



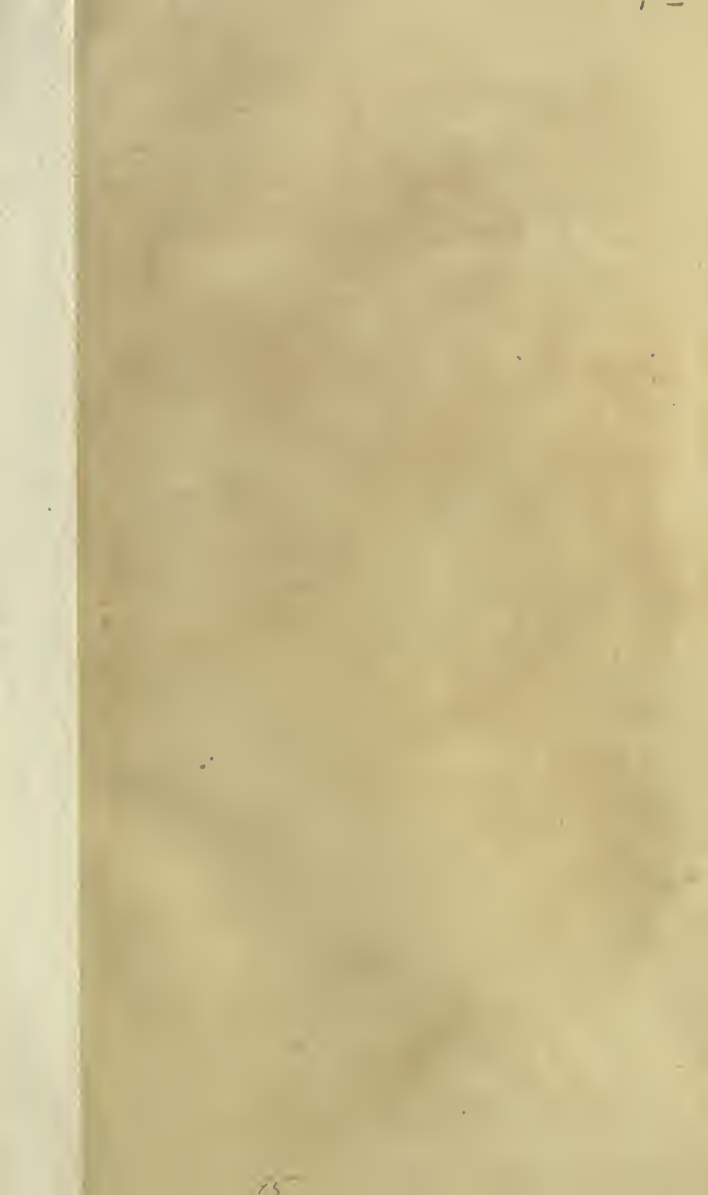
MERIDAN'S PLAYS

ILLUSTRATED BY
GEO. J. SULLIVAN





Max Edward Pohlman



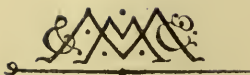


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The School for Scandal

and

The Rivals



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THE
SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL
AND
THE RIVALS

BY RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL, Q.C., M.P.

AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

EDMUND J. SULLIVAN

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INTRODUCTION

MR. FRASER RAE'S interesting and well-informed *Life of Sheridan*, lately published by Mr. Bentley, recalls attention to a brilliant figure in our dramatic and parliamentary history that is never likely to be forgotten. Such gifts as Sheridan's are not easily overlooked. Indeed, it would be hard to name any one whose reputation is more firmly embedded in that great national tradition which lives and thrives in happy independence of critics and bookmakers and other rummagers amongst the dust-heaps of history. Some vast amount of years ago, I remember, being then one of the smallest and most inquisitive of boys, anxiously inquiring of a carpenter who was doing odd jobs about the house who he would have wished to be were he not the lucky owner of a straw-bag full of dangerous tools. Quick, quite alarmingly quick came his answer (and then for the first time I heard the fascinating names), Richard Brinsley Sheridan. The carpenter, I have no

doubt, proceeded to justify his decided preference by telling his small friend about speeches in Parliament and plays on the stage, but all I can recall is his saying more than once "and he was a great wit." And so he was, though you would hardly guess so much from Mr. Rae's two volumes.

The fact is that Sheridan's latest biographer is an iconoclast, always a dangerous thing to be, and what he seeks to smash is a tradition, always a difficult thing to do. He has honestly persuaded himself that the Sheridan who lives in men's memories is a false Sheridan, and he has set himself to work to restore the true one. Animated by this belief, he has written a book which all will do well to read, a book which very likely will mark a point of departure for subsequent biographers and critics.

For my part, were I ever to be the biographer of a famous man long dead, I would never quarrel outright with a tradition. Temper it with charity, modify it with time, make ample allowances for jealousies and contending vanities, still ampler for sheer inventiveness; but this done, the stream of tradition, thus purified, which has trickled down to you, however far removed it may be from the truth, is far more likely to be nearer that shy commodity than anything you are in the least likely to concoct or suppose for yourself.

Moore's *Life of Sheridan* is a bad book. Its author was not the man to be able to take Byron's excellent and manly advice: "In writing the life of Sheridan, never mind the angry lies of the humbug Whigs."¹ Both the biography of Sheridan and Moore's own memoirs are stuffed far too full of that unfriendliness of disposition, that ill-natured gossip of Holland House which have earned for the Whigs their unlovely reputation. Still the means exist, scattered up and down well-known and most readable books, by which to test the tradition, the by no means unkindly tradition, which has floated down to us, of the man whom the carpenter, in 1857, longed to have been, and whom Charles Lamb once affectionately called "our incomparable Brinsley."²

As might be expected, it is the man Sheridan who escapes our grasp—the dramatist and the orator, articles of known manufacture, are easier to analyse. The materials for any determined, dogged life of Sheridan are scanty. He led a

¹ Moore's *Life of Byron*, iv. 135.

² There is a story about Lamb and Sheridan in Crabb Robinson's *Diary*, i. 268: "A few months afterwards (1808), I met Sir Charles Bunbury when I was walking with Lamb. Sir Charles shook hands with me. Lamb was all astonishment. 'I had no idea that you knew Sheridan.' 'Nor do I. That's Sir Charles Bunbury.' 'That's impossible, I have known him to be Sheridan all my life. That *shall* be Sheridan. You thief, you have stolen my Sheridan!'"

solitary boyhood ; his mother being much abroad, and his father always indifferent to him, his affections had no early bloom—a terrible deprivation. He was no letter-writer ; such letters as we have of his are dull as ditch-water. His first wife, the lovely Miss Linley, was an angel and a devoted one, but her letters, even if they are hers, do not, so far as they have been published, tell us anything intimate of the husband she adored. But that she did adore him is a fact to be noted.

What manner of man was Sheridan? His father, a most disagreeable creature, once said to Rogers, “Talk of the merit of Dick’s comedy! There is nothing in it. He had but to dip the pencil in his own heart and he’d find there the character of both Joseph and Charles.”¹

Such a saying, spiteful though it be, when uttered by a father, makes us think. That there should have been something of Charles Surface about our incomparable Brinsley need surprise no one, but Joseph is another matter. I hasten to add that the evidence we happily possess puts hypocrisy out of the question. Everybody, even the snarling Whigs, even the tattling Tutor Smyth (afterwards, I regret to say, Regius Professor of History in the University of Cambridge), admit that Sheridan was an honest man. Those who knew him best, his wives, one of artistic tempera-

¹ Moore’s *Diary*, iv. 226.

ment, the other (the more extravagant of the two) the daughter of a dean, his wives' sisters (those impartial witnesses), his colleagues, ay, even his creditors, all unite in a chorus, and pronounce Sheridan incorruptible and upright. But for all this, he was, like the infamous Joseph, a man of sentiment. Sheridan always assumed a lofty tone and announced himself to be governed by rules of independence and integrity which went as far beyond the actual necessities of the case as did his conduct fall short of those humbler rules of prudence and punctuality which were all that was required of him. Byron, whose admiration for Sheridan was as unbounded as was his expression of it generous, writes, "Once I saw him cry at Robin's the auctioneer's after a splendid dinner, full of great names and high spirits. I had the honour of sitting next to Sheridan. The occasion of his tears was some observation or other upon the subject of the sturdiness of the Whigs in resisting office and keeping to their principles. Sheridan turned round, 'Sir, it is easy for my Lord G. or Earl G., or Marquis B. or Lord H., with thousands upon thousands a year, some of it either presently derived or inherited in sinecure or acquisitions from the public money, to boast of their patriotism and keep aloof from temptation, but they do not know from what temptation those have kept aloof, who had equal pride, at least equal talents and not

unequal passions, and nevertheless knew not in their course of their lives what it was to have a shilling of their own.' And in saying this he wept."¹

I suppose we may believe this, though I know how dangerous it is to have to deal with men of genius, and if we do, it is an example (and others abound) to show what Sheridan's father meant when he told Rogers that his son had a Joseph Surface in his breast. But it was an honest Joseph.

Another thing that is plain about Sheridan is that he was an affectionate man. He was even touchingly so. His perpetual anxiety that his horrid father should love him proves what a fund of affection he had within him. There is no need to labour this point.

Although, of course, the most brilliant company he was not a man gay of heart. Byron speaks of him as saturnine and never laughing. Perhaps his passion for practical jokes throws some light upon the nature of his mirth. His intoxication, however it may have interfered with his success in life, is of small import. A glass or two of wine upset him. When drunk he was better company than the bulk of mankind when sober. By common consent he was a procrastinator.

Curiously enough, he was not a ready man. He did not bubble over with good things. He

¹ Byron's *Life of Moore*, ii. 201.

prepared himself carefully. The notes of his speeches which Moore inspected reveal the fact that he was far more afraid of forgetting the point of his jokes than the thread of his discourse. Yet he was a master of parliamentary badinage. I suspect the fact was, that knowing himself not to be a full man, he was timid of his own resources. A full man of course he was not. How could he be? Knowledge is acquired. You may learn in suffering what you teach in song, you may, if you have added observation to wit, gain insight into character and become wise in council, but neither mother wit nor extensive observation will make a full man.

Sheridan had a great capacity for taking pains. In order to acquit himself well *pro re natâ*, he could toil with any lawyer getting up a case. He would shut himself up in his room for hours and work unremittingly, arranging his facts and elaborating that vein of ridicule at which he excelled. Nor did he quarrel with a dull subject, but took what came. For thirty-one years he was an active and useful member of Parliament. He was no brilliant meteor, no flash in the pan, but what Mr. Disraeli called "a personage." He was a far cooler parliamentary hand than his eminent countryman Burke, whom he once pulled down in his seat, thereby preventing a painful exhibition.

As a politician Sheridan was acute and a better judge of what is now called public opinion than any of his Whig colleagues.

What were the great mistakes of that great man Charles James Fox? The Coalition, the secession from Parliament, his far too strong language in favour of the French Revolution, and his India Bill. To all these things, such at least is the tradition, Sheridan objected.¹ To call Sheridan a wise man would be excessive praise, but he was a shrewd politician.

The prodigious reputation of his Begum speech in the House of Commons on the 7th of February 1787 proves how successful it was, and also what a famous place is the lobby of the House of Commons for the manufacture of a tradition. The speech lasted for five hours and a half; of necessity it was heard by very few, and no report worthy of the name was made either at the time or since, yet Horace Walpole, who did not hear it, writing two days afterwards to Lady Ossory, says, "If you could bring over Mr. Sheridan he would do something; he talked for five hours and a half on Wednesday and turned everybody's head. One heard everybody in the streets raving on the wonders of the speech." Walpole then adds, in his inimitable way, "for my part I cannot believe it was so supernatural as they say—do you believe it was,

¹ See Charles Butler's *Reminiscences*, 204.

madame?"¹ How are we to answer Walpole? Mr. Pitt, who *did* hear the speech, in consenting to the adjournment of the House, said that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind, whilst Fox declared that all he had ever heard, all that he had ever read when compared with it dwindled into nothing and vanished like vapour before the sun. Here is human testimony. It must indeed have been an enchanting, though lengthy discourse.

Fox did not always admire Sheridan's oratory, and coarsely pronounced his hardly less famous speech on the same Begums, delivered in Westminster Hall the following year, to be trumpery, and he used to add that it spoilt the style of Burke, who greatly admired it.² Fox ceased to admire Burke's style at the same moment of time as he ceased to agree with Burke's opinions.

From the specimens we have of Sheridan's oratory, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that its fascination consisted in charm of delivery and manner, and in powers of ridicule and light satire; of real grandeur either of style or sentiment there was no more than there was of profundity of thought or depth of insight. Nor

¹ Walpole's *Letters*, vol. i. 93.

² Moore's *Diary*, ii. 187.

did his contemporaries (despite their rhapsodies in the lobby) fail to perceive this.

It is of course Sheridan's comedies that keep alive the true Sheridan tradition amongst the people at large.

The Rivals, Sheridan's first play, was first produced at Covent Garden on the 17th of January 1775, its author being then twenty-four years old. The play as he wrote it was far too long, and the famous part of Sir Lucius O'Trigger falling into bad hands, the first representation was a failure. Sheridan, however, was an adept at revision, and after he had cut down his manuscript, and the management had substituted Mr. Clinch for Mr. Lee, the path of *The Rivals* became what it has ever since remained, a path of pleasantness and theatrical peace. *St. Patrick's Day* quickly followed *The Rivals*, and *The Duenna*, *St. Patrick's Day*. *The Duenna* first appeared at Covent Garden on the 21st of November 1775. In 1777 Sheridan assumed the management of Drury Lane and opened with *The Trip to Scarborough* in February of that year, and on the 8th of May, also in the same year, appeared that joint miracle of management and wit, *The School for Scandal*, with Mrs. Abington, whose face, hung upon a wall, is still enough to make the surliest smile, as the first Lady Teazle. In 1788 appeared *The Critic*, Sheridan's last play, as *Pizarro* (most prosperous

of all) has no pretensions to be treated as an original work. So before he was forty Sheridan ceased to be a dramatist.

