, which,

16. being under clerical jurisdiction, required a number of attestations and documents, with which the travellers were wholly unprovided, and which could only be obtained at Venice. Signora Goldoni hastened thither to get them, while the father and son enjoyed themselves at Milan, hospitably entertained by their kind and noble soi-disant relation ; till, the necessary papers having arrived, they pursued their way to Pavia, and Goldoni left his son at his college.

The university of Pavia was on a more expensive and luxurious footing than is usual in Italy, and dissipation and liberty were the order of the day. The students were regarded in the town like officers in garrison : the men hated, and the women welcomed them ; while the studies principally followed up were dancing, fencing, music, and games of hazard : the latter were prohibited, and, therefore, the more sought after. Carlo's youth, gaiety, and Venetian dialect pleased generally ; and he easily suffered himself to be seduced from study to pleasure.

His success caused him to make many enemies among his fellow-students, augmented by the distinction derived from the kindness of the marchese Goldoni ; still he passed two years happily enough, returning to Chiozza during the vacations, and spending his time between unforced studies and pleasant society. But misfortune was at hand to blight his happiness. The time approached when he was to take his degree ; and this very moment was seized upon by his college enemies to ensure his disgrace. He had been admitted into the university at sixteen : the legal age was eighteen. He was a boy among men, and an easy prey. A serious quarrel arose between the inhabitants of Pavia and the students : four among the latter, who had conspired to

ruin poor Carlo, persuaded him to revenge himself and his comrades by a satire. The verses of which he was the author attacked and insulted many families: his four false friends dispersed them and betrayed him: the outcry was prodigious; and, despite every exertion made by his protectors, Goldoni was expelled. The youth repented very bitterly at once his imprudence and the easiness of his disposition. Shame and regret overwhelmed him, and the idea of his parents' reproaches filled him with terror. To escape these he meditated plans of flight, resolving to seek his fortunes at Rome. It appeared of slight import to him that he should go on foot without money or resources, so that he could fly from those who were justly offended. This idea was frustrated by the vigilance of those about him: he was sent back to his family under the especial care of the master of the boat, who never lost sight of him; and a good monk, who was a passenger with him, comforted him by his pious but kind admonitions. His mother's affection and his father's easiness of nature led them to pardon his fault, from which he had suffered severely enough. A few days after he accompanied his father to Friuli. Goldoni exercised his profession as physician at Udine, and Carlo studied the law under an eminent advocate; after a short time, the former proceeded to Gorizia, to the house of count Landieri, lieutenant-general of the army of the emperor Charles VI. The count was ill, and having heard of the skill of Goldoni, sent for him. Carlo, left behind at Udine, got into several youthful scrapes, very little to his credit: he found himself deceived and betrayed; and, fearing a dangerous termination, he hurried away, and found his father at Vispack, where count Landieri had a mansion. They remained there for some months, till the count was convalescent, hospitably entertained, and very happy. A dramatic puppet-show was got up, which exercised the theatrical talents of Carlo; and afterwards he made a tour to Laubeck, Gratz, and Trieste, with the count's secretary. On his

return to Vispack, he and his father set off on their journey home, the latter having happily effected the cure of his patient, who rewarded him handsomely for his trouble. "We arrived at Chiozza," said Goldoni, "and were received as a fond mother receives a son, and a wife a beloved husband, after a long absence. I was delighted to see again a virtuous mother who was tenderly attached to me. After having been deceived and betrayed, I needed the consolation of being loved. This, indeed, was another species of attachment, but, until I felt a virtuous and engrossing passion, my mother's love formed my greatest happiness." Soon after his arrival at Chiozza, his father received a letter from a cousin at Modena, to inform him that the duke of that state had revived an ancient decree, which forbade the possessor of any landed property within it, to absent himself without an express permission from the sovereign, which it was very expensive to obtain. This relation added, that his best course would be to send his son to Modena, which would satisfy the law, and he might there pursue his legal studies. The advice was followed, and the youth sent to Modena.

He went by water; and the master of the boat was a very religious man: each evening he invited the passengers to join him in prayers. When Goldoni arrived at Modena, this man, whose name was Bastia, asked him where he meant to lodge, and, learning that he had his lodgings to seek, asked him to select his house as his place of abode; and, with the assent of his cousin, who had been the cause of his journey, Goldoni agreed to the proposal. He found that the family of Bastia was equally devout with himself; father, sons, and daughters, all were given up to pious exercises. No great amusement could be derived from their society; but, as they were respectable people, and lived in concord, Goldoni was satisfied and happy under their roof. He grew as religiously inclined as themselves, while, as is often the case in youth, this sentiment was accompanied by feelings of despondency and even terror. One day he hap-

pened to pass through the public square while an unfortunate churchman was doing public penance for his conduct towards a female penitent. The sight struck him in the most painful manner: he brought it home to his own heart; he thought of his past life, his expulsion from college, his adventures in Friuli: the world seemed beset with multiplied dangers, and there was no refuge from them, except in total retirement. He wrote to his parents to express a part of these feelings, and to declare his resolve of entering the order of Capuchin monks. His parents acted on this occasion with prudence: they were both, especially his mother, pious, but without bigotry. They wrote in answer, that he should do exactly as he pleased, but in the mean time entreated him to return to them without delay. He immediately obeyed: he was received with caresses, and no opposition was made to his project. His father proposed to take him to Venice, and he refused with that boldness which the fancy of acting in immediate obedience to God, alone inspires; but, on being told that he was to be introduced to the guardian of the Capuchins, he consented. They went to Venice, visited their relations and friends, dining with one and supping with another: he was even tricked into going to the theatre. His low spirits and ascetic vocation vanished insensibly, and he returned to Chiozza cured of every wish to shut himself up in a cloister.

