Scene v:
HENRIETTE, ARMANDE

ARMANDE: Mother has spared no effort on your behalf. A more distinguished husband she could not have found for—
HENRIETTE: If you think he's such a catch, why don't you marry him yourself?
ARMANDE: He's been picked out for you, not for me.
HENRIETTE: I'll stand down and let you have him — you are my older sister, after all.
ARMANDE: If I thought as well of marriage as you do, I would be delighted to accept your offer.
HENRIETTE: If I thought as well of pedants as you do, I should find him a very suitable match.
ARMANDE: Nevertheless, though our tastes might be quite different sister, we still have to obey our parents. A mother has total authority over us and you are wrong to think that resistance...

Scene vi:
CHRYSALE, ARISTE, CLITANDRE, HENRIETTE, ARMANDE

CHRYSALE (presenting Clitandre to Henriette): Come my girl, you must give your approval to what I propose. Remove your glove. Take this gentleman's hand and, from this moment on, think of him in your heart as the man whose wife I intend you to be.
ARMANDE: Sister, you seem rather more enthusiastic about this one.
HENRIETTE: We must always obey our parents, sister. A father has total authority over us.
ARMANDE: A mother has some claim on our obedience.
CHRYSALE: What does that mean?
ARMANDE: I mean that I am very much afraid that in this matter you and your mother do not see eye to eye, for she has in mind another husband —
CHRYSALE: Hold your tongue, you prattlebox. You can talk philosophy with her to your heart's content, but keep your nose out of what I do. Tell her what I've decided and warn her that she's not to come here and start arguing. Now, be off with you.
ARISTE: Bravo! You are doing marvellously!
CLITANDRE: Oh joy! Such bliss! How sweetly life has treated me!
CHRYSALE (to Clitandre): Come along, take her hand. You two go on ahead. (To Ariste) Take her up to her room. Such a tender scene. You know I'm deeply touched to see such affection. It's a tonic for this old heart of mine. I can remember when I was young and in love.

Act IV
Scene i:
ARMANDE, PHILAMINTE

ARMANDE: Yes, she did not hesitate for an instant. She took such pride in obeying him. Though I was there, she hardly gave her feelings time to hear what he'd decided before surrendering. It looked as though she wasn't so much respecting the will of her father as letting everyone know that she was challenging the orders of her mother.
PHILAMINTE: I'll teach her by whose authority, his or mine, the laws of reason must direct her wishes, and which should govern her conduct, her mother or her father, mind or body, form or matter.
ARMANDE: The wretched man should at least have paid you his respects. He's going about things in a very odd way if he's intending to be your son-in-law against your wishes.
PHILAMINTE: He hasn't got where he would dearly like to be yet. I thought him rather handsome when he was paying his court to you. But I never liked his attitude. He knows that I write, heaven be praised, but he never asked me to read him anything.
Scene ii:

CLITANDRE (enters quietly and listens), ARMANDE,

PHILAMINTE

ARMANDE: If I were you, I should never allow him to be Henriette's husband. It would be quite wrong if anyone thought that I am in any way biased in this matter and that the cowardly way he has been seen to behave towards me has sown the seed of some secret resentment in my heart. The soul arms itself against such adversity with the stout buckler of Philosophy, and with its support a person may rise above anything. But by treating you like this, he leaves you no choice. Your honour requires you to oppose his wishes, for he's not really the sort of man you could ever like. I never felt, when we used to talk together, that he really had any respect for you.

PHILAMINTE: The poor fool!

ARMANDE: Whenever you added to your reputation, he always seemed cool in singing your praises.

PHILAMINTE: The brute!

ARMANDE: There were many occasions when I read him poems you had written, new works, but he never thought much of them.

PHILAMINTE: The nerve!

ARMANDE: We often used to have words about it. You'd never believe what stupid things he —

CLITANDRE (revealing himself, to Armande): Now just a minute, if you don't mind. Show a little charity, or failing that, a little honesty. What harm did I ever do you? What offence have I committed that you should want to direct the full force of your eloquence against me, blacken my good name and to go such lengths to ensure that I am hated by the very people I need? Tell me. Speak. Why are you so terribly angry? I am happy to let Madame here, who is fair-minded, be the judge.

ARMANDE: If I were really as angry as I am accused of being, I could produce plenty of reasons to justify my resentment and you'd deserve it all. For our first love establishes such sacred rights over our souls that we should rather sacrifice wealth and even life itself than fall in love with someone else. There is no horror to compare with fickleness: a faithless heart is a moral monster.

CLITANDRE: Madame, how can you call fickle what your proud heart itself ordered me to do? I have done no more than act upon what its dictates imposed on me, and if I have offended you, then your own pride is the cause of it. At first, your beauty possessed my heart which for two years burned with a constant flame. There were no riper attentions, duties, respects, services, no loving sacrifice which I did not offer you. But all my passion, all my thoughts, had no effect and I found you opposed to my tenderest wishes. What you have spurned I have offered another to choose. Consider, Madame: is the fault mine or yours? Did I seek change or did you urge me to it? Was it I who left you, or you who drove me away?