No criticism of these plays seems to be less to the purpose than that which concerns itself with the undeniable use their author made of the methods and manners of his predecessors. Sheridan is only to be judged by the effect he produces, and that effect is his, and nobody else's. Could anybody ever have said that the credit of *The School for Scandal* belonged to him and not to Sheridan? Without the *Rehearsal*, there would have been no *Critic*; without Dogberry and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, there would have been no Mrs. Malaprop and no Bob Acres. Possibly, in the same way, without the *Fall of Man* there would have been neither comedy nor tragedy. Sheridan by the order of his mind belonged to the race who borrow. Lord Thanet quoted aptly when, in reply to Moore, who was talking foolishly about the use Sheridan made of other men's wit, he called to mind Molière's famous phrase, "*C'est mon bien et je le prends où je le trouve.*"¹ Stolen goods betray the receiver, who does not know how to get rid of them; but Sheridan had no difficulty in disposing of his appropriations. Were it pretended on Sheridan's behalf that he was an original dramatist, it might be necessary to consider the extent of his

¹ Moore's *Diary*, iii. 233.

pilferings, but as no such claim can be made, the charge of literary theft may be contemptuously dismissed. Landor, in one of his *Imaginary Conversations*,¹ remarks, "Some traveller a little while ago was so witty as to call Venice Rome—not indeed the Rome of the Tiber, but the Rome of the sea. A poet ran instantly to the printers out of breath at so glorious an opportunity of perpetuating his fame and declaring to all Europe that he had called Venice Rome the year before."

Though Sheridan as a dramatist can lay no claim to especial originality, he nevertheless wrought a great change, appearing as he did just when such a change was demanded. He belonged to the school of artificial comedy—to the school of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar—where wit predominates and where human nature, happily not altogether absent, is yet condemned to breathe the air of a forcing-house for jests, and risible, because risky, situations.

The elder men were, if one may say so, broader in the beam than Sheridan. There are passages in Congreve far stronger than anything Sheridan ever wrote. For example, the well-known passage in *Love for Love*, when Valentine reminds his obdurate father though the latter could deprive him of the family estate, he could not disinherit him of the hereditary passions and tendencies with

¹ The Abbé Delille and Walter Landor.

which he had endowed him at birth. Nor is there anything in Sheridan's comedies so comical and original as the fancy of Heartfree in Vanbrugh's *Provoked Wife*, which first foreshadows, nay indeed proclaims, the now famous philosophy of Clothes.

But these elder dramatists had already become impossible, not so much by reason of the coarseness of their language, though that was reprehensible enough and made Miss Burney blush, as by the exceeding hardness of their hearts, their downright, vile inhumanity. Well does Lord Macaulay put it, "We are surrounded by foreheads of bronze, hearts like the nether-millstone, and tongues set on fire of hell." What can be more abominable than the words of Valentine (almost his first words) in the fourth scene of the first act of Congreve's *Love for Love*? Who is to be blamed if on encountering them he reads no more Congreve that day or any other day? This is the real offence of these admirable writers and undeniably witty fellows.

These dramatists were followed by a turgid and insipid race of playwrights, who thought to make up for their plentiful lack of wit and finish by copious draughts of bombast, floods of tears, and sentiment false as Belial. They won applause, but of necessity their day was short. It was Sheridan's allotted task to be witty after the

fashion of Congreve without inhumanity, and to give mere sentiment the slip.

In *The Rivals* we note the transition, for Julia and her Faulkland are still hopelessly entangled in the thicket of sentiment, and there were those, we know, in the early audiences who preferred the sentiment to the wit, and the speeches of these boring lovers to the humour of Bob Acres and Sir Anthony Absolute. But in *The School for Scandal* the triumph of wit is complete.

The complaint so frequently urged against Sheridan, that his servants are as witty as their masters, appears to me an unreasonable one in artificial comedy. Why should they not be? The wit in question is not that of a Benedict or a Falstaff, but a production quite as likely to flourish in the servants' hall as in the card-room. All that is required is a little additional pertness, and this Sheridan usually supplies. After all, it is not one bit more unlikely that Fag and Trip should talk as they do, than that the empty-headed libertines they serve should always prove themselves so prodigal of epigram and such masters of style.

No! the real risk to which *The School for Scandal* is more and more exposed as the years roll by, is lest it may be found trespassing on the borderlands of truth and reality, and evoking genuine feeling; for as soon as it does this, the

surroundings must become incongruous and therefore painful.

Too long ago, when Miss Ellen Terry used to act Lady Teazle at the Vaudeville with a moving charm still happily hers, I remember hearing behind me a youthful voice full of tears and terror (it was of course when Joseph Surface was making his insidious proposals to Lady Teazle) exclaim, "Oh, mother, I hope she won't yield!" and I then became aware of the proximity of some youthful creature to whom all this comic business (for one knew the screen was soon to fall) was sheer tragedy. It made me a little uncomfortable. To Sheridan, nearer to Congreve than we now are to Sheridan, it was all pure comedy. We see this from the boisterous laughter with which Charles Surface greets the *dénouement*. Charles was no doubt a rake, but he was not meant to be a heartless rake after the fashion of the Wildairs of an earlier day. Had he not refused five hundred pounds for a trumpery picture of his uncle, for whose fortune he was waiting? It was all comedy to Sheridan, and if it ever ceases to be all comedy to us, it will be the first blow this triumphant piece has ever received.

We do not go to the play to argue with the players as to the view of life they present to us on their mimic stage. We go to agree, not to quarrel; to laugh or to cry (what passes for crying), not to

wrangle or discuss. Sooner than to do these latter things, we will stop away altogether. It is indeed a fierce light that beats upon the stage. Were it as easy for a book to be damned as for a play, there would be many more ugly gaps in our shelves than there are. We can read in our arm-chairs and enjoy with a languid pleasure many a book, which, were its characters and incidents to be presented to us on the boards, would outrage our feelings and evoke our displeasure.

The comedies of Sheridan have already had a long life, and though they are now entering upon a century sure to prove one of critical stir and stress, when old canons of taste, and rules of dialogue and of scenic propriety will be rudely upset, I see no reason why *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Duenna*, and *The Critic* should not triumphantly emerge through the ordeal and be received as warmly throughout the twentieth century as they ever have been during the nineteenth. And if so, the Sheridan tradition will be kept alive a good while longer.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL	I
THE RIVALS	185



ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
In beauty, that copy is not equal to you	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Half-Title to "The School for Scandal"	I
Lady Sneerwell and Snake discovered drinking chocolate	15
My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do to-day?	19
Enter Maria	23
Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. So, good-bye to ye	45
Cards at Lady Sneerwell's	49
Queen-of-Swords Minuet at Lady Sneerwell's	57
By all that's honest, I swear	61
Hah! Sir Oliver—my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!	66
Your friend is an unconscionable dog: but you can't help that	75
Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you—so, bye—bye!	84
Bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria!	90

	PAGE
Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen	93
You may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree	105
Knock down my Aunt Deborah!	109
She always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street	117
Ay, ever improving himself—Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface—	124
Hush!—a little French milliner . . . she's in the room now	136
Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!	139
Fiends! vipers! furies!	157
Out with him, to be sure	167
Enter Snake	171
Leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer	175
May you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I intend to do!	179
Tailpiece to "The School for Scandal"	182
Half-Title to "The Rivals"	185
This is "The Gordian Knot,"—and this "Peregrine Pickle." Here are "The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker"	209
My dearest Julia, how delighted am I!	213
There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton	219
Let me see to what account have I turned my <i>simplicity</i> lately	226
Oh, I lied, sir—I forget the precise lie	230
Now d—n me! if ever I call you <i>Jack</i> again!	247

ILLUSTRATIONS

xxvii

PAGE

So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand, to put you in mind	255
I see an impudent scoundrel before me	261
Not to please your father, sir?	265
Captain Absolute and Lydia	279
Ay, poor young man!—down on his knees entreating for pity!	283
Dress <i>does</i> make a difference, David	287
Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme . . .	293
Good-bye, master	301
Remember, Jack—a determined dog!	305
“Youth’s the season made for joy”	314
Oh! Sir Anthony!—Oh fie, captain!	320
She’s gone!—for ever!	333
So! so! here’s fine work!—here’s fine suicide, para- cide, and simulation!	338
Hey, Sir Lucius!—we—we—we—we—won’t run . .	349
Come on then, sir—(<i>draws</i>); . . . here’s my reply .	355
Pardon my blushes, I am Delia	359
At night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs Malaprop .	363



THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL



by
R. BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
Illustrated by
EDMUND J. SULLIVAN.

A PORTRAIT

ADDRESSED TO MRS. CREWE, WITH THE COMEDY
OF THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

BY R. B. SHERIDAN, ESQ.

TELL me, ye prim adepts in Scandal's school,
Who rail by precept, and detract by rule,
Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
So deck'd with grace, and so unlike your own,
That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise!—
Attend!—a model shall attract your view—
Daughters of calumny, I summon you!
You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
Or fond creation of the Muse and Love.—
Attend, ye virgin critics, shrewd and sage,
Ye matron censors of this childish age,
Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare
A fixt antipathy to young and fair;
By cunning, cautious; or by nature, cold,
In maiden madness, virulently bold!—
Attend! ye skilled to coin the precious tale,

Creating proof, where inuendos fail!
 Whose practised memories, cruelly exact,
 Omit no circumstance, except the fact!—
 Attend, all ye who boast,—or old or young,—
 The living libel of a slanderous tongue!
 So shall my theme as far contrasted be,
 As saints by fiends, or hymns by calumny.
 Come, gentle Amoret (for 'neath that name,
 In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame);
 Come—for but thee who seeks the Muse? and
 while

Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,
 With timid grace, and hesitating eye,
 The perfect model, which I boast, supply:—
 Vain Muse! couldst thou the humblest sketch
 create

Of her, or slightest charm couldst imitate—
 Could thy blest strain in kindred colours trace
 The faintest wonder of her form and face—
 Poets would study the immortal line,
 And *Reynolds* own *his* art subdued by thine;
 That art, which well might added lustre give
 To Nature's best, and Heaven's superlative:
 On *Granby's* cheek might bid new glories rise,
 Or point a purer beam from *Devon's* eyes!
 Hard is the task to shape that beauty's praise,
 Whose judgment scorns the homage flattery pays!
 But praising Amoret we cannot err,
 No tongue o'ervalues Heaven, or flatters her!
 Yet she by Fate's perverseness—she alone
 Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise
 her own!

Adorning Fashion, unadorn'd by dress,

Simple from taste, and not from carelessness ;
 Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,
 Not stiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild :
 No state has *Amoret!* no studied mien ;
 She frowns no *goddess*, and she moves *no queen*.
 The softer charm that in her manner lies
 Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise ;
 It justly suits th' expression of her face,—
 'Tis less than dignity, and more than grace !
 On her pure cheek the native hue is such,
 That form'd by heav'n to be admired so much,
 The hand divine, with a less partial care,
 Might well have fix'd a fainter crimson there,
 And bade the gentle inmate of her breast,—
 Inshrined Modesty!—supply the rest.
 But who the peril of her lips shall paint?
 Strip them of smiles—still, still all words are
 faint!

But moving Love himself appears to teach
 Their action, though denied to rule her speech ;
 And thou who seest her speak and dost not hear,
 Mourn not her distant accents 'scape thine ear ;
 Viewing those lips, thou still may'st make pretence
 To judge of what she says, and swear 'tis sense :
 Cloth'd with such grace, with such expression
 fraught,

They move in meaning, and they pause in thought !
 But dost thou farther watch, with charm'd surprise,
 The mild irresolution of her eyes,
 Curious to mark how frequent they repose,
 In brief eclipse and momentary close—
 Ah ! seest thou not an ambush'd Cupid there,
 Too tim'rous of his charge, with jealous care

Veils and unveils those beams of heav'nly light,
 Too full, too fatal else, for mortal sight?
 Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
 In pard'ning dimples hope a safe retreat.
 What though her peaceful breast should ne'er
 allow

Subduing frowns to arm her alter'd brow,
 By Love, I swear, and by his gentle wiles,
 More fatal still the mercy of her smiles!
 Thus lovely, thus adorn'd, possessing all
 Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,
 The height of vanity might well be thought
 Prerogative in her, and Nature's fault.
 Yet gentle *Amoret*, in mind supreme
 As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme;
 And half mistrustful of her beauty's store,
 She bars with wit those darts too keen before:—
 Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
 Though *Greville*, or the *Muse*, should deign to
 teach,

Fond to improve, nor tim'rous to discern
 How far it is a woman's grace to learn;
 In *Millar's* dialect she would not prove
 Apollo's priestess, but Apollo's love,
 Graced by those signs, which truth delights to
 own,

The timid blush, and mild submitted tone:
 Whate'er she says, though sense appear throughout,
 Displays the tender hue of female doubt;
 Deck'd with that charm, how lovely wit appears,
 How graceful *science*, when that robe she wears!
 Such too her talents, and her bent of mind,
 As speak a sprightly heart by thought refined,

A taste for mirth, by contemplation school'd,
A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled,
A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide ;
An awe of talent, which she owns with pride !

Peace ! idle Muse,—no more thy strain prolong,
But yield a theme, thy warmest praises wrong ;
Just to her merit, though thou canst not raise
Thy feeble verse, behold th' acknowledged praise
Has spread conviction through the envious train,
And cast a fatal gloom o'er Scandal's reign !
And lo ! each pallid hag, with blister'd tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung—
Owns all the colours just—the outline true ;
Thee my inspirer, and my *model*—CREWE !

PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK

A SCHOOL for Scandal! tell me, I beseech you,
Needs there a school this modish art to teach you?
No need of lessons now, the knowing think;
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.
Caused by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours
Distress our fair ones—let them read the papers;
Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit;
Crave what you will—there's *quantum sufficit*.

“Lord!” cries my Lady *Wormwood* (who loves
tattle,

And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just ris'n at noon, all night at cards when
threshing

Strong tea and scandal—“Bless me, how re-
freshing!

Give me the papers, *Lisp*—how bold and free!
(sips)

Last night Lord L. (sips) *was caught with*
Lady D.

For aching heads what charming *sal volatile*!
(sips)

*If Mrs. B. will still continue flirting,
We hope she'll DRAW, or we'll UNDRAW the
curtain.*

Fine satire, poz—in public all abuse it,
But, by ourselves, (*sips*) our praise we can't
refuse it.

Now, *Lisp*, read you—there, at that dash and
star” :

“Yes, ma'am—*A certain lord had best beware,
Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor
Square ;*

*For should he Lady W. find willing,
Wormwood is bitter*”—“Oh! that's me, the
villain !