It became matter of anxiety to know what to do with him. His brother, an adventurous, gallant youth, had entered the army, and was in garrison. But Carlo was nothing; the plaything of fortune, all the expense gone to on his account had been of no avail; the only resource seemed to be to obtain an employment under government; and, at the moment when it appeared impossible to succeed in so doing, one presented itself to them. The republic of Venice governed the towns under their dominion through an officer called a *podestà*, who had under him a chancellor, or criminal judge, who was assisted in his duties by a vice-chancellor, or, as he was

called, a coadjutor ; and where there was much to do, this officer also had an assistant. These places were more or less lucrative, but were always desirable, since they included the privilege of dining at the governor's table, and making one of his society. The father of Goldoni was intimately acquainted with the governor of Chiozza, and with the judge, and through their means Carlo was employed to assist the coadjutor.

Goldoni was not of a noble and enterprising disposition, but he possessed great integrity, and that habit of scrupulously examining his own motives, and those of others, which makes a part of the nature of one whose bent it was to enter into and describe character. On this occasion he was earnest to do his duty, and interested to observe the variety of human action and motive, which presented themselves to his enquiry in the exercise of his office as assistant to the criminal judge. He acquitted himself to the satisfaction of his superiors ; and, when the governor of Chiozza was changed, and the chancellor was appointed to go to Feltri, the latter offered Goldoni the place of coadjutor, which was eagerly accepted.

Feltri is at a distance of 180 miles from Venice, high up among the mountains, whose snows besiege it during the winter, and block up the streets and houses. Goldoni found plenty of amusement here, for there was a company of comedians ; and he also fell in love. He assures us that this was his first passion, and a sincere one ; but the future writer of comedies had not that tenderness and passion of soul which creates a profound and engrossing attachment. He made parties of pleasure for the lovely girl, who returned his affection, and got up a tragedy for her amusement, which did not amuse her at all ; for, too bashful to act herself, with all the delicacy of love, she was pained at witnessing her lover's familiar conduct with other women. " Poor girl ! " exclaims Goldoni, with naïveté ; " she loved me tenderly and sincerely, and I loved her with all my heart ; and I may say that she was the first person for whom I felt

a sincere attachment. She was desirous of marrying me ; and would have become my wife, but for some considerations which prevented my proposing for her." These considerations were a notion he formed that her beauty was of a delicate, evanescent species, and that she would soon fade and become old, while he remained in the pride of youth. Such was the force of his first passion, that it was at once overcome by selfish foresight, and the habit, innate in him, of dissecting the materials of life, despoiling them of their sunny gloss, and handling the most frail, yet precious, among them with a roughness that iron and rock could not have resisted. This dry, analytical spirit is very apparent in his comedies : he dignifies it with the name of morality and honour ; but its root is often in coldness and tameness of feeling and fancy.

On his return from Feltri his father had accepted a medical situation at Bagnacavallo, a town of Romagna, near Ravenna. Carlo joined him ; but, after a short time, the elder Goldoni fell ill of a malignant fever, and died in the month of March, 1731, when his son was four and twenty years of age. He was sincerely lamented by his wife and son, who wept together over their loss. As soon as the funeral was over, Goldoni accompanied the widow to Venice, and established her with her sister at the house of a relation. She was most anxious to have her son resident with her, and her persuasions, and those of other friends, induced him to yield, and to enter on the profession of barrister at Venice. The profession of advocate at Venice was exceedingly honourable ; the first men of the city practised it : but there were 240 registered barristers, and few among them rose to eminence ; the rest spent their time in running after briefs. Goldoni, however, was of a sanguine disposition, and did not doubt that he should rank among the most celebrated pleaders at the bar. He calculated how much could be gained, and found that a barrister might make an income of 2000*l.* a year, — a large fortune at Venice, which at that time, before it

fell under the Austrians, whose aim is to ruin it by the imposition of a vexatious taxation, was one of the cheapest places in the world. It is true that the beginning of a forensic career is in all countries trying to the patience; and, while Goldoni indulged in castles in the air with regard to future eminence, he spent his time attending the courts without a brief, or in waiting for clients, who did not appear: still he might hope for better success than the major part of his brethren of the robe, since, during the first six months of his being at the bar, he carried on and won a cause; but his destiny concurred with the genius still unformed and dormant within him to draw him another way.

At the very moment of triumph on gaining his suit, and when he might fairly hope for an influx of clients, an incident occurred to destroy his prospects, causing him to form the resolution to quit Venice.

He had fallen in love with a lady at Venice, who, though forty years of age, was as fair and beautiful as a girl. She was rich and unmarried: the affection was mutual, and he already looked forward to their union, when the attentions of a noble awakening the ambition of the lady, she jilted him for his patrician rival. This lady had a married sister with two daughters, one deformed and the other ugly, but not without attraction; she had beautiful eyes, a laughing countenance, and graceful, fascinating manners. She had often deprived her beautiful aunt of lovers, and inspired her with jealousy. She tried to win Goldoni from her; and, on her tergiversation, vengeance induced him to make the niece an offer. Her mother entered into her plans, and the contract of marriage was drawn up and signed; but when the moment came to fulfil it, a variety of doubts presented themselves to Goldoni's mind. He was himself in debt, and several years must pass before he could hope to make an income at the bar. The mother of his promised bride was wholly unable to fulfil the conditions of the marriage contract, and he found that he should be burdened with the expense of his wife's family. He consulted his mother, and his own

sense of prudence: he had become very much in love but, in his light heart, every motive and impulse was stronger than the strongest affection: frightened at the prospect before him, he made a sudden determination; paid his debts, threw up his profession, and quitted Venice; leaving a letter for the unfortunate girl's mother, attributing to her his sudden departure, and promising to return if she would fulfil the conditions of the contract. He received no answer.

