

Eyes and No Eyes

Or
The Art of Seeing

By W.S. Gilbert

Characters

Cassandre	A wealthy Farmer in love with Nicolette	Bass
Columbine		Mezzo—Soprano
Clochette	His nieces	Soprano
Arlequin		Baritone
Pierrot	Brothers	Tenor
Nicolette	An old coquette	Contralto or Mezzo

Scene: *Exterior of CASSANDRE'S cottage. Cottage in flat with door and practicable window. Trees, &c. R. and L.*

CLOCHETTE *discovered with Spinning—wheel.*

No.1.— Song — Clochette

As I at my wheel sit spinning,
I think of my maiden state,
For I am, at my life's beginning,
A thread in the hands of Fate.
Shall I dwell among crowds that flatter,
A robe for a king to bear –
Or a poor little rag of a tatter
A beggar would scorn to wear?
As I at my wheel sit spinning
I think of my maiden state,
For I am, at my life's beginning,
A thread in the hands of Fate.

Half—past one and Columbine not home yet. I hope no accident has happened to the old mare. If there has, I wouldn't be in Uncle Cassandre's way when he hears of it! There's a stingy cross old man for two dear little orphan nieces to have to live with. And when he's married to Nicolette – and he's to be betrothed to her today— the cottage will be

unendurable. Here comes the conceited old maid. Well, as she's going to be my aunt, I suppose I had better be civil to her. (*Spins.*)

Enter NICOLETTE

Nic. Good morning, my dear. Hard at work, I see.

Clo. Oh yes, hard at work. No time to be idle like *some* people. No time to go gadding about setting honest folk by the ears like *some* people. No time for flirting and ogling, and making myself conspicuous and getting myself talked about like *some* people. Ugh! (*Aside*) Must be civil to her.

Nic. Ah, well, I like to see little girls busy. It keeps them out of all sorts of mischief. I often wish I could work too.

Clo. Oh, but at your age, Nicolette —

Nic. Exactly, as you say, at my age one's time's fully employed in receiving those little attentions which fall to the lot of an extremely lovely girl. Your time will come some day, but the men are terrible plagues, and you needn't wish you were me, dear.

Clo. I don't.

Nic. I'm not the gay and giddy young thing I look.

Clo. (*Aside*) I know you're not! Made up old thing!

Nic. When you see me, the center of an eager throng, vieing with each other as to who shall say the sweetest things to me; when you see me playing fast and loose with one, encouraging another, and sending a third about his business, broken-hearted, say to yourself, "I hope I may never, never, never be like Nicolette."

Clo. Believe me, it is my most earnest prayer.

Nic. For reflect — say I have a hundred admirers —

Clo. I beg your pardon — how many?

Nic. Say a hundred. Now out of this hundred I can only marry one.

Clo. Poor fellow!

Nic. Well — I declare myself in favour of that one, and what becomes of the other ninety-nine?

Clo. (*After a pause*). I give it up.

Nic. (*Annoyed*) Why, they blow their brains out, of course!

Clo. What, right out?

Nic. Right out. Bang! Poof! And it's over. Now that's a fearful responsibility for a young woman to have on her mind.

Clo. Appalling! Oh, Nicolette, I do indeed hope more than ever that I shall never be anything at all like you.

Nic. Well, to do you justice, I don't think you ever will. You're a good girl, but you're not pretty, and if ever you're a full—grown woman like me, you'll be plain.

Clo. Yes — if ever I'm a full—grown woman *like you*, I shall be very plain indeed. And now, what can I do for you?

Nic. Do for me?

Clo. Yes, I suppose you've called about something?

Nic. No! Oh no — I've come to spend a long, long day with my two dear little friends, Clochette and Columbine.

Clo. Oh that is nice. I'm so glad, because it's so dull here without uncle.

Nic. (*Taken aback*) Without uncle? Isn't he at home?

Clo. Oh no, he's out, and he won't be home for ever so long. You'll have us all to yourself, you dear old thing, and we'll be as happy as three little birds.

Nic. Oh. (*Getting up*) Well, I must be off.

Clo. You're not going?

Nic. Oh yes I am. I can't stop chattering here all day. I'm very busy, very busy indeed. But before I go, I *should* like to break a bit of very bad news to you.

Clo. I'm sure you would.

Nic. Yes. It's about Pierrot and Arlequin. It's generally understood that they're in love with you and Columbine. My dear, they're not.

Clo. What do you mean?

Nic. They used to come and see you every day, I believe?

Clo. Yes.

Nic. But they haven't been for the last two days?

Clo. Well?

Nic. My dear, I'm very sorry for you, but — they've seen me!

Clo. You don't mean to say that you've frightened them away?