Throw it behind the fire, and never more
Let that vile paper come within my door.”
Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart ;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must smart.
Is our young bard so young, to think that he
Can stop the full springtide of calumny ?
Knows he the world so little, and its trade ?
Alas! the devil's sooner raised than laid
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging :
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles once lavishly bestow'd,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road ;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks this hydra, Scandal, in his den.
For your applause all perils he would through—
He'll fight—that's write—a cavalliero true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for
you.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE, MAY 8, 1777

SIR PETER TEAZLE	<i>Mr. King.</i>
SIR OLIVER SURFACE	<i>Mr. Yates.</i>
JOSEPH SURFACE	<i>Mr. Palmer.</i>
CHARLES	<i>Mr. Smith.</i>
CRABTREE	<i>Mr. Parsons.</i>
SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE	<i>Mr. Dodd.</i>
ROWLEY	<i>Mr. Aickin.</i>
MOSES	<i>Mr. Baddeley.</i>
TRIP	<i>Mr. Lamash.</i>
SNAKE	<i>Mr. Packer.</i>
CARELESS	<i>Mr. Farren.</i>
SIR HARRY BUMPER	<i>Mr. Gawdry.</i>
LADY TEAZLE	<i>Mrs. Abington.</i>
MARIA	<i>Miss P. Hopkins.</i>
LADY SNEERWELL	<i>Miss Sherry.</i>
MRS. CANDOUR	<i>Miss Pope.</i>

ACT I

SCENE I.—Lady SNEERWELL'S *House*

Discovered Lady SNEERWELL at the dressing-table; SNAKE drinking chocolate

Lady Sneer. The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?

Snake. They were, madam; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

Lady Sneer. Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?

Snake. That's in as fine a train as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, I think it must reach Mrs. Clackitt's ears within four and twenty hours; and then, you know, the business is as good as done.

Lady Sneer. Why, truly, Mrs. Clackitt has a very pretty talent, and a great deal of industry.

Snake. True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge she

has been the cause of six matches being broken off, and three sons disinherited; of four forced elopements, and as many close confinements; nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a *tête-à-tête* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties, perhaps, had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lives.

Lady Sneer. She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.

Snake. 'Tis very true. She generally designs well, has a free tongue and a bold invention; but her colouring is too dark, and her outlines often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of tint, and mellowness of sneer, which distinguishes your ladyship's scandal.

Lady Sneer. You are partial, Snake.

Snake. Not in the least—everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a look than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

Lady Sneer. Yes, my dear Snake; and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.

Snake. Nothing can be more natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you have lately employed me, wherein, I confess, I am at a loss to guess your motives.



Lady Sneerwell and Snake discovered drinking chocolate.

Lady Sneer. I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbour, Sir Peter Teazle, and his family?

Snake. I do. Here are two young men, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death; the eldest possessing the most amiable character, and universally well spoken of—the youngest, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom, without friends or character: the former an avowed admirer of your ladyship's, and apparently your favourite: the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and confessedly beloved by her. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me, why you, the widow of a city knight, with a good jointure, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface; and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria.

Lady Sneer. Then at once to unravel this mystery, I must inform you, that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Mr. Surface and me.

Snake. No!

Lady Sneer. His real attachment is to Maria, or her fortune; but finding in his brother a favoured rival, he has been obliged to mask his pretensions, and profit by my assistance.

Snake. Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success.

Lady Sneer. How dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto, through

shame, have concealed even from you? Must I confess, that Charles, that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation, that he it is for whom I'm thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?

Snake. Now, indeed, your conduct appears consistent: but how came you and Mr. Surface so confidential?

Lady Sneer. For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious—in short, a sentimental knave; while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his acquaintance, he passes for a youthful miracle of prudence, good sense, and benevolence.

Snake. Yes; yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England—and above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment.

Lady Sneer. True—and with the assistance of his sentiment and hypocrisy, he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria; while poor Charles has no friend in the house, though, I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Mr. Surface.

Lady Sneer. Show him up. [*Exit SERVANT.*]

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE

Joseph S. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do to-day? Mr. Snake, your most obedient.



F. V. Sullivan

181

Joseph. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do to-day?

Lady Sneer. Snake has just been rallying me on our mutual attachment ; but I have informed him of our real views. You know how useful he has been to us, and, believe me, the confidence is not ill placed.

Joseph S. Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr. Snake's sensibility and discernment.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, no compliments now ; but tell me when you saw your mistress, Maria—or, what is more material to me, your brother.

Joseph S. I have not seen either since I left you ; but I can inform you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria.

Lady Sneer. Ah ! my dear Snake ! the merit of this belongs to you : but do your brother's distresses increase ?

Joseph S. Every hour. I am told he has had another execution in the house yesterday. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of.

Lady Sneer. Poor Charles !

Joseph S. True, madam ; notwithstanding his vices, one can't help feeling for him. Poor Charles ! I'm sure I wish it were in my power to be of any essential service to him ; for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves——

Lady Sneer. O Lud ! you are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends.

Joseph S. Egad, that's true !—I'll keep that

sentiment till I see Sir Peter ;—however, it certainly is a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

Snake. I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming : I'll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you.—Mr. Surface, your most obedient. [*Exit* SNAKE.]

Joseph S. Sir, your very devoted.—Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any further confidence in that fellow.

Lady Sneer. Why so ?

Joseph S. I have lately detected him in frequent conference with old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

Lady Sneer. And do you think he would betray us ?

Joseph S. Nothing more likely :—take my word for't, Lady Sneerwell, that fellow hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villany.—Ah ! Maria !

Enter MARIA

Lady Sneer. Maria, my dear, how do you do ?
—What's the matter ?

Maria. Oh ! there is that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbite, has just called at my guardian's, with his odious uncle, Crabtree ; so I slipt out, and ran hither to avoid them.



F. L. Schmitt

56

Enter Maria.

Lady Sneer. Is that all?

Joseph S. If my brother Charles had been of the party, madam, perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.

Lady Sneer. Nay, now you are severe; for I dare swear the truth of the matter is, Maria heard *you* were here.—But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done, that you would avoid him so?

Maria. Oh, he has done nothing—but 'tis for what he has said: his conversation is a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance.

Joseph S. Ay, and the worst of it is, there is no advantage in not knowing him—for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend; and his uncle's as bad.

Lady Sneer. Nay, but we should make allowance,—Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

Maria. For my part, I confess, madam, wit loses its respect with me, when I see it in company with malice.—What do you think, Mr. Surface?

Joseph S. Certainly, madam; to smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

Lady Sneer. Pshaw!—there's no possibility of being witty without a little ill-nature: the malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick.—What's your opinion, Mr. Surface?

Joseph S. To be sure, madam; that conversation, where the spirit of raillery is suppressed, will ever appear tedious and insipid.

Maria. Well, I'll not debate how far scandal

may be allowable; but in a man, I am sure, it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy, rivalry, and a thousand motives to depreciate each other; but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce one.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Madam, Mrs. Candour is below, and if your ladyship's at leisure, will leave her carriage.

Lady Sneer. Beg her to walk in.—[*Exit* SERVANT.]—Now, Maria, here is a character to your taste; for though Mrs. Candour is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best-natured and best sort of woman.

Maria. Yes,—with a very gross affectation of good nature and benevolence, she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree.

Joseph S. I'faith that's true, Lady Sneerwell: whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candour undertakes their defence.

Lady Sneer. Hush!—here she is!—

Enter MRS. CANDOUR

Mrs. Can. My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been this century?—Mr. Surface, what news do you hear?—though indeed it is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.

Joseph S. Just so, indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Oh, Maria! child,—what, is the whole affair off between you and Charles?—His extravagance, I presume—the town talks of nothing else.

Maria. I am very sorry, ma'am, the town has so little to do.

Mrs. Can. True, true, child: but there's no stopping people's tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it, as I indeed was to learn, from the same quarter, that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately as well as could be wished.

Maria. 'Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

Mrs. Can. Very true, child:—but what's to be done? People will talk—there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filigree Flirt. But, Lord! there's no minding what one hears; though, to be sure, I had this from very good authority.

Maria. Such reports are highly scandalous.

Mrs. Can. So they are, child—shameful, shameful! But the world is so censorious, no character escapes.—Lord, now who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an indiscretion? Yet such is the ill-nature of people, that they say her uncle stopt her last week, just as she was stepping into the York diligence with her dancing-master.

Maria. I'll answer for't there are no grounds for that report.

Mrs. Can. Ah, no foundation in the world, I dare swear ; no more, probably, than for the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino ;—though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly cleared up.

Joseph S. The licence of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

Maria. 'Tis so,—but, in my opinion, those who report such things are equally culpable.

Mrs. Can. To be sure they are ; tale-bearers are as bad as the tale-makers—'tis an old observation, and a very true one : but what's to be done, as I said before ? how will you prevent people from talking ? To-day, Mrs. Clackitt assured me, Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife, like the rest of their acquaintance. She likewise hinted that a certain widow, in the next street, had got rid of her dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. And at the same time, Miss Tattle, who was by, affirmed, that Lord Buffalo had discovered his lady at a house of no extraordinary fame ; and that Sir H. Boquet and Tom Saunter were to measure swords on a similar provocation.—But, Lord, do you think I would report these things ?—No, no ! tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as the tale-makers.

Joseph S. Ah ! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good-nature !

Mrs. Can. I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs ; and when ugly circumstances come out against our acquaintance, I own I always love to think the

best.—By the by, I hope 'tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined?

Joseph S. I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. Ah! I heard so—but you must tell him to keep up his spirits; everybody almost is in the same way—Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit—all up, I hear, within this week; so if Charles is undone, he'll find half his acquaintances ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation.

Joseph S. Doubtless, ma'am—a very great one.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

[*Exit SERVANT.*

Lady Sneer. So, Maria, you see your lover pursues you; positively you shan't escape.

Enter CRABTREE and Sir BENJAMIN BACKBITE

Crabt. Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand—Mrs. Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite? Egad! ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet too; isn't he, Lady Sneerwell?

Sir Benj. B. O fie, uncle!

Crabt. Nay, egad it's true; I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymer in the kingdom.—Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire?—Do, Benjamin, repeat it, or the

charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's conversazione. Come now ;—your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and——

Sir Benj. B. Uncle, now—pr'ythee—

Crabt. I'faith, ma'am, 'twould surprise you to hear how ready he is at all these fine sort of things.

Lady Sneer. I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

Sir Benj. B. To say truth, ma'am, 'tis very vulgar to print ; and as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties.—However, I have some love elegies, which, when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to give the public.

Crabt. 'Fore heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalise you!—you will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa.

Sir Benj. B. Yes, madam, I think you will like them, when you shall see them on a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall meander through a meadow of margin.—'Fore Gad they will be the most elegant things of their kind !

Crabt. But, ladies, that's true—have you heard the news?

Mrs. Can. What, sir, do you mean the report of——

Crabt. No, ma'am, that's not it—Miss Nicely is going to be married to her own footman.

Mrs. Can. Impossible !

Crabt. Ask Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. B. 'Tis very true, ma'am ; everything is fixed, and the wedding liveries bespoke.

Crabt. Yes—and they do say there were pressing reasons for it.

Lady Sneer. Why, I have heard something of this before.

Mrs. Can. It can't be—and I wonder any one should believe such a story, of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

Sir Benj. B. O Lud ! ma'am, that's the very reason 'twas believed at once. She has always been so cautious and so reserved, that everybody was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.

Mrs. Can. Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp, as a fever is generally to those of the strongest constitutions. But there is a sort of puny sickly reputation, that is always ailing, yet will outlive the robusiter characters of a hundred prudes.

Sir Benj. B. True, madam,—there are valetudinarians in reputation as well as constitution ; who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air, and supply their want of stamina by care and circumspection.

Mrs. Can. Well, but this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales.

Crabt. That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am.—

Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her love and her character last summer at Tunbridge?—Sir Benjamin, you remember it?

Sir Benj. B. Oh, to be sure!—the most whimsical circumstance.

Lady Sneer. How was it, pray?

Crabt. Why, one evening, at Mrs. Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a young lady in company, "I have known instances of it—for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins."—"What!" cries the Lady Dowager Dundizzy (who you know is as deaf as a post), "has Miss Piper had twins?"—This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughter. However, 'twas the next morning everywhere reported, and in a few days believed by the whole town, that Miss Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl; and in less than a week there were some people who could name the father, and the farm-house where the babies were put to nurse.

Lady Sneer. Strange, indeed!

Crabt. Matter of fact, I assure you.—O Lud! Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle, Sir Oliver, is coming home?

Joseph S. Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

Crabt. He has been in the East Indies a long time. You can scarcely remember him, I believe?—Sad comfort whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has gone on!

Joseph S. Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may reform.

Sir Benj. B. To be sure he may: for my part, I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say; and though he has lost all his friends, I am told nobody is better spoken of by the Jews.

Crabt. That's true, egad, nephew. If the Old Jewry was a ward, I believe Charles would be an alderman:—no man more popular there, 'fore Gad! I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine; and that whenever he is sick, they have prayers for the recovery of his health in all the synagogues.

Sir Benj. B. Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me, when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own securities; have a score of tradesmen waiting in the antechamber, and an officer behind every guest's chair.

Joseph S. This may be entertainment to you, gentlemen, but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother.

Maria. Their malice is intolerable.—Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning: I'm not very well. [Exit MARIA.]

Mrs. Can. O dear! she changes colour very much.

Lady Sneer. Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her: she may want assistance.

Mrs. Can. That I will, with all my soul,

ma'am.—Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be! [Exit Mrs. CANDOUR.]

Lady Sneer. 'Twas nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles reflected on, notwithstanding their difference.

Sir Benj. B. The young lady's *penchant* is obvious.

Crabt. But, Benjamin, you must not give up the pursuit for that:—follow her, and put her into good humour. Repeat her some of your own verses. Come, I'll assist you.

Sir Benj. B. Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you; but depend on't your brother is utterly undone.

Crabt. O Lud, lay! undone as ever man was.—Can't raise a guinea!—

Sir Benj. B. And everything sold, I'm told, that was movable.—

Crabt. I have seen one that was at his house.—Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures, which I believe are framed in the wainscots—

Sir Benj. B. And I'm very sorry, also, to hear some bad stories against him. [Going.]

Crabt. Oh! he has done many mean things, that's certain.

Sir Benj. B. But, however, as he's your brother—— [Going.]

Crabt. We'll tell you all another opportunity.

[Exit CRABTREE and Sir BENJAMIN.]

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! 'tis very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite run down.

Joseph S. And I believe the abuse was no more acceptable to your ladyship than Maria.

Lady Sneer. I doubt her affections are further engaged than we imagine. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing further; in the meantime, I'll go and plot mischief, and you shall study sentiment.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—Sir PETER'S *House*

Enter Sir PETER

Sir Peter T. When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect? 'Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men—and I have been the most miserable dog ever since! We tifted a little going to church, and fairly quarrelled before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution—a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race ball. Yet now she plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of the fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and

paraphrased in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune, and contradicts all my humours; yet, the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

Enter ROWLEY

Rowley. Oh! Sir Peter, your servant: how is it with you, sir?