ARMANDE: Sir, how can you call being opposed to your tenderest wishes the desire I have to purge those wishes of their vulgarity, to dismiss them until they reach that state of purity which is the true beauty of perfect love? Why can't you, for my sake, keep your thoughts free and clear of any hint of crude sensuality? Why can't you savour the sweeter joy of a union of souls in which the body has no part to play? You are capable of loving only with a love that is coarse, with all the trappings of material ties. To keep alive the passion which another heart ignites in yours, you need marriage and all that goes with it. Ah, this is a kind of love! Great souls do not burn with such earthly flames. Their senses play no part in their yearnings and their noble passion seeks only the union of two hearts: it sets the rest to one side, as being unworthy. It is a passion as pure and clean as the love of God. It impels them to breathe virtuous sighs and does not incline them to base desires. There's nothing impure in the goal which hearts like those set for themselves — they love for love and for nothing else. It is to the mind alone that all their joys are directed and they are never aware that they even have a body.

CLITANDRE: Well I personally, Madame, am unfortunately aware, if you don't mind my saying so, that I have a body as well as a soul, and I feel the one is too closely linked to the other simply to be set aside. I do not possess the art of detaching the one from the other. Heaven has not imparted that philosophy to me and my body and my soul go hand in hand. There is nothing finer, as you say, than the pure love which directs itself to the spirit, the winning of souls, the tender yearnings cleansed of all hint of sensuality. But love like that is far too refined for me: I am rather coarsey inclined, as you
accuse me. I love with my whole being and the love that anyone offers me, I admit, has to include my whole person. It's not a matter which calls for harsh punishment, and, without wishing to cast doubt on your admirable sentiments, I merely remark that I observe that my approach is widespread among people in general. Furthermore, marriage has not gone out of fashion, and is considered a sufficiently honest, wholesome bond for me to have wanted to become your husband, without giving you cause to take offence at the liberty of such a thought.

Armande: Very well sir, very well. Since, despite all I have said, your animal urges must be satisfied and because you need carnal bonds and corporeal chains before you can be induced to appreciate love that is less earthly, then, if my mother contents, I am ready to ignore my better judgement for your sake and accept what you propose.

Clitandre: It's too late, Madame. Another has taken your place. And I should be ungrateful indeed if I, by any such change of heart, were to abuse the welcome and not repay the kindness which were my refuge against your pride.

Philaminte: But are you really counting on my support, sir, for this other marriage which you have in mind? And are you aware, pray, in these plans of yours, that I already have another husband for Henriette?

Clitandre: But Madame, please give a thought to the man you have chosen. I beg you, do not expose me to such embarrassment, do not condemn me to the ignominious fate of being regarded as Monsieur Trissotin's rival. The love which clever people have in mind has turned you against me, and that kind of love could not have given me a less noble opponent. There are those, and they are numerous, who have had their reputation for cleverness made for them by the bad taste of the present age. But Monsieur Trissotin has fooled nobody. Everywhere justice is done to the writhings he thrusts upon us, and, outside this house, they are everywhere judged for what they are worth. But I have been amazed on a score of occasions to hear you praise to the skies silly poetry which you'd disown if you'd written it yourself.

Philaminte: If you judge him differently from the way we do it is because we do not see him through the same eyes as you.

Scene iii:

Trissotin, Armande, Philaminte, Clitandre

Trissotin: I've come to tell you the good news. We had a narrow escape, Madame, as we slept in our beds last night! A comet passed close to us, falling right through our vortex. Now, if it had collided with us as it went on its way, the earth would have been shattered into small pieces, just like glass.

Philaminte: Perhaps we could discuss that on some other occasion.

This gentleman here would not see the point of it. He professes to be fond of ignorance and in particular he hates wit and learning.

Clitandre: That statement calls for some qualification. Let me explain, Madame. What I hate is the kind of wit and learning which spoil people. Of themselves, these things are fine and good, but I'd rather be classed as an ignoramus than to be clever the way some people are.

Trissotin: Personally, I don't believe, whatever its effects, that science can spoil anything.

Clitandre: And it's my contention that science can make fools of people in both what they say and do.

Trissotin: That is a very paradoxical remark.

Clitandre: I'm not particularly clever myself, but I think I would be able to substantiate it without difficulty. If arguments weren't sufficient, then at all events there is no shortage of well-known examples that I could call upon.

Trissotin: You could quote as many as you like but they would prove nothing.

Clitandre: I shouldn't have to look very far for what I needed.

Trissotin: I myself don't see these well-known examples.

Clitandre: I see them as plain as a pikestaff.

Trissotin: I have always believed that it was ignorance, not science, that made fools.

Clitandre: Then you believed wrong. I can assure you that a learned fool is a bigger fool than an ignorant fool.