Nic. You are quite right; I *don't* mean to say it. On the contrary, I am very very sorry to say that they love me fondly. They told me so. I did all I could to persuade them to be true to you, but in vain. "Ah, Pierrot! Ah, Arlequin" I said, "Moths about a candle — moths about a candle! How soon will ye burn your poor wings, and lie helplessly and hopelessly with a hundred others at my feet. Better, far better are the solid practical virtues of the homely Clochette than the superficial attractions of the beauty who, like the jeweled serpent, fascinates only to destroy." "Be pitiful, oh lovely Nicolette," said they. "I cannot," I replied, "I am a basilisk. I am Nicolette the Destroyer!"

No. 2 – Scena – Nicolette.

Yes, yes, I am that miserable Beauty,
Whose lot it is to wither hearts and homes;
Who, in the course of her unhappy duty,
Brings grief and misery where'er she roams.
The man who once sets his eyes—
He is my prize!
He can't escape — he pines and dies!
This state of things goes on from bad to worse;
I am so fair,
So passing fair,
So dangerously fair,
That people call me the Domestic Curse!

Women avoid me like a plague,
For they have heard tales, strange and vague,
Told at the fire with bated breath,
Of beautiful witches who lure to death—
Of husbands false and cheated wives—
Of broken hearts and wasted lives—
Of suicides in chill despair—
Oh society!
Oh Society!
Is it my fault if I am fair?
Oh Society!

Oh Society!
That I am a Basilisk is too true,
But, Oh Society!
Oh Society!
What in the world would you have me do?

I'll do anything you like, I'm sure!
I'll dress in cottons and cheap serges,
Blacken my face like a Blackamoor—
A Black—a—Moore—and—Burgess!
Stroll in the park in a Life Guardsman's boots,
Smoke cheroots,
Pull out my eyelashes by the roots!
Pad myself out
Till I look stout;
My H's drop,
Squint, limp, lollop and flop,
Go to dinner—parties in a great pasteboard nose
(Or one of gutta-percha plastic),
And shave off all my hair,
And walk about with my head bare,
And wear nothing on it but a rose
On a piece of elastic!

Useless, alas, would be the vain endeavour,
For if I did all this (Though you may doubt me),
There'd still be something so remarkable about me
That men would stare at me as much as ever!
For alas, I am that miserable Beauty
Whose lot it is to wither hearts and homes;
Who in the course of her unhappy duty
Brings grief and misery where'er she roams!

(Exit NICOLETTE)

Clo. Poor dear old lady — it's very melancholy! So Pierrot and Arlequin have been amusing themselves by playing on the poor old thing's weakness, have they? I'm afraid they're a pair of terrible rakes. Well, a reformed rake is a useful implement of husbandry after all!

Enter Arlequin and Pierrot suddenly, their arms about each other's necks. They strike an attitude.

Oh, here you are, you two!

Arl. Yes, here we are, we two.

Pier. Oh yes, here we are.

Arl. What are you spinning?

Clo. Why, my wedding linen, of course.

Pier. Her wedding linen.

Arl. Oh rapture!

(They skip simultaneously and strike another attitude.)

Clo. Yes, I believe one of you is going to marry me.

Pier. Yes, only one.

Clo. And the other is going to marry Columbine.

Arl. Yes — only the other.

Clo. By the bye, which other?

Arl. True. Pierrot, which other?

Pier. I don't care, I love 'em both.

Arl. So do I, Madly.

Pier. After all, what does it matter? Our love is a grand love, a majestic love, a heroic love, a pyramidal love. We tow love you tow pyramidically. A love like ours cannot condescend to details. Let us leave the details to be settled by sordid lawyers.

Clo. Well, as long as you don't quarrel about us—

Arl. Quarrel? We never quarrel. We are twins.

Pier. Are we?

Arl. Certainly. Did I never mention it? Oh yes — I came into the world with you.

Pier. Did you? Sociable creature. *(Shaking his hand.)* How good of you. But, are you sure?

Arl. Quite. *(Beckoning to him mysteriously.)* I was there — you were not.

Pier. That settles it — if you were there you must know.

Clo. Why, bless me!

Both. What?

Clo. If you are both twins, that accounts for your being brothers!

Arl. Yes, we are rather remarkable people. We are called “The Coincidental Infants.”

No. 3 — Trio — Arlequin, Pierrot and Clochette.

Arl. Of our parents each child is the son,

Clo. Yet you had the same father and mother.

Pier. In number we’re two – I am one,

Arl. And I, if you please am the other.

Pier. Our lives did together begin,

Clo. A fact they’ve no reason to smother –

Arl. Moreover, each one is a twin.

Pier. And each of the twins is a brother.

All. Oh, pray to (our/their) history, hark!
(Our/Their) story is singular very,
And justifies well the remark,
Oh, derry! Oh, derry! Down derry!