Sir Peter T. Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.

Rowley. What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday?

Sir Peter T. A good question to a married man!

Rowley. Nay, I'm sure your lady, Sir Peter, can't be the cause of your uneasiness.

Sir Peter T. Why, has anybody told you she was dead?

Rowley. Come, come, Sir Peter, you love her, notwithstanding your tempers don't exactly agree.

Sir Peter T. But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am, myself, the sweetest-tempered man alive, and hate a teasing temper; and so I tell her a hundred times a day.

Rowley. Indeed!

Sir Peter T. Ay; and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she is always in the wrong! But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the perverseness of her disposition.—Then, to complete my vexation,

Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband; meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

Rowley. You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be deceived in your opinion of the elder. For Charles, my life on't! he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honoured master, was, at his years, nearly as wild a spark; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament his loss.

Sir Peter T. You are wrong, Master Rowley. On their father's death, you know, I acted as a kind of guardian to them both, till their uncle Sir Oliver's liberality gave them an early independence: of course, no person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment, and acts up to the *sentiments* he professes; but for the other, take my word for't, if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has dissipated it with the rest of his inheritance. Ah! my old friend, Sir Oliver, will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied.

Rowley. I am sorry to find you so violent against the young man, because this may be the most critical period of his fortune. I came hither with news that will surprise you.

Sir Peter T. What ! let me hear.

Rowley. Sir Oliver *is* arrived, and at this moment in town.

Sir Peter T. How ! you astonish me ! I thought you did not expect him this month.

Rowley. I did not ; but his passage has been remarkably quick.

Sir Peter T. Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend. 'Tis fifteen years since we met.—We have had many a day together :—but does he still enjoin us not to inform his nephews of his arrival ?

Rowley. Most strictly. He means, before it is known, to make some trial of their dispositions.

Sir Peter T. Ah ! there needs no art to discover their merits—he shall have his way : but, pray, does he know I am married ?

Rowley. Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

Sir Peter T. What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption. Ah ! Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, and he has been steady to his text.—Well, he must be soon at my house, though !—I'll instantly give orders for his reception.—But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.

Rowley. By no means.

Sir Peter T. For I should never be able to stand Noll's jokes ; so I'd have him think, Lord forgive me ! that we are a very happy couple.

Rowley. I understand you :—but then you must be very careful not to differ while he is in the house with you.

Sir Peter T. Egad, and so we must—and that's impossible. Ah! Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves—no—the crime carries its punishment along with it.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

SCENE I

Enter Sir PETER and Lady TEAZLE

Sir Peter T. Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

Lady T. Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not, as you please; but I ought to have my own way in everything, and what's more, I will, too. What! though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

Sir Peter T. Very well, ma'am, very well;—so a husband is to have no influence, no authority?

Lady T. Authority! No, to be sure:—if you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me: I am sure you were old enough.

Sir Peter T. Old enough!—ay—there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

Lady T. My extravagance! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam, you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, and give a fête champêtre at Christmas.

Lady T. And am I to blame, Sir Peter, because flowers are dear in cold weather? You should find fault with the climate, and not with me. For my part, I'm sure, I wish it was spring all the year round, and that roses grew under our feet!

Sir Peter T. Oons! madam—if you had been born to this, I shouldn't wonder at your talking thus; but you forget what your situation was when I married you.

Lady T. No, no, I don't; 'twas a very disagreeable one, or I should never have married you.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat a humbler style:—the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys at your side; your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working.

Lady T. O, yes! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led.—My daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt-book,—and comb my aunt Deborah's lapdog.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, ma'am, 'twas so indeed.

Lady T. And then, you know, my evening amusements! To draw patterns for ruffles, which I had not materials to make up; to play Pope Joan with the curate; to read a sermon to my aunt; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.

Sir Peter T. I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from; but now you must have your coach—vis-à-vis—and three powdered footmen before your chair; and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double, behind the butler, on a dock'd coach-horse.

Lady T. No—I swear I never did that: I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

Sir Peter T. This, madam, was your situation; and what have I done for you? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank; in short, I have made you my wife.

Lady T. Well, then,—and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, and that is——

Sir Peter T. My widow, I suppose?

Lady T. Hem! hem!

Sir Peter T. I thank you, madam—but don't flatter yourself; for though your ill conduct may disturb my peace, it shall never break my heart, I promise you: however, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.

Lady T. Then why will you endeavour to

make yourself so disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense?

Sir Peter T. 'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these little elegant expenses when you married me?

Lady T. Lud, Sir Peter! would you have me be out of the fashion?

Sir Peter T. The fashion, indeed! what had you to do with the fashion before you married me?

Lady T. For my part, I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.

Sir Peter T. Ay—there again—taste—Zounds! madam, you had no taste when you married me!

Lady T. That's very true indeed, Sir Peter; and after having married you, I should never pretend to taste again, I allow. But now, Sir Peter, if we have finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's.

Sir Peter T. Ay, there's another precious circumstance—a charming set of acquaintance you have made there.

Lady T. Nay, Sir Peter, they are all people of rank and fortune, and remarkably tenacious of reputation.

Sir Peter T. Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance; for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves!—Such a crew! Ah! many a wretch has rid on a hurdle who has done less mischief

than these utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation.

Lady T. What! would you restrain the freedom of speech?

Sir Peter T. Ah! they have made you just as bad as any one of the society.

Lady T. Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace. But I vow I bear no malice against the people I abuse.—When I say an ill-natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humour; and I take it for granted, they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell's too.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I'll call in just to look after my own character.

Lady T. Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. So, good-bye to ye.
[*Exit* Lady TEAZLE.]

Sir Peter T. So—I have gained much by my intended expostulation: yet, with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her contempt for my authority! Well, though I can't make her love me, there is great satisfaction in quarrelling with her; and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me.
[*Exit.*]



Lady T. Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late.
So, good-bye to ye.

SCENE II.—*At Lady SNEERWELL'S*

Enter Lady SNEERWELL, Mrs. CANDOUR, CRABTREE, Sir BENJAMIN BACKBITE, *and* JOSEPH SURFACE.

Lady Sneer. Nay, positively, we will hear it.

Joseph S. Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

Sir Benj. B. O plague on't, uncle! 'tis mere nonsense.

Crabt. No, no; 'fore Gad, very clever for an extempore!

Sir Benj. B. But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance. You must know, that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricle was taking the dust in Hyde Park, in a sort of duodecimo phaeton, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies; upon which I took out my pocket-book, and in one moment produced the following:

Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies;
 Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies:
 To give them this title I'm sure can't be wrong,
 Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.

Crabt. There, ladies, done in the smack of a whip, and on horseback too.

Joseph S. A very Phœbus, mounted—indeed, Sir Benjamin.

Sir Benj. B. O dear, sir! trifles—trifles.

Enter Lady TEAZLE and MARIA

Mrs. Can. I must have a copy.

Lady Sneer. Lady Teazle, I hope we shall see Sir Peter?

Lady T. I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

Lady Sneer. Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit down to piquet with Mr. Surface.

Maria. I take very little pleasure in cards—however, I'll do as you please.

Lady T. I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with her; I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me, before Sir Peter came. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. Now, I'll die, but you are so scandalous, I'll forswear your society.

Lady T. What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

Mrs. Can. They'll not allow our friend Miss Vermillion to be handsome.

Lady Sneer. O surely she is a pretty woman.

Crabt. I am very glad you think so, ma'am.

Mrs. Can. She has a charming fresh colour.

Lady T. Yes, when it is fresh put on.

Mrs. Can. O fie! I'll swear her colour is natural: I have seen it come and go.

Lady T. I dare swear you have, ma'am: it goes off at night, and comes again in the morning.

Sir Benj. B. True, ma'am, it not only comes and goes, but, what's more—egad, her maid can fetch and carry it!



Cards at Lady Sneerwell's.

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha! how I hate to hear you talk so! But surely now, her sister *is*, or *was*, very handsome.

Crabt. Who? Mrs. Evergreen? O Lord! she's six and fifty if she's an hour!

Mrs. Can. Now positively you wrong her; fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost—and I don't think she looks more.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! there's no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

Lady Sneer. Well, well, if Mrs. Evergreen *does* take some pains to repair the ravages of time, you must allow she effects it with great ingenuity; and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the widow Ochre chinks her wrinkles.

Sir Benj. B. Nay now, Lady Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, 'tis not that she paints so ill—but when she has finished her face, she joins it so badly to her neck, that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur sees at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique.

Crabt. Ha! ha! ha! well said, nephew!

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha! well, you make me laugh; but I vow I hate you for it.—What do you think of Miss Simper?

Sir Benj. B. Why, she has very pretty teeth.

Lady T. Yes, and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a jar, as it were,—thus.

[*Shows her teeth.*]

Mrs. Can. How can you be so ill-natured?

Lady T. Nay, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the aperture of a poor's box, and all her words appear to slide out edgewise as it were,—thus—*How do you do, madam? Yes, madam.*

Lady Sneer. Very well, Lady Teazle; I see you can be a little severe.

Lady T. In defence of a friend it is but justice.—But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry.

Enter Sir PETER TEAZLE

Sir Peter T. Ladies, your most obedient.—Mercy on me! here is the whole set! a character dead at every word, I suppose. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Can. I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious—and Lady Teazle as bad as any one.

Sir Peter T. It must be very distressing to you, Mrs. Candour, I dare swear.

Mrs. Can. Oh, they will allow good qualities to nobody; not even good-nature to our friend Mrs. Pursy.

Lady T. What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Quadrille's last night?

Mrs. Can. Nay, her bulk is her misfortune; and when she takes such pains to get rid of it, you ought not to reflect on her.

Lady Sneer. That's very true, indeed.

Lady T. Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey; laces herself by pulleys; and often in the hottest noon in summer, you may see

her on a little squat pony, with her hair plaited up behind like a drummer's, and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

Mrs. Can. I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

Sir Peter T. Yes, a good defence, truly!

Mrs. Can. Truly, Lady Teazle is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

Crabt. Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious—an awkward gawky, without any one good point under heaven.

Mrs. Can. Positively you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a near relation of mine by marriage, and as for her person, great allowance is to be made; for, let me tell you, a woman labours under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six and thirty.

Lady Sneer. Though, surely, she is handsome still—and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candlelight, it is not to be wondered at.

Mrs. Can. True, and then as to her manner; upon my word I think it is particularly graceful, considering she never had the least education: for you know her mother was a Welsh milliner, and her father a sugar-baker at Bristol.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! you are both of you too good-natured!

Sir Peter T. Yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! mercy on me! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Can. For my part, I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill-spoken of.

Sir Peter T. No, to be sure!

Sir Benj. B. Oh! you are of a moral turn. Mrs. Candour and I can sit for an hour and hear Lady Stucco talk sentiment.

Lady T. Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the dessert after dinner; for she's just like the French fruit one cracks for mottoes—made up of paint and proverb.

Mrs. Can. Well, I never will join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical on beauty.

Crabt. Oh, to be sure! she has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen; 'tis a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.

Sir Benj. B. So she has, indeed—an Irish front—

Crabt. Caledonian locks—

Sir Benj. B. Dutch nose—

Crabt. Austrian lips—

Sir Benj. B. Complexion of a Spaniard—

Crabt. And teeth *à la Chinois*—

Sir Benj. B. In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa—where no two guests are of a nation—

Crabt. Or a congress at the close of a general war—wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

Mrs. Can. Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Mercy on my life!—a person they dine with twice a week. [*Aside.*

Lady Sneer. Go, go; you are a couple of provoking toads.

Mrs. Can. Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so—for give me leave to say, that Mrs. Ogle——

Sir Peter T. Madam, madam, I beg your pardon—there's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues.—But when I tell you, Mrs. Candour, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you'll not take her part.

Lady Sneer. Ha! ha! ha! Well said, Sir Peter! but you are a cruel creature,—too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

Sir Peter T. Ah! madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good-nature than your ladyship is aware of.

Lady T. True, Sir Peter: I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.

Sir Benj. B. Or rather, madam, suppose them to be man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

Lady T. But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal, I believe he would have it put down by parliament.

Sir Peter T. 'Fore heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors, and pass an act for the preservation of fame, I believe there are many would thank them for the bill.

Lady Sneer. O Lud! Sir Peter; would you deprive us of our privileges?

Sir Peter T. Ay, madam; and then no person should be permitted to kill characters and run

down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

Lady Sneer. Go, you monster!

Mrs. Can. But, surely, you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear?

Sir Peter T. Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the indorsers.

Crabt. Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.

Sir Peter T. Oh, nine out of ten of the malicious inventions are founded on some ridiculous misrepresentation!

Lady Sneer. Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room?

Enter a SERVANT, who whispers Sir PETER

Sir Peter T. I'll be with them directly.—I'll get away unperceived. [*Apart.*

Lady Sneer. Sir Peter, you are not going to leave us?

Sir Peter T. Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me. [*Exit Sir PETER.*

Sir Benj. B. Well—certainly, Lady Teazle, that lord of yours is a strange being: I could tell you some stories of him would make you laugh heartily if he were not your husband.



Queen-of-Swords Minuet at Lady Sneerwell's.

Lady T. Oh, pray don't mind that ;—come, do let's hear them.

[*Joins the rest of the company going into the next room.*]

Joseph S. Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

Maria. How is it possible I should?—If to raise malicious smiles at the infirmities or misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province of wit or humour, Heaven grant me a double portion of dulness!

Joseph S. Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are,—they have no malice at heart.

Maria. Then is their conduct still more contemptible ; for, in my opinion, nothing could excuse the interference of their tongues, but a natural and uncontrollable bitterness of mind.

Joseph S. Undoubtedly, madam ; and it has always been a sentiment of mine, that to propagate a malicious truth wantonly is more despicable than to falsify from revenge. But can you, Maria, feel thus for others, and be unkind to me alone?—Is hope to be denied the tenderest passion?

Maria. Why will you distress me by renewing the subject?

Joseph S. Ah, Maria ! you would not treat me thus, and oppose your guardian Sir Peter's will, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favoured rival.

Maria. Ungenerously urged !—But whatever my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him

up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

Joseph S. Nay, but, Maria, do not leave me with a frown: by all that's honest, I swear—Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle!—[*Aside.*]—You must not—no, you shall not—for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle—

Maria. Lady Teazle!

Joseph S. Yet were Sir Peter to suspect—

Enter Lady TEAZLE, and comes forward

Lady T. What is this, pray? Do you take her for me?—Child, you are wanted in the next room.—[*Exit MARIA.*]—What is all this, pray?