Trissotin: The common view is against your generalizations, since ignorant and foolish are synonyms.
CLITANDRE: If you want to move the discussion to the way words are used, the link between pedant and fool is even closer.
TRISSOTIN: Foolishness in the latter is present in its purest, literal form.
CLITANDRE: And in the former, study serves merely to reinforce nature.
TRISSOTIN: Knowledge has its own in-built justification.
CLITANDRE: Knowledge is out of place in a fool.
TRISSOTIN: Ignorance must have a very great attraction for you since you leap so readily to its defence.
CLITANDRE: If ignorance has charms for me, it is only since I have had dealings with certain clever persons.
TRISSOTIN: If we were acquainted with those certain clever persons, they might well compare favourably with certain other people who draw attention to themselves.
CLITANDRE: Yes, but only if we took those certain clever persons at their own estimation. There is less agreement among those certain other people.
PHILAMINTE (to CLITANDRE): Sir, it seems to me that—
CLITANDRE: Please Madame. This gentleman is quite capable of holding his own without other people rushing to his aid. I am already reeling under the savagery of his attack and if I fight back I am very much on the defensive.
ARMANDE: But the insulting venom of the answers which you—
CLITANDRE: Someone else who wants to help him! I lay down my weapons!
PHILAMINTE: One can tolerate the cut and thrust of intellectual debate, as long as the attacks do not become personal.
CLITANDRE: But good God, nothing’s been said so far for him to take offence at. He can take a joke as well as any man in France. He’s had a lot worse barbs directed at him and his self-confidence has merely shrugged it all off.
TRISSOTIN: In this battle I have been drawn into, I am not the least surprised to see you defend the position you have adopted. It has taken root at Court: need I say more? As is well known, the Court has little regard for cleverness, for it is in its interest to promote ignorance. It is as a courtier that you rush to its defence.
CLITANDRE: You have a very low opinion of the much-maligned Court which must be saddened to observe that not a day passes without clever people like you openly sneering at it. You take out all your bilious ill-humour on it and lay the sole blame for your lack of success on the bad taste you accuse it of having. Allow me, Monsieur Trissotin, with all the respect with which your name fills me, to tell you that you and your colleagues would be much better employed in speaking of the Court in more moderate terms. When viewed objectively, the Court is really not as stupid as you gentlemen have persuaded yourselves that it is. It has enough common-sense to be able to form a sensible view of all things, and is a venue where anyone can learn the elements of good taste. And, setting all flattery aside, courtly wit is as commendable as all the obscure erudition of the pedants.
TRISSOTIN: We see the results of its good taste all too clearly, sir.
CLITANDRE: In what respects, sir, do you observe its taste to be bad?
TRISSOTIN: What I observe, sir, is that in the area of science Rastius and Baldus do honour to France, yet their merit, though trumpeted abroad loud enough, does not attract the eye of the Court, nor its bounty.
CLITANDRE: I quite see why you are not pleased, and I also see, sir, that modesty forbids you to include yourself in their number. But, if I may also leave you out of the reckoning, what have these intellectual warriors done for the state? What services have their writings performed for the Court to be accused of such dreadful injustice and for complaints to be made on all sides that it has failed to honour their learned names with its favour and tangible rewards? So their learning is vital to France! And the books they write are of great value to the Court! A few miserable blockheads with tiny brains get it into their heads that they are important persons in the state simply because what they write is printed and bound in leather. They think that they decide the fate of thrones with their pen, that when the news breaks of their latest offerings they should see pensions fly in their direction, that the eyes of the whole universe are watching them all the time, that the glory of their name spreads everywhere, and that they are famed as prodigies of learning simply because they know what other men discovered before them, because they have had eyes and ears for thirty years, because they have spent nine or ten thousand nights dabbling in Greek and Latin and filling their heads with a dubious haul of all the old rubbish that littered the pages of books. They appear intoxicated by all the things they know. The
only quality they have is a wealth of tiresome chatter. They are
good at noting, have no common-sense and are full of an absurd,
preposterous zeal for belittling true wit and science everywhere.

PHILAMINTE: You are very heated sir, and your anger reveals the way
Nature moves in you — it was being called a rival that stirred you to . . .

Scene iv:
JULIEN, TRISSOTIN, PHILAMINTE, CLITANDRE, ARMANDE

JULIEN: The learned gentleman who called earlier and whose valet I
have the honour of being, Madame, requests you to read this note.

PHILAMINTE: No matter how important it is that I should read this
note, you must learn, my man, that it is most inopportune to be blundering
into a conversation like this. When you call at a house, you should
go first to the servants so that you may make your entrance like valet
who knows his business.

JULIEN: I shall write that down in my notebook Madame.

PHILAMINTE (reads): 'Madame, Trissotin has been boasting that he will
marry your daughter. I beg to inform you that his philosophy thinks
no further than your money, and that you would be well advised not
to finalize the marriage before reading the poem which I am presently
writing against him. Until I am ready with my portrait of him, in
which I intend to paint him in his true colours, I send you Horace,
Virgil, Terence and Catullus, where you will see that I have marked
in the margins all the passages he has pillared.'