Clo. They were born the same moment exact,

Arl. Which, at times, sets us wondering whether

Pier. That may not account for the fact

Arl. That our birthdays come always together.

Pier. We could walk when we grew to be men,

Arl. But when we were born we were carried,

Clo. And each was a bachelor then,

For neither had ever been married.

All. Oh, pray to (our/their) history, hark!
 (Our/Their) story is singular very,
 And justifies well the remark,
 Oh, derry! Oh, derry! Down derry!

Arl. Astonishing questions occur—

Clo. A solution perhaps, I may render?

Arl. If I had been changed to a her,

Pier. And I had been female in gender;

Arl. And both had been twins from our birth,

Clo. But born of two different mothers,

Arl. Whatever relation on earth

Pier. Would each of us be to the other?

All. On that point (We/They) are still in the dark,
 The query is singular, very,
 And justifies quite the remark,
 Oh derry! Oh derry! Down derry!

Clo. (*Crying*) Ah, there are no coincidences in *my* family. *My* brother's a sister, and she's ever so much older than I am, and besides that, she was born first and at a different date too, and neither of us is a twin, and we are both girls.

Arl. This is bad news, Pierrot.

Pier. Very. I'd no idea they were *both* girls.

Clo. If that's an objection you'd better trot off to Nicolette. *She* is not a girl, and I know you've been flirting with her.

Arl. (*Carelessly*) Oh yes, we've flirted with her. Lardy—da, Lardy—da — Nothing more, 'sure you!

Pier. We flirt with all women. We love 'em, on principle.

Clo. On principle? On want of principle you mean. You know you don't want to marry her.

Pier. Oh *dear* no! She's too old — and stout, and her complexion isn't what it was.

Clo. What, has she changed her perfumer, then?

Arl. Oh come, that's very good — oh dear me, that's very subtle!

Clo. But perhaps you're not aware that Uncle Cassandre is going to marry Nicolette — and then she'll be my aunt.

Pier. Why, then, if I'd married her I should have been you uncle. No, I'm wrong. But are you sure he's going to marry her?

Clo. Yes, he's to be formally betrothed to her this afternoon, and what's more he's sent Columbine to town to buy him a magnificent mantle to do it in.

Arl. A magnificent mantle?

Clo. Yes, cotton velvet trimmed with rabbit-skin, and I expect her home with it every minute.

Pier. You expect Columbine home? Beloved Columbine!

Arl. How we adore that girl.

Pier. We will wait for her.

(They sit simultaneously.)

Clo. Well, you won't have to wait long, for here she is!

Enter Columbine

No.4 — Quartette

Col. (agitated) Well, here's a very pretty state of things,
Upon my word I don't know what to do;
Each day some fresh perplexing worry brings,
Such terribly bad luck I never knew!

Arl. & Pier. Oh, we love you fondly — madly,
We would marry you most gladly;
I adore you, so does he—

Col. (Irritably) Go away and let me be!

Clo. Why, what's happened? Come, come, dry your eye!

Col. (*Sobbing*) The cloak that uncle ordered me to buy—

Clo. Yes, yes — I'm almost dying to behold it—

Col. A dozen crowns I paid to him who sold it.

Clo. It must be beautiful indeed to cost it!
Come, show it me—

Col. I can't!

Clo. Why not?

Col. I've lost it!

Both. Lost I t— lost it — lost the cloak—
'Tis a very serious joke—

Clo. Think of Uncle's awful rage.

Col. How he'll bluster, stamp and scold.

Both. Fix like this would madden sage,
Who to tell him will make bold?

Arl. & Pier. Oh, we love you fondly — madly,
We would marry you most gladly;
I adore you, so does he—

Col. And Clo. Go away and let us be!

(*At the end of ensemble, ARLEQUIN and PIERROT exeunt into house.*)

Clo. Well, when Uncle Cassandre returns and hears that the cloak's lost, the village won't hold him.

Col. Oh yes it will, dear, I wish it wouldn't. But what on earth shall we do?

Clo. I can't think.

(*Columbine cries*)

Now don't cry, let's try and find a way out of the scrape. Do you believe in fairies?

Col. No. Do you?

Clo. No, but I'm going to. Now listen, Pierrot is a flirt.

Col. No doubt.

Clo. Arlequin is an awful flirt.

Col. Awful!

Clo. Nicolette is a terrific flirt.

Col. Absolutely terrific!

Clo. And Uncle Cassandre is rather worse than all three put together.

Col. Uncle Cassandre would flirt with his own shadow.

Clo. Now this is my plan, we'll pretend that the cloak is a magic cloak, visible only to true lovers, and absolutely invisible to flirts of every degree.

Col. I understand. As they are flirts they won't be surprised at not being able to see it.