Joseph S. Oh, the most unlucky circumstance in nature! Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern I have for your happiness, and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavouring to reason with her when you came in.

Lady T. Indeed! but you seemed to adopt a very tender mode of reasoning—do you usually argue on your knees?

Joseph S. Oh, she's a child, and I thought a little bombast— But, Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised?

Lady T. No, no; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion sanctions.

Joseph S. True—a mere platonic cicisbeo—what every wife is entitled to.



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/ 66

Joseph. *By all that's honest, I swear.*

Lady T. Certainly, one must not be out of the fashion.—However, I have so much of my country prejudices left, that, though Sir Peter's ill-humour may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to——

Joseph S. The only revenge in your power.—Well—I applaud your moderation.

Lady T. Go—you are an insinuating wretch.—But we shall be missed—let us join the company.

Joseph S. But we had best not return together.

Lady T. Well—don't stay; for Maria shan't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you. [*Exit* Lady TEAZLE.

Joseph S. A curious dilemma my politics have run me into! I wanted, at first, only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle, that she might not be my enemy with Maria; and I have, I don't know how, become her serious lover. Sincerely I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many cursed rogueries that I doubt I shall be exposed at last. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—SIR PETER TEAZLE'S

Enter ROWLEY and Sir OLIVER SURFACE

Sir Oliver S. Ha! ha! ha! So my old friend is married, hey?—a young wife out of the country.—Ha! ha! ha! that he should have stood bluff to old bachelor so long, and sink into a husband at last.

Rowley. But you must not rally him on the subject, Sir Oliver: 'tis a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

Sir Oliver S. Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance!—Poor Peter! —But you say he has entirely given up Charles, —never sees him, hey?

Rowley. His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure, greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has industriously been led into by a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's ill name. Whereas, the truth is, I believe, if the lady is partial to either of them, his brother is the favourite.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, I know there are a set of malicious, prating, prudent gossips, both male and female, who murder characters to kill time; and will rob a young fellow of his good name, before he has years to know the value of it.—But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such, I promise you.—No, no,—if Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall compound for his extravagance.

Rowley. Then, my life on't, you will reclaim him.—Ah, sir! it gives me new life to find that *your* heart is not turned against him; and that the son of my good old master has one friend, however, left.

Sir Oliver S. What, shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself?—Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent





E. CUMMINGS
17

Sir Peter. *Hah! Sir Oliver—my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!*

youths ; and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was.

Rowley. Sir, 'tis this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family.—But here comes Sir Peter.

Sir Oliver S. Egad, so he does.—Mercy on me!—he's greatly altered—and seems to have a settled married look! One may read *husband* in his face at this distance!

Enter Sir PETER TEAZLE

Sir Peter T. Hah! Sir Oliver—my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

Sir Oliver S. Thank you—thank you, Sir Peter! and i'faith I am glad to find you well, believe me.

Sir Peter T. Oh! 'tis a long time since we met—fifteen years, I doubt, Sir Oliver, and many a cross accident in the time.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, I have had my share.—But, what! I find you are married, hey?—Well, well—it can't be helped—and so—I wish you joy with all my heart.

Sir Peter T. Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver.—Yes, I have entered into—the happy state ;—but we'll not talk of that now.

Sir Oliver S. True, true, Sir Peter: old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting—no, no, no.—

Rowley. Take care, pray, sir.—

Sir Oliver S. Well—so one of my nephews is a wild fellow, hey?

Sir Peter T. Wild!—Ah! my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there; he's a lost young man, indeed. However, his brother will make you amends; Joseph is, indeed, what a youth should be. Everybody in the world speaks well of him.

Sir Oliver S. I am sorry to hear it; he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him!—Pshaw! then he has bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue.

Sir Peter T. What, Sir Oliver! do you blame him for not making enemies?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

Sir Peter T. Well, well—you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

Sir Oliver S. Oh! plague of his sentiments! If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly.—But, however, don't mistake me, Sir Peter; I don't mean to defend Charles's errors: but before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and my friend Rowley and I have planned something for the purpose.

Rowley. And Sir Peter shall own for once he has been mistaken.

Sir Peter T. Oh! my life on Joseph's honour.

Sir Oliver S. Well—come, give us a bottle of good wine, and we'll drink the lads' health, and tell you our scheme.

Sir Peter T. Allons then!

Sir Oliver S. And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe against your old friend's son. Odds my life! I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little : for my part, I hate to see prudence clinging to the green succours of youth ; 'tis like ivy round a sapling, and spoils the growth of the tree.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III

SCENE I.—SIR PETER TEAZLE'S

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE,
and ROWLEY

Sir Peter T. Well, then, we will see this fellow first, and have our wine afterwards:—but how is this, Master Rowley? I don't see the jet of your scheme.

Rowley. Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley, whom I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their mother. He was a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has applied, by letter, to Mr. Surface and Charles: from the former he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all that his extravagance has left him power to do; and he is, at this time, endeavouring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

Sir Oliver S. Ah!—he is my brother's son.

Sir Peter T. Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to——

Rowley. Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother, that Stanley has obtained permission to apply personally to his friends, and as they have neither of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver assume his character, and he will have a fair opportunity of judging, at least, of the benevolence of their dispositions; and believe me, sir, you will find in the youngest brother, one, who, in the midst of folly and dissipation, has still, as our immortal bard expresses it,—“a heart to pity, and a hand, open as day, for melting charity.”

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! What signifies his having an open hand or purse either, when he has nothing left to give? Well, well—make the trial, if you please. But where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine, relative to Charles's affairs?

Rowley. Below, waiting his commands, and no one can give him better intelligence. This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly Jew, who, to do him justice, has done everything in his power to bring your nephew to a proper sense of his extravagance.

Sir Peter T. Pray let us have him in.

Rowley. Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs.

[*Apart to SERVANT.*

Sir Peter T. But, pray, why should you suppose he will speak the truth?

Rowley. Oh! I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums ad-

vanced to Charles, but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived ; so that you may depend on his fidelity to his own interests : I have also another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall speedily produce him to remove some of your prejudices.

Sir Peter T. I have heard too much on that subject.

Rowley. Here comes the honest Israelite.—

Enter MOSES

—This is Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I understand you have lately had great dealings with my nephew, Charles.

Moses. Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could for him ; but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.

Sir Oliver S. That was unlucky, truly ; for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

Moses. None at all ; I hadn't the pleasure of knowing his distresses till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

Sir Oliver S. Unfortunate, indeed !—But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses ?

Moses. Yes, he knows that ;—this very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the city, who does not know him, and will, I believe, advance him some money.

Sir Peter T. What,—one Charles has never had money from before ?

Moses. Yes,—Mr. Premium, of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker.

Sir Peter T. Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me!—Charles, you say, does not know Mr. Premium?

Moses. Not at all.

Sir Peter T. Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation: go with my friend Moses, and represent Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.

Sir Oliver S. Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as old Stanley.

Sir Peter T. True—so you may.

Rowley. Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure;—however, Moses, you understand Sir Peter, and will be faithful?

Moses. You may depend upon me;—this is near the time I was to have gone.

Sir Oliver S. I'll accompany you as soon as you please, Moses—— But hold! I have forgot one thing—how the plague shall I be able to pass for a Jew?

Moses. There's no need—the principal is Christian.

Sir Oliver S. Is he? I'm very sorry to hear it. But then again, ain't I rather too smartly dressed to look like a money-lender?

Sir Peter T. Not at all; 'twould not be out of character, if you went in your own carriage—would it, Moses?

Moses. Not in the least.

Sir Oliver S. Well—but how must I talk?—there's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.

Sir Peter T. Oh! there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands—hey, Moses?

Moses. Yes, that's a very great point.

Sir Oliver S. I'll answer for't I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him 8 or 10 per cent on the loan, at least.

Moses. If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately.

Sir Oliver S. Hey!—what the plague!—how much then?

Moses. That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply, you should require only 40 or 50 per cent; but if you find him in great distress, and want the moneys very bad, you may ask double.

Sir Peter T. A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver!

Sir Oliver S. Truly, I think so—and not unprofitable.

Moses. Then, you know, you haven't the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of an old friend.

Sir Oliver S. Oh! I borrow it of a friend, do I?

Moses. And your friend is an unconscionable dog: but you can't help that.

Sir Oliver S. My friend an unconscionable dog?



W. I. S. 1780
/ 1780

Moses. *Your friend is an unconscionable dog : but you can't help that.*

Moses. Yes, and he himself has not the moneys by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss.

Sir Oliver S. He is forced to sell stock at a great loss, is he? Well, that's very kind of him.

Sir Peter T. I'faith, Sir Oliver—Mr. Premium, I mean, you'll soon be master of the trade. But, Moses! would not you have him run out a little against the Annuity Bill? That would be in character, I should think.

Moses. Very much.

Rowley. And lament that a young man now must be at years of discretion before he is suffered to ruin himself?

Moses. Ay, great pity!

Sir Peter T. And abuse the public for allowing merit to an act, whose only object is to snatch misfortune and imprudence from the rapacious gripe of usury, and give the minor a chance of inheriting his estate without being undone by coming into possession.

Sir Oliver S. So—so—Moses shall give me further instructions as we go together.

Sir Peter T. You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

Sir Oliver S. Oh! never fear: my tutor appears so able, that though Charles lived in the next street, it must be my own fault if I am not a complete rogue before I turn the corner.

[*Exeunt* SIR OLIVER SURFACE and MOSES.]

Sir Peter T. So, now, I think Sir Oliver will be convinced: you are partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.

Rowley. No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

Sir Peter T. Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say presently.—I see Maria, and want to speak with her. [*Exit ROWLEY.*] I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph—I am determined I will do it—he will give me his opinion sincerely.

Enter MARIA

So, child has Mr. Surface returned with you?

Maria. No, sir; he was engaged.

Sir Peter T. Well, Maria, do you not reflect, the more you converse with that amiable young man, what return his partiality for you deserves?

Maria. Indeed, Sir Peter, your frequent importunity on this subject distresses me extremely—you compel me to declare, that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention, whom I would not prefer to Mr. Surface.

Sir Peter T. So—here's perverseness!—No, no, Maria, 'tis Charles only whom you would prefer. 'Tis evident his vices and follies have won your heart.

Maria. This is unkind, sir. You know I have obeyed you in neither seeing nor corresponding with him: I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it culpable, if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests some pity for his distresses.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, pity him as much as you please; but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.

Maria. Never to his brother!

Sir Peter T. Go—perverse and obstinate! but take care, madam; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is: don't compel me to inform you of it.

Maria. I can only say, you shall not have just reason. 'Tis true, by my father's will, I am for a short period bound to regard you as his substitute; but must cease to think you so, when you would compel me to be miserable.

[*Exit* MARIA.]

Sir Peter T. Was ever man so crossed as I am? everything conspiring to fret me! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight, before her father, a hale and hearty man, died, on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. But here comes my helpmate! She appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little!

Enter Lady TEAZLE.

Lady T. Lud! Sir Peter, I hope you haven't been quarrelling with Maria? It is not using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not by.

Sir Peter T. Ah! Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good-humoured at all times.

Lady T. I am sure I wish I had; for I want

you to be in a charming sweet temper, at this moment. Do be good-humoured now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

Sir Peter T. Two hundred pounds! what, ain't I to be in a good humour without paying for it? But speak to me thus, and i'faith there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it; but seal me a bond for the repayment.

Lady T. Oh no—there—my note of hand will do as well. [Offering her hand.]

Sir Peter T. And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you:—but shall we always live thus, hey?

Lady T. If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you'll own you were tired first.

Sir Peter T. Well—then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

Lady T. I assure you, Sir Peter, good-nature becomes you—you look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms, and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth, and chuck me under the chin, you would; and ask me if I thought I could love an old fellow, who would deny me nothing—didn't you?

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive——

Lady T. Ay—so I was, and would always take your part, when my acquaintance used to abuse you, and turn you into ridicule.

Sir Peter T. Indeed!

Lady T. Ay, and when my cousin Sophy has called you a stiff, peevish old bachelor, and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my father, I have always defended you, and said, I didn't think you so ugly by any means, and I dared say you'd make a very good sort of a husband.

Sir Peter T. And you prophesied right; and we shall now be the happiest couple——

Lady T. And never differ again?

Sir Peter T. No, never!—though at the same time, indeed, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your temper very seriously; for in all our little quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always began first.

Lady T. I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter: indeed, you always gave the provocation.

Sir Peter T. Now see, my angel! take care—contradicting isn't the way to keep friends.

Lady T. Then don't you begin it, my love!

Sir Peter T. There, now! you—you are going on. You don't perceive, my life, that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry.

Lady T. Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason, my dear——

Sir Peter T. There! now you want to quarrel again.

Lady T. No, I am sure I don't:—but if you will be so peevish——

Sir Peter T. There now! who begins first?

Lady T. Why you, to be sure. I said nothing—but there's no bearing your temper.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam : the fault's in your own temper.

Lady T. Ay, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

Sir Peter T. Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gipsy.

Lady T. You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.

Sir Peter T. Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me, if ever I try to be friends with you any more !

Lady T. So much the better.

Sir Peter T. No, no, madam : 'tis evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you—a pert, rural coquette, that had refused half the honest 'squires in the neighbourhood.

Lady T. And I am sure I was a fool to marry you—an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with any one who would have him.

Sir Peter T. Ay, ay, madam ; but you were pleased enough to listen to me : you never had such an offer before.

Lady T. No ! didn't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match ? for his estate is just as good as yours, and he has broke his neck since we have been married.

Sir Peter T. I have done with you, madam ! You are an unfeeling, ungrateful—but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of everything that is bad.—Yes, madam, I now





Lady T. *Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you—so, bye—bye!*

believe the reports relative to you and Charles, madam.—Yes, madam, *you* and Charles are—not without grounds——

Lady T. Take care, Sir Peter! you had better not insinuate any such thing! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.

Sir Peter T. Very well, madam! very well! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce!—I'll make an example of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors.—Let us separate, madam.

Lady T. Agreed! agreed!—And now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple—and never differ again, you know—ha! ha! ha! Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you—so, bye—bye. [*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Plagues and tortures! Can't I make her angry either! Oh, I am the most miserable fellow! but I'll not bear her presuming to keep her temper: no! she may break my heart, but she shan't keep her temper. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—CHARLES SURFACE'S *House*

Enter TRIP, MOSES, *and* Sir OLIVER SURFACE

Trip. Here, Master Moses! if you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether—what's the gentleman's name?

Sir Oliver S. Mr. Moses, what is my name?

Moses. Mr. Premium.