Really! On account of this wedding I have set my heart on, a man
of merit is attacked by many enemies. Well, their fury only confirms
my intention to do something which will confound their jealousy
and make it quite plain that what they are doing will have the effect
of hastening what they are trying to prevent. (To Julienn) Take the
note back to your master at once and tell him, so that he may be
apprised of the importance I attach to his noble-minded warnings
and of how worthy I consider them of being followed, that this very
evening I shall give my daughter in marriage to (pointing to Trissotin)
this gentleman. (To Clitandre) You sir, as a family friend, may be
present at the signing of the marriage contract and, for my own part,
I gladly invite you to come. Armande, make sure to send word to
the notary and then go and tell your sister what is happening.

ARMANDE: There's no need for me to go and tell my sister. Monsieur
Clitandre here will be sure to run along at once to give her the news
and encourage her to rebel against your plans.

PHILAMINTE: We shall see which of us has more power over her and
whether or not I make her do her duty. (Exit.)

ARMANDE: I very much regret, sir, that things have not turned out quite
the way you had in mind.

CLITANDRE: I intend to work with all the zeal at my command, Madame,
to relieve you of that regret.

ARMANDE: I fear that all your efforts will not meet with success.

CLITANDRE: Perhaps you will see that your fears were groundless.

ARMANDE: I hope so.

CLITANDRE: I am certain you will — and I am sure I can count on your
support.

ARMANDE: Yes, I shall give you all the help I can.

CLITANDRE: And for your help I shall be most grateful. (Exit Armande.)

Scene v:
CHRYSALE, ARISTE, HENRIETTE, CLITANDRE

CLITANDRE: Without your support, sir, I am lost. Your wife has rejected
my proposal of marriage and has set her heart on having Trissotin
as her son-in-law.

CHRYSALE: But what fanciful idea has she got into her head? Why the
devil does she want Trissotin?

ARISTE: It's because of the name he has for writing poems in Latin that
he's seen off his rival.

CLITANDRE: She wants the marriage to take place this evening.

CHRYSALE: This evening?

CLITANDRE: This evening.

CHRYSALE: And this evening I, to foil her, intend you and Henriette to
be married.

CLITANDRE: She has sent someone round to the notary to draw up the
contract.
CHRYSALE: I'll send for him to come and draw up the right one.

CLITANDRE: Henriette is going to be told by her sister about the wedding and must put her feelings in readiness.

CHRYSALE: And I shall use my full authority to command her to get ready to give her hand in a quite different marriage. Ah, I'll show them when it comes to laying down the law whether or not I'm master in my own house. (To Henriette:) We'll be back, so wait for us. Come brother, follow me. You too my boy.

HENRIETTE (to Ariste): Oh, do try and keep him in the mood he's in now.

ARISTE: I shall do all I can to back you up.

CLITANDRE: Despite all the powerful help that's been promised me, your heart, Madame, is still my greatest hope.

HENRIETTE: You can always be sure of my heart.

CLITANDRE: I can only be happy if I can count on it.

HENRIETTE: You know by what chains they intend to bind it.

CLITANDRE: As long as it beats for me, I can't see that there's anything to fear.

HENRIETTE: I shall do everything I can to advance our tender cause. But if all my efforts fail and I do not become your wife, there is a holy retreat to which our souls are drawn; it will prevent me from becoming the wife of anyone else.

CLITANDRE: May heavenly justice grant this day that I shall not receive that particular proof of your love!

Act V

Scene I:

HENRIETTE, TRISOTIN

HENRIETTE: It is about this marriage my mother is planning, sir, that I wanted to speak privately to you. I thought that in the midst of all the commotion I see in the house that I might be able to make you listen to reason. I know you think that in addition to my love you believe I shall bring you a large dowry. But money, though many set great store by it, can have only tawdry attractions for a true philosopher. You should not limit your scorn of wealth and contempt for meaningless rank merely to the words you say.

TRISOTIN: And indeed it is not that which draws me to you. Your lustrous beauty, your shining, gentle eyes, your gracefulness, your whole being—all these are the riches, the wealth which have attracted my love and my tenderness, they are the only treasures that have captured my heart.

HENRIETTE: I am obliged to you for your unstinting feelings. Your fulsome love embarrasses me, for I regret, sir, that I cannot return it. I respect you as much as anyone could, but I see an obstacle which stands in the way of my loving you. As you know, a single heart cannot belong to two persons and I sense that Clitandre has made himself master of mine. I am aware he does not have your merits. I know that I do not have a good eye when it comes to choosing a husband. I know that you have many fine talents which by rights should delight me, I know I am wrong but I cannot help it. The only effect my reason has on me is to reprobe of my blindness.

TRISOTIN: When you give me your hand, to which others have urged me to aspire, you will give me the heart of which Clitandre is master. I make so bold as to venture that I myself am master of enough gentle arts to allow me to find the secret of being loved.