Clo. Exactly. Here comes Pierrot and Arlequin, let's try it on them first; we'll pretend to be admiring it. We'll suppose we've got the cloak, now hold it out — there, so.

Enter PIERROT and ARLEQUIN from house. COLUMBINE and CLOCHETTE pretend to be admiring the cloak. PIERROT and ARLEQUIN, think themselves unobserved, watch their proceeding with amazement.

Clo. Well, there now, it is extremely pretty.

Col. Most sweet, most enchanting! Feel its texture.

Clo. Oh, what a lovely quality! I should so like to try it on.

Col. Should you? Then you shall. There (*putting it on*) stop a bit— there, oh my, that is lovely!

Pier. (*Whispers to ARLEQUIN*) What are they doing?

Arl. (*Whispers*) Going mad.

(PIERROT *howls*)

Col. Oh dear me, here are Pierrot and Arlequin who've been watching us all the time, and I promised Uncle nobody should see it. (*Pretending to snatch it off.*)

Clo. Oh my dear, you needn't be alarmed. They *couldn't* see it.

Col. Oh, of course, I forgot. *They* couldn't see it.

Clo. Not if they stared at it for a month.

Col. And propped their eyelids open with bits of Lucifer match.

Clo. And wore telescopes in them.

Co. And ear trumpets.

Clo. And smelling bottles.

Col. Because *they* are flirts.

Clo. Yes, because *they* trifle with young confiding hearts.

Col. And because *this* cloak, being a magic cloak, is visible only to true lovers.

Clo. Which you are not.

Col. And is *invisible* to flirts and popinjays.

Clo. Which you are. And *that's* why you don't see the cloak, and that's why you never *will* see the cloak, no, not if you live to be as old as Jerusalem. Neither of you! Ugh!

Pier. Why, you don't mean to say you really believe we are not true to you? Oh Arlequin!

Arl. Oh Pierrot! (*They sob on each other's shoulders*)

Pier. All our little jokelets about Nicolette taken in earnest!

Arl. All our little innocent attentions looked on as flirtations!

Pier. You, who are so true!

Arl. You, who are constancy itself. Oh Pierrot!

Pier. Oh Arlequin!

Col. Well, but *did* you see the cloak?

Pier. What cloak?

Col. There! He asks *what* cloak! He *didn't* see it! He couldn't see it.

Pier. But I don't know what cloak you're referring to.

Clo. Why, the magic cloak we had in our hands when you came in, to be sure.

Pier. Oh, the magic cloak! Oh yes, we saw the magic cloak. But you didn't say you meant the *magic* cloak.

Col. No, but did you *really* see it?

Pier. Did we really see it? Why of course we really saw it.

Arl. Do you think we are blind? We were admiring it as you spoke.

Clo. Oh Arlequin, I'm so sorry I doubted you.

Col. Pierrot, will you forgive me? For now I know you are true; if you hadn't been true you'd never have seen it.

Pier. Well, say no more about it, but produce it at once.

Clo. (*Pretending to produce it*) There — isn't it a love?

Pier. No, no, I don't want to see *that* one, I want to see the invisible one.

Clo. This is the invisible one.

Pier. Well, but it can't be invisible if *I* can see it. Why it's as plain as Arlequin. Clochette, you're trying to deceive me. (*Hurt*)

Arl. Columbine, you're practicing on our inexperience. (*Hurt*)

Col. No, *indeed* this is the one. Isn't it a beauty?

Arl. (*Pretending to admire it*) Well, it *is* a beauty, to be sure.

Pier. Oh my! What a duck.

Arl. Put it on.

Col. To be sure I will! (*Pretends to put it on.*)

Pier. Well I never *did* see anything like it. Stop a bit, you've got it wrinkled on the shoulder. (*Pretends to smooth it.*) There — that's better.

Col. How do you like the colour?

Arl. Oh, it's a beautiful colour.

Pier. Hm— well, yes,— no, to my taste it's rather too — what shall I say?

Arl. Well, that occurred to me. It is rather — just the least thing too—

Clo and Col. Yes— what?

Arl. Well, I should have thought red would have suited the old gentleman better.

Pier. Ah, now *I* should have thought yellow.

Arl. You are quire right; yellow would decidedly have been better.

Clo. Why that *is* good. Why, it *is* yellow! Ha, ha, ha!

Col. Ha, ha, ha!

Arl. Well, it's a *kind* of yellow.

Pier. A kind of reddish yellow.

Arl. Now, what material do you call this? Silk, isn't it?

Col. Silk! Why it's the richest cotton velvet.

Pier. Ho, ho! That *is* good. Silk! He don't know silk from velvet. Why, you great donkey, anyone can see that it's the richest cotton velvet, trimmed with gold.

