

**THE COMEDIES OF  
CARLO GOLDONI**

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The Comedies of Carlo Goldoni by Carlo Goldoni & Helen Zimmern

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**CARLO GOLDONI & HELEN ZIMMERN**

**THE COMEDIES OF  
CARLO GOLDONI**



Masterpieces of Foreign Authors

GOLDONI'S COMEDIES

THE COMEDIES OF  
77512  
CARLO GOLDONI

*EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION BY*  
HELEN ZIMMERN



CHICAGO  
A. C. M'CLURG & CO.  
1892

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## INTRODUCTION.

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"PAINTER and son of nature," wrote Voltaire, at that time the arbitrator and the dispenser of fame in cultured Europe, to Carlo Goldoni, then a rising dramatist, "I would entitle your comedies, 'Italy liberated from the Goths.'" The sage of Ferney's quick critical faculty had once again hit its sure mark, for it is Goldoni's supreme merit, and one of his chief titles to fame and glory, that he released the Italian theatre from the bondage of the artificial and pantomime performances that until then had passed for plays, and that, together with Molière, he laid the foundations of the drama as it is understood in our days. Indeed, Voltaire, in his admiration for the Venetian playwright, also called him "the Italian Molière," a comparison that is more accurate than such comparisons between authors of different countries are apt to be, though, like all such judgments, somewhat rough and ready. It is interesting in this respect to confront the two most popular dramas of the two dramatists, Molière's "Le Misanthrope" and Goldoni's "Il Burbero Benefico." Goldoni, while superior in imagination, in spontaneity, deals more with the superficial aspects of humanity. Molière, on the contrary, probes deep into the human soul, and has greater elegance of form. In return, Goldoni is more genial and kindly in his judgments, and, while lacking none of

Molière's keenness of observation, is devoid of his bitter satire. Both have the same movement and life, the same intuitive perception of what will please the public, the same sense of dramatic proportion. Goldoni was, however, less happy than Molière as regards the times in which his lines were cast. The French dramatist, like Shakespeare, was born at an age in which his fatherland was traversing a glorious epoch of national story. The Italian lived instead in the darkest period of that political degradation which was the lot of the fairest of European countries, until quite recently, when she emancipated herself, threw off the chains of foreign bondage, and proclaimed herself mistress of her own lands and fortunes. And manners and customs were no less in decadence in private as well as in public,—a sad epoch, truly, though to outsiders it looked light-hearted and merry enough. Goldoni's lot was cast in the final decades of the decrepitude of Venice, the last of the Italian proud Republics, which survived only to the end of the eighteenth century, indeed dissolved just four years after her great dramatist's demise. His long life comprised almost the whole of that century, from the wars of the Spanish Succession, which open the history of that era, to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle and the French Revolution.

Historical events had, however, merely an outward and accidental influence on this great artist-nature, entirely absorbed in his work, and indifferent, even unconscious, to all that surged around him in this respect. To be assured that this is so, we need merely peruse Goldoni's own *Memoirs*, composed by him in his old age, and which, according to Gibbon's verdict, are even more amusing to read than his very comedies.

"The immortal Goldoni," as his countrymen love to call him, was born in Venice in 1707. His family