HENRIETTE: No sir. My heart is bound by its first impressions and will remain untouched by your arts. I can speak freely to you here, and there is nothing in what I am about to say that should shock you. The loving feeling which stirs in our hearts has nothing to do with merit, as you know. Whim has a part in it and when we love someone, we may often be hard put to say why. If we fell in love by conscious choice and common-sense, then, sir, you should have my heart and all my affection. But we observe that love works in a different way. Please leave me in my blindness and reject the force which others would use on your behalf to make me obey. When a man is honourable, he has no wish to be indebted to the power parents have over us. He shrinks from the idea that the woman he loves must be sacrificed to him and will want none but a heart that is willing. Do not encourage my mother to insist on her choice by asserting the full rigour of her rights over my wishes. Stop loving me and offer someone else the homage of a heart as precious as yours.

TRISOTIN: But how can my heart do what you ask? Order it to do
something it can do, for how can this heart of mine be incapable of loving you? Unless, that is, you stop being lovable Madame, and no longer allow my eyes to feast upon such heavenly charms.

HENRIETTE: Ah! let's have no more of this foolishness sir! In your poems you talk of Iris and Phyllis and Lais whom you portray as charming and swear such passionate feelings for them that—

TRISSOTIN: That's my mind speaking, not my heart. What you see with them is merely the poet in love. But Henriette I worship with all my heart and soul.

HENRIETTE: Please sir!

TRISSOTIN: If this offends you, then I am far from done offending you yet. My passion, which thus far has been hidden from view, offers you a fire which shall burn eternally: nothing can put out its tender flames! Although your beauty rejokes my advances, I cannot refuse the help of a mother who intends to crown my love with success. And as long as I achieve such bewitching happiness, provided I have you, I don't care how it's done.

HENRIETTE: But do you realize that you run much greater risks than you imagine by wanting to use force to win my affections? To be blunt, little good can ever come of marrying a girl against her wishes. When she sees that she is being coerced, she might well give way to resentments which should make a husband quake and tremble.

TRISSOTIN: There is nothing in what you say to give me cause for concern. A philosopher is prepared for any eventuality. Purged by reason of all vulgar weakness, he rises above such things and has learned not to let himself be discomfitted in any way by matters which are beyond his control.

HENRIETTE: Really sir, I am delighted with you. I never knew philosophy was so wonderful that it can teach people to bear conjugal strife with equanimity. The strength of character which you possess so particularly deserves to be given a worthier opportunity of showing what it can do. It calls for a wife who with loving care would provide constant opportunities for you to exercise it. And since, to be frank, I would not dare claim for one moment to be the kind of person who could bring out its full glory, I leave that task to someone else and swear here and now that I abandon all hope of having you for a husband.

TRISSOTIN: We shall soon see how all this turns out. The notary has been sent for. He's here. (Exit.)

Scene ii:

CHRYSALE, CLITANDRE, MARTINE, HENRIETTE

CHRYSALE: There you are my girl, I'm glad you're here. Come now, do your duty by sacrificing your own wishes to the will of your father. I intend, oh yes, I fully intend to teach your mother to behave herself. And to show her I mean business here's Martine whom I've brought back and shall reinstated under my roof, no matter what Madame says.

HENRIETTE: Such determination is to be commended, but do try, father, not to let your resolve falter. Be firm in wanting your wishes to come about and don't let your kind heart get the better of you. Don't weaken and be sure not to let mother get the upper hand.

CHRYSALE: What do you mean? What do you think I am? A ninny?

HENRIETTE: Heaven forbid.

CHRYSALE: Am I stupid?

HENRIETTE: I didn't say that.

CHRYSALE: Do you think I'm incapable of being firm and behaving like a sensible man?

HENRIETTE: Not at all father.

CHRYSALE: Is it that I, at my age, haven't got wit enough to be master in my own house?

HENRIETTE: Of course you have,

CHRYSALE: Or that I'm such a weak character that I let my wife lead me by the nose?

HENRIETTE: Certainly not father.

CHRYSALE: Well then! What do you mean? I think it's a joke the way you're speaking to me.

HENRIETTE: If I shocked you, that was not what I intended.

CHRYSALE: My word must be law in my own house.

HENRIETTE: Of course father.

CHRYSALE: Under this roof, I am the only one who has the right to command.

HENRIETTE: Yes, you're right.
CHRYSALE: I am the head of the household.
HENRIETTE: I agree.
CHRYSALE: I'm the one who says what's to become of my daughter.
HENRIETTE: Oh yes!
CHRYSALE: I have the full authority of Heaven to decide your future.
HENRIETTE: Who's going to argue with that?
CHRYSALE: And as to the matter of taking a husband, I'll show you that it's your father you must obey, not your mother.
HENRIETTE: Ah, in saying that you flatter my dearest wishes. Insist on being obeyed, that's all I ask.
CHRYSALE: We shall see if my wife dares oppose my wishes ...
CLITANDRE: Here she is and she's bringing the notary with her.
CHRYSALE: You must all give me your support.
MARTINE: Don't worry about me, I'll be sure to back you up, if needs be.