Col. Silver.

Pier. Eh?

Col. Silver.

Arl. Oh, he don't know gold form silver. Oh, he *is* a muff. He could see it was velvet, but he couldn't see it was silver.

Pier. How is a poor, friendless, destitute orphan to know gold form silver? Born before I was old enough to work for my bread; left to gain my living by my own native shrewdness; what chance have I of ever seeing ether? Now, if it had been trimmed with

ha'pence I should have known it at a glance. I'm a judge of ha'pence. So this is really silver, is it? Dear me, I've often heard of silver.

Col. There now, you've looked at it quite long enough; don't touch it or you'll tarnish it. (*Slapping his hands.*) We must fold it up and put it back in the parcel. Uncle will be furious if he finds we've opened it.

(*Exeunt CLO. and COL.*)

Pier. Arlequin, that's a remarkably handsome cloak?

Arl. Beautiful! Very tasty indeed.

Pier. I'm glad I was able to see it.

Arl. I'm glad I was able to see it.

Pier. I say, Arlequin—

Arl. Well?

Pier. I shouldn't have thought you and I were exactly what's called true lovers.

Arl. No, but we must be or we couldn't have seen the cloak.

Pier. We did see it, didn't we?

Arl. Distinctly. I can see it now.

Pier. So can I as plainly as when I had it in my hand.

Arl. I should have thought that if there were two people to whom the cloak would have been invisible, you and I would have been those two people.

Pier. Yes, we do carry on.

Arl. Awfully. But in confidence, did you *really* see it!

Pier. What a question! Of course I did.

Arl. No, but honour?

Pier. Well, when I say I saw it, I've no objection to admit I saw it indistinctly. Now after that admission, how did it appear to you?

Arl. Foggy. Outline confused.

Pier. Sketchy, eh?

Arl. Very. In fact I could barely distinguish it.

Pier. And to me it was hardly perceptible.

Arl. I scarcely saw it — in fact, I may say I didn't see it.

Pier. So may I. *I* didn't see it. We both didn't see it. Shake hands.

(Music. Exeunt together)

Enter CASSANDRE with whip.

Cass. *(Furious)* Clochette! Columbine! Why aren't you here to receive me? I've come back. Where's my dinner? I'm hungry. Oh, when I do catch you two young women! Well, I'm home at last. Home to discharge the most important duty of my career, for to-night I am to be formally betrothed to Nicolette. Thirty years ago I saw her, and then I didn't like her. People said she was an acquired taste, and so she was. I am fond of acquired tastes, and I determined to learn to love her. For thirty years I withdrew myself from my native village and set to work. In the first place, Nicolette was stout, so I began by trying to be fond of stout people, and I succeeded — the fatter they were the more I loved them. Nicolette was a chatterbox; I fell in love with all the chatterboxes I could find. Nicolette was vain; I became the slave of all the conceited young women for miles around. Nicolette was quick — tempered; there wasn't a cross —grained vixen in the province whom I didn't adore. But by this time Nicolette had grown elderly, so it became necessary to cultivate a taste for oldest inhabitants, and I succeeded so well that a troop of lovesick grandmothers followed me wherever I went. Having taught myself to admire all those qualities for which Nicolette is remarkable, I retuned to her, and directly I saw her I fainted in her arms. What took place during the interval of unconsciousness I don't know, but it must have been something decisive, for when I revived I found myself engaged to her — engaged to the purest, properest, and correctest old lady in France. Oh, how correct is Nicolette!

Enter NICOLETTE.

Nic. And had it tum home to its little old lady, and was it a naughty, naughty old poppet to top away so long?

Cass. *(Aside)* What fascinating innocence. *(Aloud)* Yes, it had tum home again, and it had ordered its little niece to buy it a boofy mantle to make its little love in, that it might be a pooty pooty boy when it came to see its little pipsy wispy.

Nic. *(Doubtfully)* I don't understand what you mean by pipsy wispy.

Cass. It's a term of endearment.

Nic. I never heard the expression.

Cass. It's Arabic.

Nic. Oh, if it's Arabic I don't mind.

Cass. (*Aside*) How prudent and respectable she is. (*Aloud*) Shall we resume?

Nic. Certainly, only pray be careful.

Cass. I will. And when will it make its little old gentleman the happiest old tootletum in the world?

Nic. It shall name its own little day, it shall, and they shall be married in a boofy little church and they shall be as happy as two tiny tiny little dicky birds.

Cass. Oh, it was a delightful little roguey poguey.

Nic. (*Severely*) Roguey poguey? I am not familiar with that expression.

Cass. It's a term of general application signifying respectful affection. It's Scotch.

Nic. Oh. The Scotch are a moral people, and if it's Scotch I've no doubt it's correct.

