

to Monsieur de Beantrellis and Monsieur de Sarlines, who were standing near by.

"Gentlemen, you must excuse the presence of so many hats, but a comedy ill-dressed is a comedy ill-acted. Monsieur de Maupeou," raising her voice, "are you a judge of hats?"

"No, Madame," replied De Maupeou, breaking off his conversation with Madame de Stenlis. "My business in life is to judge men."

"Your business is a tragedy, not a comedy, then. Well, at all events, you can give an opinion on an actress's qualification for the tragic rôle. I told you this morning I was about to stage a little play of mine, and upon my heart, Monsieur de Maupeou, I have not yet fixed in my mind whether it will have a comic or a tragic ending. That sounds as though I were an indifferent playwright. I am, and it seems to me that nowadays it is the indifferent playwrights who please. They study their public, not their art. So do I. Monsieur de Beantrellis, what would you advise as an ending for my little play, comedy or tragedy?"

"Oh, *ma foi!*" cried the simple-minded Beantrellis, "I prefer to laugh. Comedy, Madame, by all means. One leaves the theater with a better taste in the mouth and able to cut one's supper."