Scene iii:
PHILAMINTE, RÉLISE, ARMANDE, TRISSOTIN,
NOTARY, CHRYSALE, CLITANDRE, HENRIETTE,
MARTINE

PHILAMINTE (to the Notary): Couldn't you modify your boorish style and give us a contract written in more literary language?
NOTARY: The style is very good Madame, and I'd be a fool to want to change a word of it.
RÉLISE: Oooh! such philistinism here in the heart of France! But at the very least sir, couldn't you defer to learning by expressing the amount of the dowry not in crowns, livres and francs but in minas and talents, and by dating the document with Ides and Calends?™
NOTARY: Why Madame, if I were to agree to what you ask, I should be the laughing-stock of all my colleagues.
PHILAMINTE: We're not getting anywhere complaining to this barbarian, so come sir, you may use this table to write on. (Seeing Martine) Oh! so the impudent hussy dares to show her face here again! Would you mind telling me why you've brought her back?
CHRYSALE: I'll tell you why later, when we've time. We have something else to settle first.

NOTARY: Let's proceed with the contract. Where is the bride?
PHILAMINTE: The daughter I'm giving away in marriage is my youngest.
NOTARY: Good.
CHRYSALE: And here she is, sir. Her name is Henriette.
NOTARY: Very good. And the groom?
PHILAMINTE (indicating Trissotin): The husband I am giving her is this gentleman.
CHRYSALE (indicating Clitandre): And the man I, myself, in my personal capacity, intend her to marry is this gentleman.
NOTARY: Two husbands? By law, that's one too many.
PHILAMINTE: Why have you stopped writing? Put down, sir, put Trissotin as my son-in-law.
CHRYSALE: For my son-in-law, put down, sir, put Clitandre.
NOTARY: You must come to some agreement between yourselves and, after mature reflection, see eye to eye about who is to be the groom.
PHILAMINTE: Abide, sir, by the choice I have made.
CHRYSALE: Sir, do this my way.
NOTARY: Tell me which of you I'm supposed to listen to.
PHILAMINTE (to Chrysale): So! You are set on contesting my wishes?
CHRYSALE: I will not stand by and let any man ask for my daughter's hand merely for the money he sees in my family.
PHILAMINTE: So you think your money is at the back of this? Money is hardly a matter to concern a philosopher!
CHRYSALE: Well, I've chosen Clitandre to be her husband.
PHILAMINTE (indicating Trissotin): And here is the gentleman I have chosen to marry her. My choice shall be respected. It's all settled.
CHRYSALE: My word, you're being very high-handed about this.
MARTINE: It ain't for wives to give the orders. I'm all for lettin' the men have their say in everythin'.
CHRYSALE: Well said.
MARTINE: Even if it was sure as sure as how I'll get me marchin' orders again for sayin' so, the hen musn't crow before the cock.
CHRYSALE: That's right.
MARTINE: Look round and you'll see people always have a good larn' at a man when it's his wife who wears the trousers in his house.
CHRYSALE: True.
MARTINE: I tell you straight, if I had a husband I'd want him to rule the roost. I couldn't love him if he acted all hen-pecked, like. And
if I had a fancy to answer back or talked too much, 'twould think it was fair enough if he taught me to mind my lip with a damned good bidin'.

CHRYSALE: That's the way to talk.

MARTINE: The master's right to want a proper hubby for his daughter.

CHRYSALE: Yes.

MARTINE: What reason could he have for not letting her have Clitandre?

He's young and he's handsome. And please tell me why she should get herself saddled with a pedant who goes on and on? What she needs is a husband, not somebody who'll be forever lecturin' her. She don't want to learn all that there Greek and Latin, so what do she want with Monsieur Trissotin?

CHRYSALE: Exactly!

PHILAMINT: Of course, we have to let her prattle on and on.

MARTINE: All your professors is good for is spouting in public. If I wanted a husband, and I've said this ever so many times, I'd never pick one with brains. Brains ain't what you want in a house. Books and marriage don't go together. Now if I was to say yes to a man, the only book he'd get would be me. He wouldn't know A from B and, begging your pardon Madame, he wouldn't be a doctor of nothing except his wife.

PHILAMINT (to CHRYSALE): Is that the end? Have I listened long enough - unmoved - to your eloquent mouthpiece?

CHRYSALE: What she says is true.

PHILAMINT: And I tell you, to put an end to this discussion, that I am absolutely determined that my wishes shall be carried out. Henriette and Monsieur Trissotin will be married at once. I have spoken. I insist, so don't argue. If you've given your word to Clitandre, offer him the alternative of marrying Armande.

CHRYSALE: That might be a way of settling this matter. Look here, you two, would you agree to that?

HENTIERETTE: Oh father!

CLITANDRE: But sir . . .