Cass. She is indeed delightfully particular. Ah, Nicolette, how much more quickly time flies with some people than it does with others. When I first knew you we were the same age, I was then eight and twenty. (*Sighs*)

Nic. So was I. (*Sighs*)

Cass. And now I'm fifty-eight. (*Sighs*)

Nic. And I am eight and twenty still (*Sighs*)

Cass. Then notwithstanding the disparity of our years you don't think I'm too old for you?

Nic. No, if you don't think I'm too young for you.

Cass. Not a day, not a day. I think I could love you if you were younger still.

No.5 – Duet – Cassandre and Nicolette

Nic. When you were eight and twenty,

You were extremely wild,
Of willfulness you'd plenty,
A giddy thoughtless child.
All life seemed sugar candy,
Hard bake and balls of brandy,
A little jack-a-dandy,
And quite unfit to mate.
'Twas dolce far niente,
When you were eight and twenty.

Both. 'Twas dolce far niente, etc.

Cass. But now I'm eight and fifty,
I've reached the prime of life;
I'm sober now and thrifty,
And fit to take a wife.
My boyish freaks are over,
No longer I'm a rover,
I'm fit to be a lover,
I've come to man's estate.
I'm careful now and thrifty,
For I am eight and fifty.

Both. He's careful now and thrifty, &c. (*They embrace.*)

Enter COLUMBINE.

Col. (*Starts*) Oh, beg your pardon. I didn't know you were doing anything like that.

Cass. Ahem! Allow me to present to you a new aunt.

(NICOLETTE *curtseys*, COLUMBINE *also.*)

Col. She don't look new.

Cass. Cherish her, venerate her, for I love her. Columbine, respect that love, for it has taken thirty years to develop. My child, respect the labour of thirty years.

(COLUMBINE *kisses her.*)

Nic. My darling little niece.

Col. My pretty little aunt.

Nic. (*Aside*) Affected little coquette.

Col. (*Aside*) Old frump.

Cass. And now, where's the cloak, I'm dying to see it.

Col. Oh, but uncle—

Cass. What?

Col. I— that is—

Cass. That is what? That is *what*, I say? Now — now be careful. Don't say anything happened to it, I'm very delicate and easily excited, and if something was to give way—

Nic. Columbine, if anything snaps inside him, I hall hold you responsible. Now go on.
(*Listens to hear if anything snaps.*)

Col. Oh, but nothing happened, dear uncle, only — *are* you *very* fond of Nicolette.

Cass. Of course I am, I love her madly — ducky, ducky, ducky! (*Flirting with her.*)

Col. And are you *very* fond of uncle?

Nic. What an absurd question. Of course I am. Chucky, chucky, chucky! (*Flirting with him.*)

Col. Oh, I'm *so* glad.

Nic. What does the girl mean?

Col. I'm so glad you're so fond of each other, because the cloak is a magic cloak and is visible only to true lovers who never flirt. You're both sure to be able to see it.

Nic. (*Aside*) *Are* we?

Cass. (*Aside*) I doubt it very much.

Col. I bought it of a tall grim man with great flashing eyes and beautiful big teeth, and great horns sticking out of his head; he had the very thing, so I asked the price, and as soon as I bought it he disappeared in a whirlwind.

(*Deleted Song.*)

No. 6 – Song— Columbine.

Col. As I was going along the road,
I met a curious party;
He was tall and thin, as his costume showed,

And his manners were frank and hearty,
His eyes were large, and round, and red,
And though the fact's unproven,
On fire and smoke I'm sure he fed,
He'd very big horns on the top of his head,
And both of his feet were cloven!

All. Gracious me, and goodness you!
Here was a serious how-de-do!
Large red eyes and horns! Dear me!
Who in the world could the stranger be?

Col. He offered to sell me the cloak he wore,
The very thing I wanted;
But he quite forgot to remark before
That the mantle was enchanted!
He handed me over the velvet cloak
Of which I've just been telling,
And laughing as though at a very good joke,
He disappeared in fire and smoke,
With a horribly hideous yelling!

Cass. I see — before you paid for it.

Col. No, immediately after.

Cass. (*Disappointed*) Oh! And where is it?

Col. (*Aside*) I haven't the face to do it all alone. (*Aloud*) Oh, Clochette's got it, she'll — she'll be here directly.

Cass. Very good. Nicolette, come into the house and read the contract; the lawyer will be her directly, and then—

Nic. Ah, Cassandre!

Cass. Yes—

Nic. There are no fools like young ones.

(*Exeunt into house*)

Col. There's a pretty bunch of stories. Oh dear, oh dear, I hope I don't look as wicked as I feel.

Enter CLOCHETTE with small basket.

Clo. Well, I've good news for you, I've found the cloak.

Col. What?