Trip. Premium—very well.

[*Exit TRIP, taking snuff.*]

Sir Oliver S. To judge by the servants, one wouldn't believe the master was ruined. But what!—sure, this was my brother's house?

Moses. Yes, sir; Mr. Charles bought it of Mr. Joseph, with the furniture, pictures, etc., just as the old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a piece of extravagance in him.

Sir Oliver S. In my mind, the other's economy in selling it to him was more reprehensible by half.

Enter TRIP

Trip. My master says you must wait, gentlemen: he has company, and can't speak with you yet.

Sir Oliver S. If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he would not send such a message?

Trip. Yes, yes, sir; he knows you are here—I did not forget little Premium: no, no, no.

Sir Oliver S. Very well; and I pray, sir, what may be your name?

Trip. Trip, sir; my name is Trip, at your service.

Sir Oliver S. Well then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess?

Trip. Why, yes—here are three or four of us pass our time agreeably enough; but then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear—and not very great either—but fifty pounds a year, and find our own bags and bouquets.

Sir Oliver S. Bags and bouquets! halters and bastinadoes! [Aside.]

Trip. And, à-propos, Moses—have you been able to get me that little bill discounted?

Sir Oliver S. Wants to raise money too!—mercy on me! Has his distresses too, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and duns. [Aside.]

Moses. 'Twas not to be done, indeed, Mr. Trip.

Trip. Good lack, you surprise me! My friend Brush has indorsed it, and I thought when he put his name at the back of a bill 'twas the same as cash.

Moses. No! 'twouldn't do.

Trip. A small sum—but twenty pounds. Hark'ee, Moses, do you think you couldn't get it me by way of annuity?

Sir Oliver S. An annuity! ha! ha! a footman raise money by way of annuity! Well done, luxury, egad! [Aside.]

Moses. Well, but you must insure your place.

Trip. Oh, with all my heart! I'll insure my place, and my life too, if you please.

Sir Oliver S. It's more than I would your neck. [Aside.]

Moses. But is there nothing you could deposit?

Trip. Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has dropped lately; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with equity of redemption before November—or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver:—these, I should think, Moses, with a few pair of

point ruffles, as a collateral security—hey, my little fellow?

Moses. Well, well. [*Bell rings.*]

Trip. Egad, I heard the bell! I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce you. Don't forget the annuity, little Moses! This way, gentlemen. I'll insure my place, you know.

Sir Oliver S. If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—CHARLES SURFACE, CARELESS, *etc.*
etc., at a table with wine, etc.

Charles S. 'Fore heaven, 'tis true!—there's the great degeneracy of the age. Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit, and politeness; but, plague on't, they won't drink.

Careless. It is so indeed, Charles! they give into all the substantial luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit. Oh, certainly society suffers by it intolerably; for now, instead of the social spirit of raillery that used to mantle over a glass of bright Burgundy, their conversation is become just like the Spa water they drink, which has all the pertness and flatulence of Champagne, without the spirit or flavour.

1st Gent. But what are they to do who love play better than wine?

Careless. True: there's Sir Harry diets himself for gaming, and is now under a hazard regimen.





Charles. *Bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria!*

Charles S. Then he'll have the worst of it. What! you wouldn't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn? For my part, egad, I am never so successful as when I am a little merry: let me throw on a bottle of Champagne, and I never lose—at least, I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing.

2nd Gent. Ay, that I believe.

Charles S. And then, what man can pretend to be a believer in love, who is an abjurer of wine? 'Tis the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties, and she that floats atop is the maid that has bewitched you.

Careless. Now then, Charles, be honest, and give us your real favourite.

Charles S. Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give a round of her peers, which is impossible—on earth.

Careless. Oh! then we'll find some canonised vestals or heathen goddesses that will do, I warrant!

Charles S. Here then, bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria!—

Sir Harry B. Maria who?

Charles S. Oh, damn the surname—'tis too formal to be registered in Love's calendar; but now, Sir Harry, beware, we must have beauty superlative.

Careless. Nay, never study, Sir Harry: we'll stand to the toast, though your mistress should want an eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.

Sir Harry B. Egad, so I have ! and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.

SONG

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen ;
 Here's to the widow of fifty ;
 Here's to the flaunting extravagant quæan,
 And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.

Chorus. Let the toast pass,—
 Drink to the lass,
 I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass.

Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize ;
 Now to the maid who has none, sir :
 Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
 And here's to the nymph with but *one*, sir.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow ;
 Now to her that's as brown as a berry :
 Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
 And now to the girl that is merry.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
 Young or ancient, I care not a feather ;
 So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
 And let us e'en toast them together.

Chorus. Let the toast pass, etc.

All. Bravo ! bravo !



Sir Harry Bumper. *Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen.*

Enter TRIP, and whispers CHARLES SURFACE

Charles S. Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little. Careless, take the chair, will you?

Careless. Nay, prithee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropt in by chance?

Charles S. No, faith! To tell you the truth, 'tis a Jew and a broker, who are come by appointment.

Careless. Oh, damn it! let's have the Jew in.

1st Gent. Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

2nd Gent. Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

Charles S. Egad, with all my heart! Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in—though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you.

Careless. Charles, let us give them some generous Burgundy, and perhaps they'll grow conscientious.

Charles S. Oh, hang 'em, no! wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities; and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery.

Enter TRIP, Sir OLIVER SURFACE, and MOSES

Charles S. So, honest Moses, walk in: walk in, pray, Mr. Premium—that's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Moses?

Moses. Yes, sir.

Charles S. Set chairs, Trip—sit down, Mr. Premium—glasses, Trip—sit down, Moses. Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a sentiment; here's *Success to usury!*—Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper.

Moses. *Success to usury!*

Careless. Right, Moses—usury is prudence and industry, and deserves to succeed.

Sir Oliver S. Then—*here's all the success it deserves!*

Careless. No, no, that won't do! Mr. Premium, you have demurred at the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

1st Gent. A pint bumper, at least.

Moses. Oh, pray, sir, consider—Mr. Premium's a gentleman.

Careless. And therefore loves good wine.

2nd Gent. Give Moses a quart glass—this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.

Careless. Here, now for't! I'll see justice done, to the last drop of my bottle.

Sir Oliver S. Nay, pray, gentlemen—I did not expect this usage.

Charles S. No, hang it, you shan't! Mr. Premium's a stranger.

Sir Oliver S. Odd! I wish I was well out of their company. [*Aside.*

Careless. Plague on 'em then!—if they don't drink, we'll not sit down with them. Come, Harry, the dice are in the next room—Charles, you'll join us when you have finished your business with the gentlemen?

Charles S. I will! I will! [*Exeunt.*] *Careless!*

Careless. [*Returning.*] Well!

Charles S. Perhaps I may want you.

Careless. Oh, you know I am always ready : word, note, or bond, 'tis all the same to me. [*Exit.*

Moses. Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secrecy ; and always performs what he undertakes. Mr. Premium, this is——

Charles S. Pshaw! have done.—Sir, my friend Moses is a very honest fellow, but a little slow at expression : he'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr. Premium, the plain state of the matter is this : I am an extravagant young fellow who wants to borrow money—you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who have got money to lend.—I am block-head enough to give 50 per cent sooner than not have it ; and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you can get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once, and may proceed to business without further ceremony.

Sir Oliver S. Exceeding frank, upon my word.—I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

Charles S. Oh no, sir ! plain dealing in business I always think best.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I like you the better for it—however, you are mistaken in one thing ; I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend ; but then he's an unconscionable dog, isn't he, Moses?

Moses. But you can't help that.

Sir Oliver S. And must sell stock to accommodate you—mustn't he, Moses?

Moses. Yes, indeed! You know I always speak the truth, and scorn to tell a lie!

Charles S. Right. People that speak truth generally do: but these are trifles, Mr. Premium. What! I know money isn't to be bought without paying for't!

Sir Oliver S. Well—but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

Charles S. Not a mole-hill, nor a twig, but what's in the bough-pots out of the window!

Sir Oliver S. Nor any stock, I presume?

Charles S. Nothing but live stock—and that's only a few pointers and ponies. But pray, Mr. Premium, are you acquainted at all with any of my connections?

Sir Oliver S. Why, to say truth, I am.

Charles S. Then you must know that I have a dev'lish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations?

Sir Oliver S. That you have a wealthy uncle I have heard; but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell.

Charles S. Oh no!—there can be no doubt. They tell me I'm a prodigious favourite, and that he talks of leaving me everything.

Sir Oliver S. Indeed! this is the first I've heard of it.

Charles S. Yes, yes, 'tis just so—Moses knows 'tis true, don't you, Moses?

Moses. Oh yes! I'll swear to't.

Sir Oliver S. Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal. [*Aside.*]

Charles S. Now I propose, Mr. Premium, if it's agreeable to you, a post-obit on Sir Oliver's life; though at the same time the old fellow has been so liberal to me, that I give you my word, I should be very sorry to hear that anything had happened to him.

Sir Oliver S. Not more than I should, I assure you. But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me—for I might live to a hundred, and never see the principal.

Charles S. Oh yes, you would—the moment Sir Oliver dies, you know, you would come on me for the money.

Sir Oliver S. Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome dun you ever had in your life.

Charles S. What! I suppose you're afraid that Sir Oliver is too good a life?

Sir Oliver S. No, indeed, I am not; though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.

Charles S. There again now you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably, poor Uncle Oliver! Yes, yes, he breaks apace, I'm told—and is so much altered lately, that his nearest relations don't know him.

Sir Oliver S. No! ha! ha! ha! so much altered lately, that his nearest relations don't know him! ha! ha! ha! egad—ha! ha! ha!

Charles S. Ha! ha!—you're glad to hear that, little Premium?

Sir Oliver S. No, no, I'm not.

Charles S. Yes, yes, you are—ha! ha! ha!—You know that mends your chance.

Sir Oliver S. But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over?—nay, some say he is actually arrived?

Charles S. Pshaw! sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no, rely on't he's at this moment at Calcutta—isn't he, Moses?

Moses. Oh yes, certainly.

Sir Oliver S. Very true, as you say, you must know better than I, though I have it from pretty good authority—haven't I, Moses?

Moses. Yes, most undoubted!

Sir Oliver S. But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately—is there nothing you could dispose of?

Charles S. How do you mean?

Sir Oliver S. For instance, now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate?

Charles S. O Lud!—that's gone long ago.—Moses can tell you how better than I can.

Sir Oliver S. Good lack! all the family race cups and corporation bowls! [*Aside.*]—Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and compact——

Charles S. Yes, yes, so it was—vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.

Sir Oliver S. Mercy upon me! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom! [*Aside.*] Pray, what are become of the books?

Charles S. You must inquire of the auctioneer, Master Premium, for I don't believe even Moses can direct you.

Moses. I know nothing of books.

Sir Oliver S. So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose?

Charles S. Not much, indeed; unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above, and if you have a taste for paintings, egad, you shall have 'em a bargain.

Sir Oliver S. Hey! what the devil! sure, you wouldn't sell your forefathers, would you?

Charles S. Every man of them to the best bidder.

Sir Oliver S. What! your great-uncles and aunts?

Charles S. Ay, and my great-grandfathers and grandmothers too.

Sir Oliver S. Now I give him up. [*Aside.*] What the plague, have you no bowels for your own kindred? Odd's life, do you take me for Shylock in the play, that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood?

Charles S. Nay, my little broker, don't be angry: what need you care if you have your money's worth?

Sir Oliver S. Well, I'll be the purchaser: I think I can dispose of the family canvass. Oh, I'll never forgive him this! never! [*Aside.*]

Enter CARELESS

Careless. Come, Charles, what keeps you?

Charles S. I can't come yet: i'faith we are going to have a sale above stairs; here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors.

Careless. Oh, burn your ancestors!

Charles S. No, he may do that afterwards, if he pleases. Stay, *Careless*, we want you : egad, you shall be auctioneer ; so come along with us.

Careless. Oh, have with you, if that's the case. Handle a hammer as well as a dice-box!

Sir Oliver S. Oh, the profligates! [*Aside.*

Charles S. Come, *Moses*, you shall be appraiser, if we want one. Gad's life, little *Premium*, you don't seem to like the business?

Sir Oliver S. Oh yes, I do, vastly. Ha! ha! ha! yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one's family by auction—ha! ha!—Oh, the prodigal! [*Aside.*

Charles S. To be sure! when a man wants money, where the plague should he get assistance if he can't make free with his own relations?

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*Picture Room at CHARLES'S*

*Enter CHARLES SURFACE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE,
MOSES, and CARELESS*

Charles S. Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in ;—here they are, the family of the Surfaces, up to the Conquest.

Sir Oliver S. And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

Charles S. Ay, ay, these are done in the true spirit of portrait painting ;—no *volontier grace* and expression. Not like the works of your modern Raphaels, who give you the strongest resemblance, yet contrive to make your portrait independent of you ; so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture.—No, no ; the merit of these is the inveterate likeness—all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature besides.

Sir Oliver S. Ah ! we shall never see such figures of men again.

Charles S. I hope not. — Well, you see,

Master Premium, what a domestic character I am ; here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family. — But, come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer ; here's an old gouty chair of my father's will answer the purpose.

Careless. Ay, ay, this will do. — But, Charles, I haven't a hammer ; and what's an auctioneer without his hammer ?

Charles S. Egad, that's true ; — what parchment have we here ? — Oh, our genealogy in full. Here, Careless, — you shall have no common bit of mahogany, here's the family tree for you, you rogue, — this shall be your hammer, and now you may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

Sir Oliver S. What an unnatural rogue ! — an *ex post facto* parricide ! [*Aside.*

Careless. Yes, yes, here's a bit of your generation indeed ; — faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the business, for 'twill serve not only as a hammer, but a catalogue into the bargain. — Come, begin — A-going, a-going, a-going !

Charles S. Bravo, Careless ! — Well, here's my great-uncle, Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye at the battle of Malplaquet. — What say you, Mr. Premium ? — look at him — there's a hero, not cut out of his feathers, as your modern clipt captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals, as a general should be. — What do you bid ?

Moses. Mr. Premium would have *you* speak.



Charles. *You may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.*

Charles S. Why, then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I'm sure that's not dear for a staff-officer.

Sir Oliver S. Heaven deliver me! his famous Uncle Richard for ten pounds! [*Aside.*]—Well, sir, I take him at that.

Charles S. Careless, knock down my Uncle Richard.—Here, now, is a maiden sister of his, my great-aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be in his best manner, and a very formidable likeness.—There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock.—You shall have her for five pounds ten—the sheep are worth the money.