Again he was thrown on the world, and all his prospects of future subsistence were centred in a tragedy, called "*Amalassunta*," which he had written in his leisure hours. It has been mentioned how, born amidst theatricals, his early pleasures had all been derived from plays. When he first went to Pavia, he had studied the ancient drama; and, finding that Italy had no theatre, he had already conceived the idea of bestowing one on her, on a more enlarged plan, more intricate as to plot, and more diversified as to character, than those of Plautus and Terence. In the course of his youth, to get up a play was his chief pleasure; and now, with "*Amalassunta*" in his pocket, he felt sure that his fortune would be made at Milan, at the theatre of which city he intended to offer it; and, with this expectation, his happy disposition caused him easily to forget prospects, friends, love, and disappointments,—all but his mother; while the pleasure of freedom easily consoled him for the loss of his bride.

Poor and almost friendless, the first piece of good fortune that happened to him was finding at Bergamo the noble who had been governor at Chiozza when he was vice-chancellor. He presented himself at his palace, and was kindly received. The governor perceiving that he was depressed in spirits, enquired the cause; and Goldoni confessed that he was penniless: his kind protector offered him his purse and a home at his house. Goldoni contented himself with borrowing ten sequins, and, in lieu of the latter offer, asked for letters of introduction at Milan, which were instantly

given him. These served him in good stead in that capital. The Venetian resident received him kindly, asked the object of his journey, and, when Goldoni had recounted his adventure, offered to lend him money, which was declined.

"Amalassunta" was the anchor of his hope, and he lost no time in seeking the actors and directors of the theatre. He paid a visit to the first ballerina, whom he had formerly known, and offered to read his opera to her circle of actors, and musicians, and theatrical patrons. His offer was accepted: he took the manuscript from his pocket, and commenced — "Amalassunta!" The chief actor, Caffariello, began to object, in the first place, to so long and ridiculous a name. Every one joined in the laugh thus raised, except the poor author, who went on to read the list of *dramatis personæ*. New censure followed the too great number of persons introduced; and, when it was found that the opera commenced by a scene between the two principal actors, he was told that that would never do: the chief singers would never consent to begin during all the bustle of the first entrance of the audience. The criticisms multiplied as he went on, till a kind amateur, count Prata, took him by the hand, and, leading him into another room, asked him to read the opera to him alone. Poor Goldoni consented, and the whole piece was gone through. When finished, the count pointed out its defects, not with regard to plot and situation, but to operatic rules; how he had given airs of passion and interest to secondary personages, and curtailed the first of what they considered their just proportion. The count would have gone on to find more fault, but Goldoni begged him to take no more trouble, and took his leave. He returned, mortified and miserable, to his inn. His first impulse was to burn his unlucky opera. The waiter asked him if he would sup. "No," he replied, "no supper, only a good fire." While this was making, he looked over his poor "Amalassunta:" it appeared to him very beautiful, and worthy of a better fate: the actors were in fault, not

it. Yet, after all his pains, his hopes were fallen ; and, in a fit of desperation, he cast it on the flaming brands, glad to see it burn, and busy in collecting all the fragments, that none might escape destruction. While thus employed, he began to recollect that no disaster which had yet happened to him, had ever caused him to go to bed supperless. He recalled the waiter, ordered his repast, ate it with a good appetite, and went to bed to sleep till morning. It is no wonder that love could exercise so little power over so well-regulated an appetite!

The next morning he was obliged to reflect seriously on his desperate situation, and he paid Signor Bartolini, the Venetian resident, a visit, that he might consult with him. He asked for a private interview, and it was granted ; and then he related the occurrences of the previous evening, the impertinent criticisms of the actors, and the decisive judgment passed by count Prata, and ended by declaring that he was totally at a loss what to do. Bartolini laughed at his recital, and asked to see the opera. " The opera ? " cried Goldoni, " I have not got it ! " — " Where is it, then ? " — " I burnt it; and with it my hopes, my possessions, and my whole fortune." The minister laughed still more at this *dénouement*, and ended by offering him the situation of gentleman in his palace, with a good suite of rooms. Goldoni now found that he had gained by his loss: without doubt, as he declares himself, he was a lucky man, and it was his own fault whenever he fell into misfortune. Yet he did this so frequently, that the best part of his luck was that cheerful buoyant disposition which never allowed him to be overwhelmed by adversity, and an integrity that always kept him from any dishonourable scrape.

" Amalassunta " was burnt, but Goldoni's predilection for theatricals continued as strong as ever. There arrived at Milan a singular man, named Buonafede Vitali, who had talents and knowledge enough to practise as a regular physician, but who preferred strolling as a mountebank, under the name of the Anonymous. As a part of the paraphernalia of his trade, he had with him a com-

pany of comedians. Goldoni sought out this man, who availed himself of his protection, to obtain leave for his company to act on the Milanese theatre. There were several good actors among them, but their representations were made on the old Italian plan. Goldoni was particularly scandalised by a travestie of the story of "Belisarius," given out as a tragedy; and, to prevent the future degradation of historical names and sentiments, he promised to write a tragedy on the subject, but was interrupted by events of greater moment.