Clo. You left it behind, at Hubert's, the blacksmith's, and he's sent it on and it's here.
(Opening basket.)

Col. Oh, what a pity.

Clo. A pity!

Col. Yes, I've told Uncle and Nicolette that it's a magic cloak and visible only to true lovers. Now when they find that they can really see it they'll know I've been telling stories. And then he'll beat me.

Clo. Oh never mind a beating, dear — bear it.

Col. Yes, but he'll beat you too.

Clo. Oh my dear, we must hit upon another plan. Tell him you made a mistake, and that it's visible to flirts and coquettes but invisible to true lovers; then when they see it, they'll be convinced of its supernatural character. Oh, here they are.

Enter CASSANDRE and NICOLETTE.

No.6 — Concerted Piece — Cassandre, Nicolette, Columbine and Clochette

Cass. Now, Columbine, the magic cloak produce,
This mystic robe I'm dying for to see!

(Aside) Although, alas, it's very little use,
For it will be invisible to me.
For, oh, I am such a terrible rake,
For every girl my heart does ache;
Of wicked old men I am the pink,
I flirt, I ogle, I leer, I wink.

Nic. Come, let the cloak instantly be displayed,
Its gorgeous beauties please at once unfold!

(Aside) Alas, alas, I'm very much afraid
That magic cloak I never can behold.
For, oh, I am such a wicked old maid,
Whatever its age, whatever its grade,
On every heart at once I seize,
I giggle, I flutter, I flirt, I tease.

Clo. But, Uncle, I admit with terror
That I have made a serious error.
I've made the very greatest of mistakes—
I said 'twas visible to lovers true—
It's only visible to first and rakes,
And therefore won't be visible to you.
And therefore won't be visible to you.

Nic.
and **Cass.** Why, what d'ye mean, the truth, come quickly tell.

Col. To all true lovers it's invisible!

Nic.
and **Cass.** Then alas, alas, it can never be
Visible unto you or me.
For I am a lover, a lover true,
It cannot be seen by me or you.
(*Aside*) This is as right as right can be,
This magical cloak I'm sure to see.

Cass. For, oh, I am such a terrible rake, &c.

Nic. For, oh, I am such a wicked old flirt, &c.

Col. For, oh, he is such a terrible rake, &c.

Clo. For, oh, she is such a wicked old maid, &c.

Clo. (*Opening basket*) There, there it is. (*Showing cloak which is in basket.*)

Cass. (*Looking in*) Where?

Nic. I don't see any cloak.

Col. No, I told you you wouldn't be able to see it.

Cass. Pooh, pooh! There's no cloak here. (*Aside*) Oh remorse, I see it plainly.

Nic. (*Aside*) Agony! It's as plain as a pikestaff.

Clo. But if you can't see it, you can feel it.

Cass. I do, I feel it very much.

Clo. But I mean the cloak.

Cass. Oh, I beg your pardon.

(CASSANDRE and NICOLETTE put their hands into the basket.)

Nic. Dear me, there certainly *is* something here.

Cass. Well, that's the most extraordinary thing I ever experienced. There certainly *is* a cloak, cotton velvet trimmed with rabbit-skin.

Nic. Yes, and a very pretty cloak too.

Cass. (*Suspiciously*) How do you know it's pretty?

Nic. Why, if it's cotton velvet trimmed with rabbit-skin, it must be pretty, mustn't it? Oh, Cassandre, do you doubt your particular and correct Nicolette?

Cass. Never! I believe it's as invisible to you as it is to me.

Nic. (*Aside*) About.

Cass. But I should like to have just one peep at it.

Nic. Cassandre!

Cass. If I might be permitted to allow my thoughts to wander from you for one minute, only one—

Nic. Cassandre, if ever that cloak meets your eye, the consequence will be Death!

Cass. To you?

Nic. No — to you.

Cass. (*Aside*) Then the sooner I go stone blind the better.

Enter PIERROT and ARLEQUIN staggering. They throw themselves on to a bank and weep.

Nic. Why bless the boys, what's this?

Arl. It is remorse.

Pier. It is the voice of conscience. (*To CASSANDRE*) Listen, old man, we love your nieces — but we are unworthy of them. We found that out half an hour ago.

Cass. I found it out half a year ago.

Pier. On making the discovery we resolved to reform. For half an hour each of us has stood in a corner. Old man, we went into the corners reckless and light-hearted and triflers; we came out of those corners the repentant wrecks you see before you.

Arl. Old man, we have been thoughtless butterflies — we are now sober and highly respectable worms. We have winked much, but we will never wink again.

Pier. We have winked our last wink, we have squeezed our last squeeze, we have soft—nothinged our last soft—nothing.

Cass. If I could be sure that you are reformed characters—

Pier. Old man, we are indeed.