Sir Oliver S. Ah! poor Deborah! a woman who set such a value on herself! [*Aside.*]—Five pounds ten—she's mine.

Charles S. Knock down my Aunt Deborah!—Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs. You see, Moses, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.

Charles S. Well, take that couple for the same.

Moses. 'Tis good bargain.

Charles S. Careless!—This, now, is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit.—What do you rate him at, Moses?

Moses. Four guineas.

Charles S. Four guineas!—Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig.—Mr. Premium, you have more respect for the woollack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.

Sir Oliver S. By all means.

Careless. Gone!

Charles S. And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt, Esquires, both members of parliament, and noted speakers, and what's very extraordinary, I believe, this is the first time they were ever bought or sold.

Sir Oliver S. That is very extraordinary, indeed! I'll take them at your own price, for the honour of parliament.

Careless. Well said, little Premium! — I'll knock them down at forty.

Charles S. Here's a jolly fellow—I don't know what relation, but he was mayor of Manchester: take him at eight pounds.

Sir Oliver S. No, no; six will do for the mayor.

Charles S. Come, make it guineas, and I'll throw you the two aldermen there into the bargain.

Sir Oliver S. They're mine.

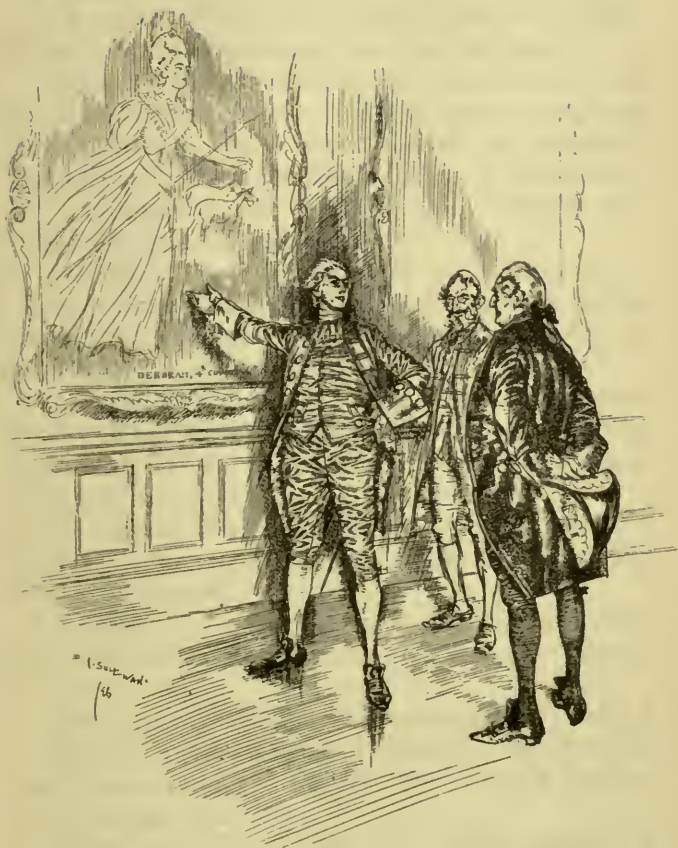
Charles S. Careless, knock down the mayor and aldermen.—But plague on't, we shall be all day retailing in this manner; do let us deal wholesale: what say you, little Premium? Give us three hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

Careless. Ay, ay, that will be the best way.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, anything to accommodate you;—they are mine. But there is one portrait which you have always passed over.

Careless. What, that ill-looking little fellow over the settee?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, sir, I mean that, though I



Charles. Knock down my Aunt Deborah!

don't think him so ill-looking a little fellow, by any means.

Charles S. What, that?—Oh! that's my Uncle Oliver; 'twas done before he went to India.

Careless. Your Uncle Oliver!—Gad, then you'll never be friends, Charles. That, now, to me, is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw; an unforgiving eye, and a damned disinheriting countenance! an inveterate knave, depend on't. Don't you think so, little Premium?

Sir Oliver S. Upon my soul, sir, I do not; I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive;—but I suppose Uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber?

Charles S. No, hang it; I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.

Sir Oliver S. The rogue's my nephew after all! [*Aside.*]—But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

Charles S. I'm sorry for't, for you certainly will not have it.—Oons, haven't you got enough of them?

Sir Oliver S. I forgive him everything! [*Aside.*]—But, sir, when I take a whim in my head I don't value money. I'll give you as much for that as for all the rest.

Charles S. Don't tease me, master broker; I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end of it.

Sir Oliver S. How like his father the dog is! [*Aside.*]—Well, well, I have done.—I did not

perceive it before, but I think I never saw such a striking resemblance — [*Aside.*] —— Here is a draft for your sum.

Charles S. Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds.

Sir Oliver S. You will not let Sir Oliver go?

Charles S. Zounds! no! — I tell you once more.

Sir Oliver S. Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time—but give me your hand on the bargain; you are an honest fellow, Charles—I beg pardon, sir, for being so free.—Come, Moses.

Charles S. Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow! But hark'ee, Premium, you'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

Charles S. But, hold; do now send a genteel conveyance for them, for, I assure you, they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

Sir Oliver S. I will, I will—for all but Oliver.

Charles S. Ay, all but the little nabob.

Sir Oliver S. You're fixed on that?

Charles S. Peremptorily.

Sir Oliver S. A dear extravagant rogue! [*Aside.*]—Good-day!—Come, Moses.—Let me hear now who calls him profligate!

[*Exeunt* SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* MOSES.]

Careless. Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw!

Charles S. Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow.—Hah! here's Rowley;

do, Careless, say I'll join the company in a few moments.

Careless. I will—but don't let that old block-head persuade you to squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such nonsense; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows.

Charles S. Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

Careless. Nothing else.

Charles S. Ay, ay, never fear. [*Exit CARELESS.*—Soh! this was an odd old fellow, indeed.—Let me see—two-thirds of this is mine by right, five hundred and thirty odd pounds. 'Fore Heaven! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them for!—Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful servant.—

Enter ROWLEY

Hah! old Rowley! egad, you are just come in time to take leave of your old acquaintance.

Rowley. Yes, I heard they were a-going. But I wonder you can have such spirits under so many distresses.

Charles S. Why, there's the point! my distresses are so many, that I can't afford to part with my spirits; but I shall be rich and splenetic, all in good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that I am not more sorrowful at parting with so many near relations; to be sure 'tis very affecting: but you see they never move a muscle, so why should I?

Rowley. There's no making you serious a moment.

Charles S. Yes, faith, I am so now. Here, my honest Rowley, here, get me this changed directly, and take a hundred pounds of it immediately to old Stanley.

Rowley. A hundred pounds! Consider only——

Charles S. Gad's life, don't talk about it: poor Stanley's wants are pressing, and if you don't make haste, we shall have some one call that has a better right to the money.

Rowley. Ah! there's the point! I never will cease dunning you with the old proverb——

Charles S. "Be just before you're generous."—Why, so I would if I could; but Justice is an old lame hobbling beldame, and I can't get her to keep pace with Generosity for the soul of me.

Rowley. Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection——

Charles S. Ay, ay, it's all very true; but, hark'ee, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I'll give; so damn your economy, and now for hazard. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Parlour*

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* MOSES

Moses. Well, sir, I think, as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr. Charles in high glory; 'tis great pity he's so extravagant.

Sir Oliver S. True, but he would not sell my picture.

Moses. And loves wine and women so much.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture.

Moses. And games so deep.

Sir Oliver S. But he would not sell my picture.

——Oh, here's Rowley.

Enter ROWLEY

Rowley. So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase——

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

Rowley. And here has he commissioned me to re-deliver you part of the purchase-money—I mean, though, in your necessitous character of old Stanley.

Moses. Ah! there is the pity of all; he is so damned charitable.

Rowley. And I left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid, and this hundred would satisfy them.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well, I'll pay his debts, and his benevolence too.—But now I am no more a broker, and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

Rowley. Not yet a while; Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about this time.

Enter TRIP

Trip. Oh, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out; this way——*Moses,* a word.

[*Exeunt TRIP and MOSES.*]

Sir Oliver S. There's a fellow for you—would you believe it, that puppy intercepted the Jew on our coming, and wanted to raise money before he got to his master.

Rowley. Indeed!

Sir Oliver S. Yes, they are now planning an annuity business.—Ah! Master Rowley, in my days servants were content with the follies of their masters, when they were worn a little threadbare; but now, they have their vices, like their birthday clothes, with the gloss on. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A Library*

JOSEPH SURFACE *and a* SERVANT

Joseph S. No letter from Lady Teazle?

Serv. No, sir.

Joseph S. I am surprised she has not sent, if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet, I wish I may not lose the heiress, through the scrape I have drawn myself into with the wife; however, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour. [*Knocking heard without.*

Serv. Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

Joseph S. Hold!—See whether it is or not before you go to the door: I have a particular message for you, if it should be my brother.

Serv. 'Tis her ladyship, sir; she always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.



E. J. S. V. C. 1846

She always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.



Joseph S. Stay, stay; draw that screen before the window—that will do;—my opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so anxious a temper.—[SERVANT *draws the screen, and exit.*]—I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria; but she must by no means be let into that secret,—at least, till I have her more in my power.

Enter Lady TEAZLE

Lady T. What, sentiment in soliloquy now? Have you been very impatient?—O Lud! don't pretend to look grave.—I vow I couldn't come before.

Joseph S. Oh, madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

Lady T. Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you know Sir Peter is grown so ill-natured to me of late, and so jealous of Charles too—that's the best of the story, isn't it?

Joseph S. I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up. [*Aside.*

Lady T. I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him, and then perhaps he would be convinced; don't you, Mr. Surface?

Joseph S. Indeed I do not. [*Aside.*]—Oh, certainly I do! for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced, how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.

Lady T. Well, well, I'm inclined to believe

you. But isn't it provoking, to have the most ill-natured things said of one?—And there's my friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too—that's what vexes me.

Joseph S. Ay, madam, to be sure, that is the provoking circumstance — without foundation ; yes, yes, there's the mortification, indeed ; for when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it.

Lady T. No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice ; but to attack me, who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody—that is, of any friend ; and then Sir Peter too, to have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart—indeed 'tis monstrous !

Joseph S. But, my dear Lady Teazle, 'tis your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife, and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compact is broken, and she owes it to the honour of her sex to outwit him.

Lady T. Indeed!—so that if he suspects me without cause, it follows, that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for't.

Joseph S. Undoubtedly—for your husband should never be deceived in you,—and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment to his discernment.

Lady T. To be sure, what you say is very

reasonable, and when the consciousness of my innocence——

Joseph S. Ah! my dear madam, there is the great mistake: 'tis this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms, and careless of the world's opinion?—why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct, and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences?—why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper, and outrageous at his suspicions?—why, the consciousness of your innocence.

Lady T. 'Tis very true!

Joseph S. Now, my dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas*, you can't conceive how cautious you would grow, and how ready to humour and agree with your husband.

Lady T. Do you think so?

Joseph S. Oh! I am sure on't; and then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for, in short, your character at present is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying from too much health.

Lady T. So, so; then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to secure my reputation?

Joseph S. Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

Lady T. Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny!

Joseph S. An infallible one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.

Lady T. Why, if my understanding were once convinced——

Joseph S. Oh, certainly, madam, your understanding should be convinced.—Yes, yes—Heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you thought wrong. No, no, I have too much honour to desire it.

Lady T. Don't you think we may as well leave honour out of the question?

Joseph S. Ah! the ill effects of your country education, I see, still remain with you.

Lady T. I doubt they do indeed; and I will fairly own to you, that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill-usage sooner than your *honourable logic*, after all.

Joseph S. Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of—— *[Taking her hand.*

Enter SERVANT

'Sdeath, you blockhead—what do you want?

Serv. I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you would not choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him.

Joseph S. Sir Peter!—Oons—the devil!

Lady T. Sir Peter! O Lud—I'm ruined—I'm ruined!

Serv. Sir, 'twasn't I let him in.

Lady T. Oh! I'm quite undone! What will become of me? Now, Mr. Logic—Oh! he's on





E
T. S. W. W. W.
162

Sir P. Ay, ever improving himself—Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface—

the stairs—I'll get behind here—and if ever I'm so imprudent again—— [*Goes behind the screen.*]

Joseph S. Give me that book.

[*Sits down.* SERVANT pretends to adjust his hair.

Enter Sir PETER

Sir Peter T. Ay, ever improving himself—Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface——

Joseph S. Oh! my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon—[*Gaping—throws away the book.*—] I have been dozing over a stupid book.—Well, I am much obliged to you for this call. You haven't been here, I believe, since I fitted up this room.—Books, you know, are the only things in which I am a coxcomb.

Sir Peter T. 'Tis very neat indeed.—Well, well, that's proper; and you can make even your screen a source of knowledge—hung, I perceive, with maps?

Joseph S. Oh, yes, I find great use in that screen.

Sir Peter T. I daresay you must, certainly, when you want to find anything in a hurry.

Joseph S. Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry either. [*Aside.*]

Sir Peter T. Well, I have a little private business——

Joseph S. You need not stay (*to the SERVANT*).

Serv. No, sir. [*Exit.*]

Joseph S. Here's a chair, Sir Peter—I beg——

Sir Peter T. Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish

to unburthen my mind to you—a point of the greatest moment to my peace; in short, my dear friend, Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy.

Joseph S. Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

Sir Peter T. Ay, 'tis too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what's worse, I have pretty good authority to suppose she has formed an attachment to another.

Joseph S. Indeed! you astonish me!

Sir Peter T. Yes; and, between ourselves, I think I've discovered the person.

Joseph S. How! you alarm me exceedingly.

Sir Peter T. Ay, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathise with me!

Joseph S. Yes—believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

Sir Peter T. I am convinced of it.—Ah! it is a happiness to have a friend whom we can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean?

Joseph S. I haven't the most distant idea. It can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite!

Sir Peter T. Oh no! What say you to Charles?

Joseph S. My brother! impossible!

Sir Peter T. Oh! my dear friend, the goodness of your own heart misleads you. You judge of others by yourself.

Joseph S. Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another's treachery.

Sir Peter T. True—but your brother has no sentiment—you never hear him talk so.

Joseph S. Yet, I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

Sir Peter T. Ay,—but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

Joseph S. That's very true.

Sir Peter T. And there's, you know, the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have any very great affection for me; and if she were to be frail, and I were to make it public, why the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

Joseph S. That's true, to be sure—they would laugh.

Sir Peter T. Laugh—ay, and make ballads, and paragraphs, and the devil knows what of me.

Joseph S. No—you must never make it public.

Sir Peter T. But then again—that the nephew of my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.