BELISE: It might be possible to make him another offer he might prefer, but in that case I should insist on a kind of love which would be as pure as the sun's rays. Thinking matter would be allowable, but we will not tolerate gross matter which has mere extension.18

Scene IV:

ARISTE, CHRYSALE, PHILAMINT, BÉLISE, HENRIETTE, ARMANDE, TRISSOTIN, NOTARY, CLITANDRE, MARTINE

ARISTE: I regret having to disturb these joyful proceedings and be the cause of vexation. These two letters make me the bearer of bad tidings which I can see have very serious implications for you. (To PHILAMINT) This one is for you. It was sent to me by your lawyer. (To CHRYSALE) The other one is for you and was sent to me from Lyons.

PHILAMINT: What worrying disaster can he be writing to me about now?

ARISTE: There's one in this letter. You can read what it is.

PHILAMINT (reads): 'Madame, I have asked your brother to convey this letter to you. It will inform you of what I have not dared to say to you in person. The utter neglect with which you mismanage your affairs has meant that your barrister's clerk has not been in touch with me and, as a result, you have lost the lawsuit which you should have won.'

CHRYSALE (to PHILAMINT): You've lost the case!

PHILAMINT: You seem very upset! I am not the least shaken by the news. Come now, try at least to show a less commonplace spirit and set your face, as I do, against the adversity of fortune. (Reads) 'Your negligence has cost you forty thousand crowns, and you have been sentenced by order of the court to pay this sum, together with costs.' Sentence! What a shocking word. It should be used only for criminals.

ARISTE: He's wrong of course and you are right to protest. He should have written that you are requested by order of the court to pay forty thousands crowns, plus costs, at your earliest convenience.

PHILAMINT: What's in the other letter?

CHRYSALE (reads): 'Sir, The friendship which I have for your brother leads me to take an interest in everything that concerns you. I am aware that you placed your entire fortune in the hands of Argante and Damon, and beg to inform you that this day they have both
be declared bankrupt.' Oh my God! I've lost all my money in one fell swoop!

PHILAMINTE: Your reaction is quite disgraceful. Fie, this is nothing. For the sake, there are no unconquerable reversals of fortune, for even if he loses everything, he still has himself. Let us finish what we began. Put all your worries to one side. (Indicating Trissotin) This gentleman's fortune is large enough for both him and us.

TRISSOTIN: No Madame, press this matter no further. I can see that everyone is opposed to this marriage and it is not my purpose to force people against their will.

PHILAMINTE: This observation is very sudden! And it follows hard on the heels, sir, of our misfortune.

TRISSOTIN: I have finally grown weary of all the opposition. I'd prefer to have nothing more to do with this whole vexatious business. I do not want a wife who is unwilling.

PHILAMINTE: I detect, yes, I detect something in you which I have refused to believe until now, and it reflects no credit on you.

TRISSOTIN: You may detect in me whatever you like and I couldn't care less about what you make of it. But I'm not the sort of man who is prepared to be placed in the ignominious position of being rejected in the insulting manner I have had to suffer. I deserve to be treated with greater consideration and when I am not wanted I take my leave. (Exeunt)

PHILAMINTE: He could not have bared his mercenary soul more clearly! The way he has behaved is thoroughly unphilosophical!

CLITANDE: I do not pretend to be a philosopher, but I can say that I shall remain devoted to you, Madame, whatever your destiny may hold. I venture to offer you, together with my loyalty, whatever money Fate has allotted me.

PHILAMINTE: I am touched, sir, by your generous gesture and am minded to reward your amorous passion — yes, I shall bestow Henriette upon your impatient ardour —

HENTRIETTE: No mother, I have changed my mind. You must allow me to oppose your wishes.

CLITANDE: What? You oppose my happiness? And, just when I see everyone accepting my love...

HENTRIETTE: I know that you do not have very much money Clitandre. I always wanted you for my husband in the knowledge that, as well as satisfying my own dearest wishes, marrying me meant settling your affairs. But now that our destinies have turned out to be so different, I love you enough at this fateful moment not to want to burden you with our misfortune.

CLITANDE: Any destiny shared with you would be precious to me. Any destiny without you would be unbearable.

HENTRIETTE: We always say such things in the heat of passion. Let us avoid the embarrassment of future regrets. Nothing weakens the tie that binds us more than the tedious demands of daily living, and since often as not each partner accuses the other of being the cause of the black misery that ordinarily follows such ardent love...

ARISTE (to HENTRIETTE): Is the reason we have heard you give your only motive for refusing to marry Clitandre?

HENTRIETTE: Yes, otherwise you would see how my heart would jump at the prospect. I reject his hand only because I love him too much.

ARISTE: Then let yourself be bound by such loving chains. The news I brought was false! It was a ruse, a sudden stratagem which I wished to try as a way of serving your love, opening my sister's eyes and making her see how her philosopher would turn out when faced with a real test.

CHRYSALE: God be praised!

PHILAMINTE: It does my heart good to think how furious that coward who ran away will feel. He will be punished for his despicable avarice when he sees how brilliantly we shall celebrate this wedding.

CHRYSALE (to CLITANDE): I knew all along that you'd end up marrying her.

ARMANDE (to PHILAMINTE): So, you intend to sacrifice me to their happiness?