The king of Sardinia allying himself with France against the Austrians, in the war of 1733, he sent an army of 15,000 men, to which was added some French troops, to occupy Milan. That city being too wide in circuit for defence, it was forced to receive the soldiers; who immediately entered on the siege of the citadel. On this event, the Venetian resident was ordered by his government to quit Milan, and to take up his abode at Crema: he had before quarrelled with his secretary, and he took this opportunity to dismiss him, and to install Goldoni in his place. He was now fully employed, and his situation was at once honourable and lucrative; but soon after he lost the good graces of the minister, though not from any fault of his own. His brother had quitted the Venetian service, and, seeking employment, visited him at Crema. He introduced him to the governor, who gave him the situation of gentleman of his chamber, formerly occupied by Goldoni; but both were violent and irritable, and they did not agree. The resident dismissed his gentleman, and no longer regarded Goldoni with the same favour as heretofore. They had a quarrel; Goldoni asked for his dismissal, and set out for Modena, where his mother was residing.

The country through which he passed on his way was the seat of war; robbers took occasion of the unsettled state of the country, and the roads were unsafe: Goldoni was the sufferer; the little carriage in which he travelled was attacked by five men, who robbed him of his money, watch, and effects, while he escaped across

the country, glad to preserve the clothes he had on. After running a long way, he came to an avenue of trees, by which flowed a rivulet. He drank of its waters in the hollow of his hand, and then, fatigued in body, but more composed in mind, he proceeded quietly along the avenue, till he encountered some peasants, to whom he related his misfortune, and who in return told him that there were a set of outlaws who took advantage of the war to attack not only travellers, but gentlemen's seats and cottages; while a number of men of some wealth near, who had formed themselves into a company to purchase the spoils of war, became their accomplices by becoming the purchasers of the stolen goods. "Such," exclaims Goldoni, "are the miseries of war, which fall alike upon friends and enemies, and ruin the innocent!" The sun was now declining, and the peasants offered Goldoni a part of their supper, of which, notwithstanding his disaster, he partook with appetite. They then guided him to a village, and recommended him to the care of the curate, who received him hospitably. To him he related his adventures, making his manuscript tragedy of "Belisarius," then in his pocket, the principal hero of the tale. He was invited to read it. The curate, two abbés, and the servants of the house, were his audience; and they all applauded it with enthusiasm. The offers and kindness of these good simple-hearted people filled Goldoni with gratitude. Unwilling, however, to burden them with his maintenance, he hastened to take leave; the curate lent him his horse, and sent his servant with him to defray the expenses of the day's journey to Brescia.

From Brescia, Goldoni proceeded to Verona. He was in a deplorable situation; he only possessed a few sequins, lent him by an adventurer whom he met by accident at Brescia; but with "Belisarius" in his pocket, he did not fear the enmity of fortune, and "Belisarius" did not prove so false a friend as "Amalassunta." When at Verona, he went to the celebrated amphitheatre, a portion of which was arranged as a theatre, and here a

drama was about to be performed. To his infinite joy, he discovered in the principal actor a man who had formed one in the companions of the mountebank at Milan, and for whom he had promised to write "Belisarius." He instantly went behind the scenes, and was welcomed with joy. He was on the moment installed poet to the company. "Belisarius" was read, approved, and the parts distributed. In the month of September they proceeded to Venice. Goldoni was presented to the proprietor of the theatre, who received him with kindness. On the 24th of November, 1734, he being then twenty-seven years of age, "Belisarius" was acted, and met with the most complete success. All actors in Italy are strollers, and looked upon with a good deal of contempt. Goldoni might have been expected to regret the exchange he had made from the honourable profession of an advocate, for that of poet to a theatre; but his light heart and easy temper were not to be afflicted by trifles of this nature, and the talent that perpetually impelled him to take interest in theatricals, prevented him from feeling degraded by his association with the professors of the art: and their existence and all its vicissitudes bear another aspect under a sunny sky, and amidst a laughter-loving people, unspoilt by pride. Goldoni had much of the spirit of Gil Blas in his disposition, and possessed in his own person all the talent which belongs, not to the hero of that book, but its author. Several pieces, operas, and interludes of his were brought out; and in the spring he accompanied the actors to Padua and to Friuli, where, leaving them, he returned to Venice to see his mother, who had arrived there from Modena. His success as an author, and the talent he displayed, raised him in the estimation of his fellow-citizens. His relations crowded around him; and he repaid their kindness by relating his adventures to his old uncles and aunts, making those laugh, who had never laughed before. In September the actors returned to Venice, and he recommenced his labours, which were not all literary, but interspersed by those

occasioned by the jealousy of the actors, or rather of the actresses. After the winter season had passed, he consented to accompany the manager to Genoa and Florence, and was glad, without expense, to visit two of the most celebrated cities of Italy.

He was delighted with the aspect of Genoa ; and the first good fortune that happened to him, was to gain 200 crowns in the lottery ; the second, to marry a girl, " who," he tells us, " was beautiful, virtuous, and prudent, and who, after all he had suffered from the treachery of women, reconciled him to the sex."

His acquaintance began in the true Italian style : he saw her at an opposite window, and, pleased with her appearance, saluted her. She curtsied, and hastily withdrew, nor again presenting herself at the window. His curiosity was thus excited ; he made enquiries, and learnt that her father's name was Corrio ; that he was a notary, with a large family and small fortune. He contrived to make acquaintance, and within a month asked permission to marry his daughter. The affair was soon concluded : he was married in July ; and, omitting the promised visit to Florence, returned to Venice at the beginning of September.

