

***GEORGE  
FARQUHAR***



***THE INCONSTANT***

**George Farquhar**

# **The Inconstant**

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**A COMEDY,**

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**IN FIVE ACTS;**

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**AS PERFORMED AT THE**

**THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.**

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**PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE  
MANAGERS**

**FROM THE PROMPT BOOK.**

**WITH REMARKS**

**BY MRS. INCHBALD.**

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**LONDON:**

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**REMARKS.**

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This comedy, by a favourite writer, had a reception, on the first night of its appearance, far inferior to that of his other productions. It was, with difficulty, saved from condemnation; and the author, in his preface, has boldly charged some secret enemies with having attempted its destruction.

Dramatic authors have fewer enemies at the present period, or they have more humility, than formerly. For now, when their works are hissed from the stage, they acknowledge they have had a fair trial, and deserve their fate. Wherefore should an author seek for remote causes, to account for his failures, when to himself alone, he is certain ever to impute all his success?

Neither the wit, humour, nor the imitation of nature, in this play, are of that forcible kind, with which the audience had been usually delighted by Farquhar; and, that the moral gave a degree of superiority to this drama, was, in those days, of little consequence: the theatre was ordained, it was thought, for mere pleasure, nor did any one wish it should degenerate into instruction.

It may be consolatory to the disappointed authors of the present day, to find, how the celebrated author of this comedy was incommoded with theatrical crosses. He was highly offended, that his play was not admired; still more angry, that there was an empty house, on his sixth night, and more angry still, that the Opera House, for the benefit of a French dancer, was, about this time, filled even to the annoyance of the crowded company. The following are his own words on the occasion:

"It is the prettiest way in the world of despising the French king, to let him see that we can afford money to bribe his dancers, when he, poor man, has exhausted all his stock, in buying some pitiful towns and principalities. What can be a greater compliment to our generous nation, than to have the lady on her re-tour to Paris, boast of her splendid entertainment in England: of the complaisance, liberty, and good nature of a people, who thronged her house so full, that she had not room to stick a pin; and left a poor fellow, who had the misfortune of being one of themselves, without one farthing, for half a year's pains he had taken for their entertainment."

This complaint is curious, on account of the talents of the man who makes it; and, for the same cause, highly reprehensible. If Farquhar, thought himself superior to the French dancer, why did he honour her by a comparison? and, if he wanted bread, why did he not suffer in silence, rather than insinuate, he should like to receive it, through the medium of a benefit?

A hundred years of refinement (the exact time since this author wrote) may have weakened the force of the dramatic

pen; but it has, happily, elevated authors above the servile spirit of dedications, or the meaner practice, of taking public benefits.

As the moral of this comedy has been mentioned as one of its highest recommendations, it must be added—that, herein, the author did not invent, but merely adopt, as his own, an occurrence which took place in Paris, about that period, just as he has represented it in his last act. The Chevalier de Chastillon was the man who is personated by young Mirabel, in this extraordinary event; and the Chevalier's friend, his betrothed wife, and his beautiful courtesan, are all exactly described in the characters of Duretete, Oriana, and Lamorce.

Having justly abridged Farquhar of the honour of inventing a moral, it may be equally just, to make a slight apology for his chagrin at the slender receipts of his sixth night.—He once possessed the income, which arose from a captain's commission in the army; and having prudently conceived that this little revenue would not maintain a wife, he had resolved to live single, unless chance should bestow on him a woman of fortune. His person and address were so extremely alluring, that a woman of family, but of no fortune, conceiving the passion she felt for him to be love, pretended she possessed wealth, and deceived him into a marriage, which plunged them both into the utmost poverty.

This admirable dramatist seems to have been born for a dupe. In his matrimonial distress, he applied to a nobleman, who had professed a friendship for him, and besought his advice how to surmount his difficulties: The counsel given, was—"Sell your commission, for present support, and,

before the money for its sale is expended, I will procure you another." Farquhar complied—and his patron broke his word.

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## **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

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Old Mirabel	Mr. Downton.
Young Mirabel	Mr. C. Kemble.
Captain Duretete	Mr. Bannister.
Dugard	Mr. Holland.
Petit	Mr. De Camp.

*Bravoes—Messrs. Maddocks, Webb, Evans  
and Sparks.*

Oriana	Mrs. Young.
Bisarre	Mrs. Jordan.
Lamorce	Miss Tidswell.

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# ACT THE FIRST.

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### SCENE I.

*The Street.*

*Enter Dugard, and his Man, Petit, in Riding Habits.*

*Dug.* Sirrah, what's o'clock?

*Petit.* Turned of eleven, sir.

*Dug.* No more! We have rid a swinging pace from Nemours, since two this morning! Petit, run to Rousseau's, and bespeak a dinner, at a Lewis d'or a head, to be ready by one.

*Petit.* How many will there be of you, sir?

*Dug.* Let me see—Mirabel one, Duretete two, myself three——

*Petit.* And I four.

*Dug.* How now, sir? at your old travelling familiarity! When abroad, you had some freedom, for want of better company, but among my friends, at Paris, pray remember your distance—Begone, sir! [*Exit Petit.*] This fellow's wit was necessary abroad, but he's too cunning for a domestic; I must dispose of him some way else.—Who's here? Old Mirabel, and my sister!—my dearest sister!

*Enter Old Mirabel and Oriana.*

*Oriana.* My Brother! Welcome!