Arl. Old man—

Cass. (*Furious*) Do *not* call me old man. I won't take your word for your reformation, I must have some proof. Call again in ten years.

Arl. Oh, Pierrot, this will break my heart.

Pier. Arlequin! (*Sobs on his breast.*)

Enter COLUMBINE and CLOCHETTE.

Cass. Stay, I have a plan. (*Takes mantle*) Can you see this mantle?

Pier. (*Overjoyed.*) I can. Ha, ha, ha! (*Hysterically.*)

Arl. So can I. Ha, ha, ha!

Cass. I thought so.

Pier. It is made of the richest cotton velvet.

Arl. Trimmed with the rarest rabbit.

Pier. Its color — is yellow.

Arl. And it is trimmed with silver.

Cass. Scoundrels! Know that this mantle which you see so plainly is visible only to those that are faithless.

Arl. I beg your pardon — faithful.

Nic. Oh no — faith*less*.

Pier. Faith*ful*.

Cass. Faith—

Arl. (*Loudly*) Ful!

Nic. Less, I say.

Pier. Ful, I say.

Cass. Less.

Arl. Ful!

Nic. Clochette, Columbine — what is the truth of this?

Cass. We are both agreed that it is faith — on that point we are unanimous. The only question is, *is it ful* or is it *less*.

Pier.

and **Arl.** I say *ful*.

Nic.

and **Cass.** I say *less*!

Pier. The less you say the better.

Nic. (*Angrily*) What?

Pier. Nothing.

Col.

and **Clo.** Well, uncle, in a kind of way you're both right. It's visible to true lovers under thirty, and invisible to true lovers over thirty.

Cass. But— Nicolette saw it, and she is ever so much under thirty. Oh, cockatrice! (*To NICOLETTE*)

Nic. (*Kneeling*) Cassandre, listen to the confession of a guilty girl. I did indeed see it, but — I have deceived you as to my age. I was thirty the day before yesterday. (*Weeps*)

Cass. Quite thirty?

Nic. Quite.

Cass. Well, you don't look it.

Nic. My own.

Cass. My love! Now to make the children happy. (*To ARL. and PIER.*) Here are my nieces. Which of them do you love?

Pier. (*With CLO.*) We don't know — we leave that to you. Only — we should like one apiece.

(*ARLEQUIN is with COLUMBINE.*)

Cass. You shall have one apiece. The simple halfpenny shall decide. Heads, Arlequin has Columbine; tails, Pierrot has Columbine. (*He tosses.*) Heads! Clochette, go to Arlequin; Columbine, go to Pierrot.

Arl. But—

Cass. Will you do as I tell you?

(*PIERROT has had his arm round COLUMBINE and ARLEQUIN has had his arm around CLOCHETTE. They exchange lovers unwillingly.*)

No.7 – Finale
Ensemble.

Pierrot, Arlequin, Columbine and Clochette.

Agony and fell despair!
This will end I know not where!

Pier. I believed until today
Both possessed this heart of mine,
Neither less and neither more;
Now that I have Columbine,
I've found (alack and well-a-day!)
It is Clochette I adore.

All. It is Clochette he adores.

Pierrot, Arlequin, Columbine and Clochette.

Agony and fell despair!
This will end I know not where!

Arl. I believed until today

On them both my heart was set,
Neither less and neither more;
Now that I possess Clochette!
I've found (alack and well-a-day!)
Columbine I do adore.

All. Columbine he does adore.

Pierrot, Arlequin, Columbine and Clochette.
Agony and fell despair!
This will end I know not where!

Clo. I believed until today
Both alike in love did shine,
Neither less, and neither more;
Now that Arlequin is mine,
It is Pierrot I adore.

All. It is Pierrot she adores!

Pierrot, Arlequin, Columbine and Clochette.
Agony and fell despair!
This will end I know not where!

Col. I believed until today
That I loved them both so—so!
Neither less and neither more;
Now that I have got Pierrot,
Arlequin I do adore.

All. Arlequin she does adore!

(CASSANDRE and NICOLETTE come forward lovingly)

Both. Happy, happy shall we be
You and I, and he and she.
Happy we and happy they
Sing a merry roundelay!

Pierrot, Arlequin, Columbine and Clochette.
(*Very dismally.*) Sing a merry roundelay!

Nic.
and **Cass.** Dance and sing and flirt and quarrel,
Make it up and draw a moral,
Seal it with our lips of coral,

A merry roundelay. (*They retire up.*)

Clo. If I wed Arlequin — my thoughts will range!

Col. While they're not looking at us, let us change!

(CLOCHETTE *goes to* PIERROT, COLUMBINE to ARLEQUIN.)

All. Happy, happy shall we be, &c.

CURTAIN