Hitherto Goldoni's pieces had been *rifaccimenti* of old dramas. " *Griselda*," " *Don Giovanni*," and " *Rinaldo di Mont' Albano*," were melodramas or tragedies, written in the old style. But at this time, finding that the company of actors at Venice, through various changes, had become one of great excellence, he began to think the time arrived when he might enter on the reform of the Italian theatre, which he had long meditated : he commenced writing comedies of character, which are the genuine source of the dramatic merit, following the example of Moliere, who had surpassed all ancient models, and even now stands alone, as the first comic writer in the world. " Was I wrong," he asks, " in presuming to enter upon such an undertaking ? for my natural bent leading me to write comedies, excellence in the art was the proper aim of my endeavours."

The old comedy in Italy was on a singular system : there were four masks on which all the farcical incidents turned. Pantaloon, a Venetian merchant, who was the father of the heroine ; a garrulous, kind-hearted old gentleman. The doctor, a Bolognese, also an old man, whose learning was opposed to Pantaloon's simplicity : and two Bergamese servants, Brighella and Harlequin. Brighella, a clever rogue ; Harlequin, a greedy simpleton ; his many-coloured clothes symbolising the poverty that forced a patched garment. The actors who filled these respective parts seldom played any others. It required ready wit and cleverness ; for the plot only being sketched, and the scenes indicated, the dialogue was left to their own invention. Of course, no great refinement could be expected : practical tricks and broad jokes were sure to command the laughter and applause of the audience ; while, there being in the Italian character something peculiarly adapted to extempore exercises of the intellect, and a vivacity that renders them good actors, many people regarded this rude but amusing effort at drama, as something at once so national and so genuine, as rendered it preferable to the studied productions of the closet. Goldoni, on the contrary, saw farce take place of comedy, and the whole action and conduct of the piece often sacrificed to the petulance of a favourite mask ; while no real sentimental interest, nor any comic incident out of the common routine, could be introduced. He proceeded, however, slowly in the reform he meditated. At first writing only the more serious portions of his plays ; then the parts of the masks themselves, and only after some time, and at intervals, dispensing with them altogether. Nor, at the time of which we are writing, did he bring out any of his best dramas ; though those which he did produce were eminently successful.

To add to the respectability, and, as he hoped, to the emoluments of his situation, the relations of his wife obtained for him the Genoese consulship at Venice. This office, however, turned out more honourable than

lucrative: no salary attended it, and the fees did not amount to more than 100 crowns a year. To do the republic he served honour, he had taken a better house and increased his number of servants, and found himself considerably embarrassed. To add to these annoyances, his income from Modena failed him; and he came to a resolution to make a journey, with the triple object of bringing out a comedy with a part for a favourite actress at Bologna, to solicit a salary at Genoa, and to look after his possessions at Modena: the first object failed before he set out, through the sudden death of the actress, while an unexpected disaster rendered the two latter even more imperative than before. His brother, who was out of employ, introduced to him a Ragusan of agreeable and gentlemanly manners. He asserted that he was sent on the secret service of raising a regiment of 2000 men for his state. He showed his commission as colonel, offered a company to Goldoni's brother, and the office of auditor, or judge, to the author. Goldoni, always easy-tempered and credulous, though a little frightened by the danger incurred if the Venetian state should come to suspect these proceedings, was soon talked over, and, on an alleged emergency, lent the man a large sum of money. The fellow was an adventurer: he ran off with the money, and left Goldoni so disagreeably implicated by his tricks, that he judged that his only resource was to quit Venice on the instant. The Ragusan had disappeared on the 15th of September, and on the 18th of the same month Goldoni and his wife embarked for Bologna.

Their journey was full of "many accidents of flood 1741. and field." The melancholy and thoughtfulness occasioned by his disaster vanished under the influence of 34. his happy temperament; and his wife was even better skilled than he in that best philosophy which makes light of worldly misfortunes. On their arrival at Bologna, he was surrounded by the directors of theatres, who asked for comedies. He gave them three, and wrote another on the subject of the Ragusan swindler, in which he

comforted himself, and dissipated the rest of his regrets, by representing to the life all the actors in that too real drama. This task concluded, he was about to proceed to Modena, when he heard that the duke was absent at the Spanish camp at Rimini, and that his best chance of pursuing his claims was to accompany Ferramonti, a celebrated pantaloon, to the latter town ; where, in default of justice being done him by his sovereign, he might have a further resource in the company of actors to which this comedian belonged. This latter staff turned out the stoutest of the two : the duke changed the conversation when Goldoni mentioned his claims on the ducal bank ; but as long as the carnival lasted, he supplied the actors with dramas, and lived a comfortable life at Rimini. At length it became necessary to depart for Genoa. The armies which then occupied the country rendered it impossible to get horses ; and he and some other travellers agreed to embark for Pesaro. The sea was high, the passengers suffered : weary of their sea voyage, they disembarked half way, at Cattolica, and, leaving their effects to the care of servants, proceeded in a cart to Pesaro.