PHILAMINTE: No, it is not you who has been sacrificing to them,¹⁶ and you can call upon philosophy to help you to look smilingly on the consummation of their love.

BELISSE: But he'd better make good and sure that no trace of me lingers on in his heart. People, you know, often get married on impulse because they are unhappy, with the result that they spend the rest of their life regretting it.

CHRYSALE (to the Notary): Come sir, enter the names as I told you and draw up the contract according to my instructions.
Those Learned Ladies

1. Vaugelas categorically outlawed: in 1647, the grammarian Claude Favre de Vaugelas (1585–1650) had published *Remarques sur la langue française*, which ruled on niceties of the language used by "the best part" of the Court, and the most 'best' authors. It became the standard reference work of French linguistic usage in the classical age.

2. Matherie and Balzac: the poet François de Mallerhe (1535–1638) was considered by 1660 as the major precursor of classical taste. Gué de Balzac (1541–1634) was instrumental in shaping the refined, elegant literary prose so admired by supporters of Preciosity.

3. *epigram*: a short, eight-lined poem which concludes with a maxim, often satirical.

4. *my madrigal*: see note 9 to *Such Fools, Such Affected Ladies*.


6. *on her fever*: the sonnet "To Mademoiselle de Longueville, now Madame de Nemours, on her fever" by the abbé Cotin (1604–82), was first published in 1679. Molière changed the title presumably because he did not wish to offend Madame de Nemours. Trissotin's epigram, which follows, is also by Cotin who, however, described it as a madrigal and intended it as an example of how such verses should not be written.

7. *tercet*: the fourteen lines of a sonnet are divided into two quatrains and two tercets.

8. *a learned reference*: Lais, famed for her beauty, lived in the fifth century BC at Corinth.

9. *what is kept apart elsewhere*: the Academy of Science, set up in 1666 by Colbert, admitted only scientists while the French Academy, founded by Cardinal Richelieu in 1635, had only literary members. Neither admitted women.

10. *Aristotle*: these exchanges make free with catchwords of science ancient and modern. Aristotle defined order as an essential characteristic of the created world. Plato interpreted creation as concrete reflections of abstract, ideal forms. Epicurus argued that all existence is determined by the atomic structures of matter. René Descartes (1596–1650) argued that nature abhors a vacuum and concluded that "subtle matter" fills the spaces between planets which are formed by the swirls and eddies ("the vortex") of the ambient ether and have the sun as their centre. He identified comets and shooting stars as distant worlds which drop out of their station (i.e., fall), and defined magnetism as a property of the created universe.

11. *Stoics*: *wise man*: four hundred years before Christ the Greek Stoics believed that the 'wise man' pursued not wealth or passion but anseric virtue. Philistine is doctrinally on safe ground and runs no risk of falling foul of seventeenth-century theological orthodoxy; the moral philosophy of Stoicism, though 'pagan' by definition, had long been regarded as compatible with Christian teaching.

12. *in the area of language*: the purification of the French language remained high on the agenda of Preciosity. The defenders of 'refined' speech banned archaisms, provincialisms and popular expressions, and demanded that 'crudity' be abolished in favour of 'decency'; thus 'heart' would replace 'breast'. Extremists, however, went further and waged war on certain prefixes and suffixes, numerous in French, which, when detached from their stem, were vulgar, rather as in English "milite", say, might offend those who are expecting to be offended.

13. *this . . . parlor*: both terms derive from the principles of Greek rhetoric, the first dealing with manners, the second with the passions.

14. *Theocritus . . . Virgil . . . Horace*: for contemporary literary theorists, the pastoral poems of Theocritus (born c. 300 BC) and the *Bucolics* of Virgil (70–19 BC) were models of the genre, while Horace was master of the ode. All three authors were associated with the poet Gilles Ménage (1615–92), poet, Hellenist, lexicographer and linguistic purist who was the original of Molière's *Vadius*. Ménage had quarrelled with Cotin in about 1659 in circumstances which, as we shall see, Molière turns into farce.

15. *author of the *Satires*: in the ninth of his *Satires* (1667–8), Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711) had consistently attacked the abbé Cotin, author of the poems attributed to Trissotin; see note 6 above. Boileau also lampooned Ménage, though less often and more indirectly.

16. *at Barbin's*: Barbin was also Molière's publisher.

17. *minos . . . Calends*: minas and talens were ancient Greek coins, while in the Roman calendar, the Ides was the thirteenth or fifteenth day in the month and the Calends was the first.

18. *Thinking matter . . . extension*: Bélisle refers to Descartes's distinction between thinking and extended substances. The first give mind and spirit, and the second the physical. Bélisle repeats the distinction between mind and body, form and matter made by Philamine at the start of Act IV.

19. *sacrifice to them*: the French is unclear here and the line has been read in other ways. The 'sacrifice' may be Philaminte's who must resign herself to not having a clever son-in-law; or the loss (in her view) may be Henriette's, for she will not marry a wit; or it may even be Citandre's, for his wife will never be learned.