A new misfortune here awaited him. The Spanish army had changed quarters, and were replaced by their enemies, the Austrians. The soldiers entered Cattolica, and seized on the boat, the servants, and the effects of the unlucky passengers. All was lost : trunks and band-boxes, dresses and jewels, were the spoil of the ravagers : even the signora Goldoni was moved by so overwhelming a calamity : but some remedy was to be found. Goldoni resolved to apply in person to the Austrian officers for the restitution of his property ; and his wife, with great cheerfulness, prepared to accompany him. Pesaro is ten miles distant from Cattolica : with great difficulty they hired a carriage to take them. The vetturino was very averse to the job, but showed no signs of discontent. When three miles from Pesaro, the pair alighted to walk a short distance ; and the cunning fellow, seizing the opportunity, turned his horses' heads, and galloped

back to Pesaro, leaving them in the middle of the road. No house, no living being was to be seen; the inhabitants had fled on the arrival of the armies. Signora Goldoni began to cry. "Courage!" said the husband; "it is but six miles to Cattolica: we are young and strong; it will not do to turn back; let us walk on." The journey was not, however, an easy one; the road was crossed by several torrents, and the bridges were broken. Goldoni carried his wife over the swollen streams; but they had been obliged to make a circuit in search of a ford, and found themselves fatigued beyond measure. At length they arrived at the first advanced post of the Austrians. Goldoni presented the passport with which he came provided, and they were conducted to the commanding officer. The colonel at first took them for two wandering pedestrians; but, reading the passport, he made them sit down, and, looking kindly on them, said: "What, are you signor Goldoni?"—"Alas! Yes," replied the other. "Author of '*Belisarius*?'—" "I am indeed."—"And this lady is the signora Goldoni?"—"She is the last good I possess in the world."—"I hear you came on foot."—"Alas! sir, you heard the truth." Goldoni now explained the nature of his expedition, and the officer reassured him: he restored his luggage, and liberated his servant, and, happy in the recovery of their property, Goldoni and his wife returned to Rimini.

After spending some weeks happily in this town, he set out on a tour through Tuscany, meaning to proceed afterwards to Genoa. He visited Florence, Siena, Volterra, and then arrived at Pisa. While walking about to see the "licns" of this town, he passed by a palace, and, perceiving that a great concourse of people were entering its gates, he looked through, and saw a large court, and the company all seated in a circle round. He asked a servant in livery, who waited, what the occasion was of so large an assembly. "That assembly," replied the man, "is a colony of the Arcadians of Rome, called the Alphean colony; that is, the colony of Alpheus, a celebrated river of Greece, which flows near the ancient Pisa of

Aulis." Goldoni asked if he might make one of the audience, and the servant ushered him to a seat. After a variety of pieces of poetry had been read, he sent the servant round to ask if a stranger might be permitted to recite ; and, on being answered in the affirmative, he repeated an old sonnet of his, which, with a little alteration, seemed extemporised à propos for the occasion. The Pisans, charmed at once by the compliment and the talent of the stranger, crowded round him. He made many acquaintances, was invited to their houses, and their cordial kindness seemed at one time to change the whole tenour of his life for ever. For, invited and pressed by them, and promised protection and patronage, he became a pleader once again, and for three years practised at the Pisan bar. Briefs flowed in, clients were numerous, all were satisfied, and Goldoni, content with his lot, abjured the theatre. He was too well known to be without temptations to break his resolution : actors wrote to him for plays, and he tried to refuse, and then, yielding to the desire, he wrote pieces for them in hours borrowed from sleep, and gave his days entire to his profession. Still law and the drama contended for him, and his heart was with the latter, though he tried to turn his back on her, and to devote himself to her rival. But he lost the game. A manager, named Mendebac, arrived at Pisa with a company. Goldoni went to see the representations. They acted his comedy of " La Donna di Garbo," which he considered his best piece : he had written it for a favourite actress ; but she died, and he had never seen it acted. The wife of the manager was young, beautiful, and a good performer, and she took the part of the Donna di Garbo. It is difficult exactly to translate, in one word, this expression : as used by the Tuscans it means, the worthy woman — the woman whose conduct is upright and estimable. The heroine of the piece, however, deserves more the name of the cunning than the worthy ; and her chief merit consists in her success. Rosaura is the daughter of a lace-maker of Pavia ; and her mother's house being

frequented by many of the students and professors of the university, she acquires a good deal of the scholastic pedantry of the schools. She is seduced by a student, who deserts her ; on which, for the sake of revenge, she gets herself introduced as a servant into the house of his father, where, by pleasing every body, and adapting herself to their humours, and by great display of learning, she hopes to force her lover into a marriage, and succeeds. This is by no means one of the best of Goldoni's comedies, but it pleased on the stage ; and on this occasion the principal part being filled up by the wife of the manager, who was a clever actress, it met with the greatest approbation. Goldoni, warmed by success, enticed by the offers of the manager, and drawn on by the instinctive bent of his disposition, suddenly resolved to leave Pisa and the profession which he was pursuing with so much advantage, and returning to Venice, to enter again on the task of writing comedies for its theatre. Such a determination was sufficiently strange and imprudent ; but Goldoni's love for his art was such, that he never regretted the sacrifice he made ; on the contrary, being now wholly devoted to the drama, his enthusiasm rose, and, filled with projects for its reform, he worked with an ardour, which was rewarded by success, and which inspired his best pieces.

It is, perhaps, difficult for a person who has never visited Italy to enter with zest into all the merits of Goldoni. His perfect fidelity to nature, the ease of his dialogue, and the dramatic effect of his pieces, can only be entirely appreciated in the representation. The best of them have often a slight plot, but the interest is kept alive by the variety of the dialogue. It was only slowly, however, that he proceeded to the reform of the Italian comedy ; the substitution of natural incident for violent and forced situations, and the higher properties of comedy for the mere burlesque of farce. Obligated to bring out his plays in quick succession, they are, of course, unequal, and did not meet always with the same approbation. Unfortunately, his first season ended with a

piece which had no success. The company for which he wrote, had to contend with others, longer established in the city; and, at the end of the carnival, these circumstances combined to afford a dreary prospect for the following year. At this moment Goldoni stepped forward in the most singular manner, to the assistance of the manager. He publicly promised sixteen new comedies for the next season; and the audience, wondering and anxious, instantly engaged all the boxes. His enemies ridiculed, his friends trembled for him; but he felt secure that he could fulfil his engagement, although at the moment he had not conceived the plot or plan of one of the promised sixteen.

This certainly was a great stretch of invention and mental labour. Out of the sixteen, for he completed the whole number, there were not more than three or four mediocre ones, and some were among his best. The "Donne Puntigliose," or Punctilious Ladies, is exceedingly amusing. A Sicilian trader's wife from the country, desires to be received among the noble ladies of Palermo: she contrives to get herself invited to small parties, where there are many men, and no lady except the mistress of the house; but finds it impossible to get admitted to their ceremonious assemblies. At last, an old countess, high-born, but poor, promises to give a ball, to which she shall be invited, on certain conditions, to which the low-born lady readily consents, though they draw rather largely on her purse. But to her consternation, as soon as she enters the ball-room, every woman flies as if she brought infection with her, and leaves her alone with her hostess. The punctilious scruples of those who try to make use of her without derogating from their own dignity, and who are ever ready to receive, but never to confer favours, form a very amusing picture of manners. "Pamela" was among the most successful of these pieces. Richardson's novel of "Pamela" is a great favourite with the Italians; and Goldoni was often asked to write a drama on the subject. As the Venetian laws are severe against the children of a

mésalliance, he considers the catastrophe of the novel as not inculcating a recommendable line of conduct. He, therefore, transformed Gaffer Andrews into a Scottish lord of the rebellion of '45, and gave Pamela good blood to render her marriage with her lover a commendable act on his part. This comedy had the greatest success. "The Donna Prudente" was equally a favourite. The story is founded on a jealous husband, afraid of ridicule, who is tortured by the attentions of the cavaliere servente of his wife, yet who dares not encounter the laughter that would ensue if he forbade the service. The prudent lady exerts herself with success to get rid of her cavaliere without its being supposed that her conduct arises from her husband's jealousy. The last of his sixteen was a purely Venetian subject, written almost entirely in the Venetian dialect: it is called "I Pettegolezzi," or The Gossipings, and turns on the misfortunes brought on the heroine through the gossip of her female acquaintances. It was brought on the last day of carnival. "The concourse," Goldoni writes, "was so immense, that the price of the boxes was tripled and quadrupled; and the applause was so tumultuous, that those who passed near the theatre were uncertain whether the sound was that of mere plaudits, or of a general revolt. I remained tranquil in my box, surrounded by my friends, who cried for joy. When all was over, a crowd of people came for me, forced me to accompany them, and carried, or rather dragged, me to the Ridotto, and overwhelmed me with compliments, from which I would fain have escaped. I was too tired to support all this ceremony; and, besides, not knowing whence all this enthusiasm sprang, I was angry that the piece just represented should be more extolled than many others which were of greater merit. By degrees I discovered the true motive of the general acclamation: it celebrated the triumph of my fulfilled engagement."

Goldoni was now forty-three years of age. His invention had not yet fallen off, but he tried his strength too much. An illness was the consequence of this ex-

traordinary exertion, and he felt the effects of it all his life after ; yet during the ensuing season he brought out scarcely a smaller number, and, as he proceeded, attained a yet purer style of comedy ; and he became the censor of the manners, and satirist of the follies, of his country. The peculiar system of what is called service, paid by gentlemen to the ladies of their choice, all over Italy, would have presented an ample field both for ridicule and reprehension, could he have ventured on it openly ; but he was obliged to treat it with the same reserve, when bringing it on the stage, as is used when it is spoken of in society ; and he could attack only the ridicule, not the real evils of the system. This comedy, called the "*Villeggiatura*," which turns on this subject, is particularly amusing ; but it can scarcely be called an attack upon it. An Italian gentleman, returned lately from Paris, offers to serve a lady in the French manner : he is not to perform those thousand services required of the cavaliere servente, nor to attend on her, nor to be of any use or amusement to her : they are to be friends secretly ; and, to preserve their friendship more sacredly, they must abstain from nearly all intercourse with each other. The lady, accustomed to be constantly waited upon, and to find in her cavaliere a resource against the ennui of solitude, is at a loss to understand the good that is to result from a negative of all the ordinary uses of friendship. The "*Smanie della Villeggiatura*" attacks another of the foibles of the Venetians. It is their custom, each autumn, to spend several weeks at their country seats ; but, instead of this being a period of economy and retirement, it was the fashion to invite their friends, and to transport with them the dissipation of the city. Besides this, it being necessary, as a mark of fashion, to retire to a villa, those who were poor, and did not possess one, fancied themselves obliged to hire a house, and to go beyond their wealthier neighbours in the number of their guests and the splendour of their entertainments : nor can any idea be formed out of the country of the sort of fanaticism with which this custom was pursued ;

even to the bringing ruin on those who imagined themselves forced to so unnecessary an expense. Goldoni wrote three comedies on this subject: the first consisted in describing the preparations for the villeggiatura, or visit to the country. It has for its subject the difficulties of a poor proud family, who were bent on following the general example; the thousand obstacles that rendered it almost impracticable; and the envy with which they view and vie with the preparations of their wealthier acquaintance. At length they depart triumphant, resolving to forget their debts and difficulties until their return. The second comedy consists of the adventures in the country; where, in the midst of gambling, pleasure, and apparent enjoyment, a thousand annoyances distract, and jealousy and envy prevent, all real happiness. The third comedy, of the return from the country, shows the unfortunate lovers of rural pleasures overwhelmed by debt; surrounded by a thousand difficulties, sprung up while there; and saved only, when on the verge of ruin, by a kind and prudent friend who assists them, on their promise never to undertake a villeggiatura again. These plays are without the masks, and give a perfect representation of Italian conversation and manners. As he wished to criticise the Venetians, he did not venture to place the scene at Venice; but the audience easily brought home to themselves the faults and follies of the Tuscans or Neapolitans. In thus making a detail of some of the best of his plays, it is impossible to do more than to indicate those which appear the best worth reading. The "*Vedova Scaltra*," or *The Gay Widow*, was a great favourite in Italy. A rich widow, with four lovers from four different nations, seeks from each a proof of love, and gives her hand to the Italian, who, by his jealousy, evinces, she imagines, the sincerest testimony of the tender passion. The "*Feudatario*" has in it more of farce than he usually admits, and is peculiarly amusing; as well as the "*Donna del Maneggio*," or *Managing Lady*, whose avaricious husband, after incurring a thousand ridiculous disasters, ends by

placing the disposal of his property in his wife's hands. It would be too long and uninteresting to enter on even this brief notice of more; but we may mention the titles of some of his best, to guide any one who wishes to read only a portion of the vast quantity he wrote: among these may be named "*Il Cavaliere e la Dama*," "*Il vero Amico*," "*La Moglie Saggia*," "*L'Avanturiere Onorato*," "*Moliere e Terenzio*," which he names himself as the favourite offspring of his pen.

He spent many years thus respectably and happily. He loved his wife and his domestic circle. The applause of a theatre perpetually ringing in his ears, he was gratified by the consciousness that he was reforming the national taste. Sometimes he was attacked for what he considered the chief merit of his dramas. The advocates of the old comedy condemned his new style as puerile and tame. He defended himself, and was satisfied that he obtained the victory. During the summer, when the theatres at Venice were closed, he visited the various cities of Italy; and his life was diversified, and his invention refreshed, by these occasional tours. He had reason to be dissatisfied with the manager, Mendebac, who had allured him from Pisa, as he not only was illiberal enough not to add to his salary on these extraordinary efforts, but appropriated the profits arising from the publication of his works. Goldoni was unwilling to enter into a lawsuit with him; he contented himself, therefore, by bringing out an edition of his play at Florence; and as soon as his five years' engagement with Mendebac was over, he transferred himself to the theatre of San Luca, on terms at once more advantageous and honourable.

With some few reverses, attendant on an entire change of actors, and his ignorance of the peculiar abilities of the company, to which he was not accustomed, his career on this new stage was equally successful. He wrote several comedies in verse, which became peculiar favourites. This success was the occasion of his being invited to Rome during the carnival: but his dramas

did not succeed so well there. The actors, unaccustomed to his style, were unable to give them with any effect, and the Roman audience called out for Puncinello.

In 1750, he received an offer from the French court of an engagement for two years, on very advantageous terms. Goldoni hesitated a little about accepting it. A few years before, his brother had returned to Venice, a widower, with two children. Goldoni gave up to him all his property in Modena, and adopted the children, having none of his own. He made a good income in Italy; but he had no provision for old age: still he was unwilling to leave his native country — whose climate and people were dear to him — where he was honoured, loved, and applauded. He made some enquiries with regard to the possibility of getting a pension from the Venetian government; but this appearing a vain hope, he considered it right to close with the offer of the king of France. He hesitated the more before taking this step, as, although the engagement in question was but for two years, he felt that, once in Paris, and acquiring an honourable maintenance, it was probable that he should never see Italy again.

During the carnival of 1761, the last pieces he wrote for the Venetian theatre were represented: one, the last acted, was a sort of allegorical leave-taking, which was so understood by the audience; and the acclamations and adieus of the public moved him to tears. He left Venice in April 1761, accompanied by his wife. His mother was dead; his niece he placed in a convent, under the superintendence of a respectable family at Venice; his nephew was soon to follow him. As he passed through Italy, on his way to France, he was received at the various towns with distinction and kindness. He spent some little time at Genoa, with his wife's relations, and then they proceeded by slow stages to Paris.

Goldoni's *débüt* as an author in the French capital was not a happy one. The Italian comedians there were not accustomed to regular comedies, which they were to

learn by heart, but to the old style of their native farce, where the plot and arrangement of the scenes were all that was written, and they filled up the dialogue themselves. Goldoni wrote two or three pieces for them on this plan without success. His stay in Paris was, however, decided by the post of Italian master to the daughters of Louis XV. being bestowed on him. He knew so little of French, that he gained as much knowledge from the princesses as he imparted to them. His salary was very slender, but it was increased in the sequel; and his nephew also was provided for by the post of Italian teacher in the military school.

Goldoni was charmed by the French actors; and his ambition was excited to write a comedy to be represented by the excellent comedians who then flourished. His desire was fulfilled to the utmost. He brought out "*Le Bourru Bienfaisant*," into which he endeavoured to instil the spirit of French dialogue and plot with great success; so that Voltaire praises it as the best French comedy written since Molière. He wrote another on the same plan; but it fell to the ground, and he at last desisted from adding to the immense number of pieces of which he is the author.

He lived tranquilly and content with his moderate means. His niece was married at Venice; his nephew settled happily at Paris. The revolution did not, fortunately, disturb the repose of his last years. The National Convention confirmed his pension to him, and continued it to his widow after his death. Goldoni died in the year 1792, at the age of eighty-five. No man was ever more born for the career which he pursued. His heart was excellent, and his disposition gay. He never allowed himself to be cast down by adversity, and met the attacks of his enemies with good humour, or such replies as caused the laugh to be on his side. He is numbered by his countrymen as among the best of their authors,—an opinion confirmed by all those sufficiently cognisant with the Italian language and manners to enter into the spirit of his compositions.