Joseph S. Ay, there's the point.—When ingratitude bars the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

Sir Peter T. Ay—I, that was, in a manner, left his guardian; in whose house he had been so often entertained; who never in my life denied him—my advice.

Joseph S. Oh, 'tis not to be credited. There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure; but, for my part, till you can give me

positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if it should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine—I disclaim kindred with him : for the man who can break the laws of hospitality, and tempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

Sir Peter T. What a difference there is between you ! What noble sentiments !

Joseph S. Yet, I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

Sir Peter T. I am sure I wish to think well of her, and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once with having made no settlement on her ; and, in our last quarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall have her own way, and be her own mistress in that respect for the future ; and if I were to die, she will find I have not been inattentive to her interest while living. Here, my friend, are the drafts of two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on.—By one, she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live ; and, by the other, the bulk of my fortune at my death.

Joseph S. This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous.—I wish it may not corrupt my pupil. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Yes, I am determined she shall have no cause to complain, though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

Joseph S. Nor I, if I could help it. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. And now, my dear friend, if you please, we will talk over the situation of your affairs with Maria.

Joseph S. [*Softly.*]—Oh, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

Sir Peter T. I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affections.

Joseph S. I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate! [*Softly.*]—'Sdeath, I shall be ruined every way. [*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with your passion for Maria, I'm sure she's not your enemy in the affair.

Joseph S. Pray, Sir Peter, now, oblige me. I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking of, to bestow a thought on my own concerns. The man who is entrusted with his friend's distresses can never——

Enter SERVANT

Well, sir?

Serv. Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street, and says he knows you are within.

Joseph S. 'Sdeath, blockhead, I'm not within—I'm out for the day.

Sir Peter T. Stay—hold—a thought has struck me :—you shall be at home.

Joseph S. Well, well, let him up. [*Exit SERVANT.*] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however.

[*Aside.*

Sir Peter T. Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you.—Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere—then do you tax him on the point we have been talking, and his answer may satisfy me at once.

Joseph S. Oh, fie, Sir Peter! would you have me join in so mean a trick?—to trepan my brother too?

Sir Peter T. Nay, you tell me you are sure he is innocent; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me: here, behind this screen will be—Hey! what the devil! there seems to be one listener there already—I'll swear I saw a petticoat!

Joseph S. Ha! ha! ha! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet, you know, it does not follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either! Hark'ee, 'tis a little French milliner—a silly rogue that plagues me,—and having some character to lose, on your coming, sir, she ran behind the screen.

Sir Peter T. Ah! you rogue! But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

Joseph S. Oh, 'twill never go any farther, you may depend upon it.

Sir Peter T. No! then, faith, let her hear it out.—Here's a closet will do as well.

Joseph S. Well, go in there.

Sir Peter T. Sly rogue! sly rogue!

[*Going into the closet.*]

Joseph S. A narrow escape, indeed! and a curious situation I'm in, to part man and wife in this manner.

Lady T. [*Peeping.*]—Couldn't I steal off?

Joseph S. Keep close, my angel!

Sir Peter T. [*Peeping.*]—Joseph, tax him home.

Joseph S. Back, my dear friend!

Lady T. Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?

Joseph S. Be still, my life!

Sir Peter T. [*Peeping.*]—You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

Joseph S. In, in, my good Sir Peter.—'Fore gad, I wish I had a key to the door.

Enter CHARLES SURFACE

Charles S. Holla! brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow would not let me up at first. What! have you had a Jew or a wench with you?

Joseph S. Neither, brother, I assure you.

Charles S. But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

Joseph S. He *was*, brother; but hearing you were coming, he did not choose to stay.

Charles S. What! was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?

Joseph S. No, sir: but I am sorry to find, Charles, you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

Charles S. Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men.—But how so, pray?

Joseph S. To be plain with you, brother—he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

Charles S. Who, I? O Lud! not I, upon my word.—Ha! ha! ha! ha! so the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he?—or, what is worse, Lady Teazle has found out she has an old husband?

Joseph S. This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh——

Charles S. True, true, as you were going to say—then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

Joseph S. Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this. [*Aloud.*

Charles S. To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement:—besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

Joseph S. But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you——

Charles S. Why, look'ee, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonourable action; but if a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way—and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father——

Joseph S. Well!

Charles S. Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your morality, that's all.—But, brother, do you know now that you surprise me exceedingly, by naming *me* with Lady

Teazle ; for, 'faith, I always understood you were her favourite.

Joseph S. Oh, for shame, Charles ! This retort is foolish.

Charles S. Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances——

Joseph S. Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

Charles S. Egad, I'm serious.—Don't you remember one day when I called here——

Joseph S. Nay, prithee, Charles——

Charles S. And found you together——

Joseph S. Zounds, sir ! I insist——

Charles S. And another time when your servant——

Joseph S. Brother, brother, a word with you !
—Gad, I must stop him. [*Aside.*

Charles S. Informed, I say, that——

Joseph S. Hush ! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I should not have consented.

Charles S. How, Sir Peter ! Where is he ?

Joseph S. Softly ; there ! [*Points to the closet.*]

Charles S. Oh, 'fore Heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth !

Joseph S. No, no——

Charles S. I say, Sir Peter, come into court.—
[*Pulls in* SIR PETER.]—What ! my old guardian !
—What ! turn inquisitor, and take evidence incog. ?

Sir Peter T. Give me your hand, Charles—
I believe I have suspected you wrongfully ; but you mustn't be angry with Joseph—'twas my plan !

Charles S. Indeed!

Sir Peter T. But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did: what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

Charles S. Egad, then, 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more—wasn't it, Joseph?

[*Apart to JOSEPH.*

Sir Peter T. Ah! you would have retorted on him.

Charles S. Ay, ay, that was a joke.

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

Charles S. But you might as well have suspected *him* as *me* in this matter, for all that—mightn't he, Joseph?

[*Apart to JOSEPH.*

Sir Peter T. Well, well, I believe you.

Joseph S. Would they were both well out of the room!

[*Aside.*

Enter SERVANT, and whispers JOSEPH SURFACE

Sir Peter T. And in future perhaps we may not be such strangers.

Joseph S. Gentlemen, I beg pardon—I must wait on you downstairs: here is a person come on particular business.

Charles S. Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I have not met a long time, and I have something to say to him.

Joseph S. They must not be left together. [*Aside.*]—I'll send this man away, and return directly.—Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

[*Apart to Sir PETER, and goes out.*





E. L. SOLIVAN
186

Sir P. Hush!—a little French milliner . . . she's in the room now.

Sir Peter T. I! not for the world! [*Apart to JOSEPH.*]—Ah! Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment.—Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!

Charles S. Pshaw! he is too moral by half—and so apprehensive of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a girl.

Sir Peter T. No, no,—come, come,—you wrong him.—No, no! Joseph is no rake, but he is no such saint either in that respect.—I have a great mind to tell him—we should have a laugh at Joseph. [*Aside.*]

Charles S. Oh, hang him! He's a very anchorite, a young hermit.

Sir Peter T. Hark'ee—you must not abuse him: he may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

Charles S. Why, you won't tell him?

Sir Peter T. No—but—this way. Egad, I'll tell him. [*Aside.*]—Hark'ee—have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

Charles S. I should like it of all things.

Sir Peter T. Then, i'faith, we will—I'll be quit with him for discovering me.—He had a girl with him when I called.

Charles S. What! Joseph? you jest.

Sir Peter T. Hush!—a little French milliner—and the best of the jest is—she's in the room now.

Charles S. The devil she is!

Sir Peter T. Hush! I tell you! [*Points.*]

Charles S. Behind the screen ! 'Slife, let's unveil her !

Sir Peter T. No, no—he's coming—you shan't, indeed !

Charles S. Oh, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner !

Sir Peter T. Not for the world—Joseph will never forgive me.

Charles S. I'll stand by you——

Sir Peter T. Odds, here he is !

[JOSEPH SURFACE *enters just as CHARLES SURFACE throws down the screen.*

Charles S. Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful !

Sir Peter T. Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable !

Charles S. Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw. Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek, and I don't see who is out of the secret.—Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me ? Not a word !—Brother, will you be pleased to explain this matter ? What ! is Morality dumb too ?—Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now ! All mute !—Well—though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another—so I'll leave you to yourselves—[*Going.*] Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man cause for so much uneasiness.—Sir Peter ! there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment !

[*Exit CHARLES.*

[*They stand for some time looking at each other.*



F. S. W. 176

Sir P. *Lady Teazle*, by all that's damnable!

Joseph S. Sir Peter—notwithstanding—I confess—that appearances are against me—if you will afford me your patience—I make no doubt—but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

Sir Peter T. If you please, sir.

Joseph S. The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward Maria—I say, sir,—Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of your temper—and knowing my friendship to the family—she, sir, I say—called here—in order that—I might explain these pretensions—but on your coming—being apprehensive—as I said—of your jealousy—she withdrew—and this, you may depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.

Sir Peter T. A very clear account, upon my word; and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.

Lady T. For not one word of it, Sir Peter!

Sir Peter T. How! don't you think it worth while to agree in the lie?

Lady T. There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.

Sir Peter T. I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am!

Joseph S. [*Aside.*]—'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

Lady T. Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I'll speak for myself.

Sir Peter T. Ay, let her alone, sir; you'll find she'll make out a better story than you, without prompting.

Lady T. Hear me, Sir Peter!—I came hither on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant

of this gentleman's pretensions to her. But I came seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness.

Sir Peter T. Now, I believe, the truth is coming indeed!

Joseph S. The woman's mad!

Lady T. No, sir,—she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means.—Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me—but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated so to my heart, that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honourable addresses to his ward—I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him.

[*Exit Lady TEAZLE.*

Joseph S. Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows——

Sir Peter T. That you are a villain! and so I leave you to your conscience.

Joseph S. You are too rash, Sir Peter; you shall hear me.—The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to——

[*Exeunt Sir PETER and SURFACE talking.*

ACT V

SCENE I.—*The Library*

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE *and* SERVANT

Joseph S. Mr. Stanley!—and why should you think I would see him? you must know he comes to ask something.

Serv. Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to the door with him.

Joseph S. Pshaw! blockhead! to suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor relations!—Well, why don't you show the fellow up?

Serv. I will, sir.—Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady——

Joseph S. Go, fool! [*Exit* SERVANT.]—Sure Fortune never played a man of my policy such a trick before. My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria, destroyed in a moment! I'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses! I shan't be able to bestow even a benevolent sentiment on Stanley.—So! here he comes, and Rowley with him. I must try to recover

myself, and put a little charity into my face, however. [Exit.

Enter Sir OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY

Sir Oliver S. What ! does he avoid us?—That was he, was it not?

Rowley. It was, sir. But I doubt you are come a little too abruptly. His nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first to break it to him.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, plague of his nerves! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking!

Rowley. As to his way of thinking, I cannot pretend to decide; for, to do him justice, he appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

Sir Oliver S. Yet has a string of charitable sentiments at his fingers' ends.

Rowley. Or rather, at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has such faith in as that "Charity begins at home."

Sir Oliver S. And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all.

Rowley. I doubt you'll find it so;—but he's coming. I mustn't seem to interrupt you; and you know immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

Sir Oliver S. True; and afterwards you'll meet me at Sir Peter's.

Rowley. Without losing a moment. [Exit.

Sir Oliver S. I don't like the complaisance of his features.

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE

Joseph S. Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting——Mr. Stanley, I presume.—

Sir Oliver S. At your service.

Joseph S. Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down—I entreat you, sir!—

Sir Oliver S. Dear sir—there's no occasion——too civil by half! [Aside.

Joseph S. I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think, Mr. Stanley?

Sir Oliver S. I was, sir;—so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children, else I should not have presumed to trouble you.

Joseph S. Dear sir, there needs no apology:—he that is in distress, though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the wealthy. I am sure I wish I was of that class, and had it in my power to offer you even a small relief.

Sir Oliver S. If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

Joseph S. I wish he was, sir, with all my heart: you should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir.

Sir Oliver S. I should not need one—my

distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty would enable you to become the agent of his charity.

Joseph S. My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy man; but avarice, Mr. Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing; though people, I know, have thought otherwise, and, for my part, I never chose to contradict the report.

Sir Oliver S. What! has he never transmitted you bullion—rupees—pagodas?

Joseph S. Oh, dear sir, nothing of the kind:—No, no—a few presents now and then—china, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers—little more, believe me.

Sir Oliver S. Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds!—Avadavats and Indian crackers! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother: there are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man.

Sir Oliver S. Not I, for one! [*Aside.*

Joseph S. The sums I have lent him!—Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame; it was an amiable weakness: however, I don't pretend to defend it,—and now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived me of the pleasure of serving you, Mr. Stanley, as my heart dictates.

Sir Oliver S. Dissembler! [*Aside.*]—Then, sir, you can't assist me?

Joseph S. At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

Sir Oliver S. I am extremely sorry——

Joseph S. Not more than I, believe me;—to pity without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

Sir Oliver S. Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

Joseph S. You leave me deeply affected, Mr. Stanley. William, be ready to open the door.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, dear sir, no ceremony.

Joseph S. Your very obedient.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, your most obsequious.

Joseph S. You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

Sir Oliver S. Sweet sir, you are too good!

Joseph S. In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

Sir Oliver S. Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

Joseph S. Sir, yours as sincerely.

Sir Oliver S. Charles, you are my heir!

[*Aside. Exit.*]

Joseph S. This is one bad effect of a good character; it invites application from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities; whereas the sentimental French plate I use instead of it makes just as good a show, and pays no tax.

Enter ROWLEY

Rowley. Mr. Surface, your servant : I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will inform you.

Joseph S. Always happy to see Mr. Rowley. [*Reads the letter.*]—Sir Oliver Surface!—My uncle arrived!

Rowley. He is, indeed : we have just parted—quite well, after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

Joseph S. I am astonished!—William! stop Mr. Stanley, if he's not gone.

Rowley. Oh! he's out of reach, I believe.

Joseph S. Why did you not let me know this when you came in together?

Rowley. I thought you had particular business ;—but I must be gone to inform your brother, and appoint him here to meet your uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour.

Joseph S. So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming.—Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky. [*Aside.*]

Rowley. You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

Joseph S. Ah! I'm rejoiced to hear it—Just at this time! [*Aside.*]

Rowley. I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

Joseph S. Do, do ; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I cannot express the sensa-

tions I feel at the thought of seeing him.—
 [*Exit* ROWLEY.]—Certainly his coming just at
 this time is the cruellest piece of ill-fortune!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—Sir PETER TEAZLE'S

Enter Mrs. CANDOUR *and* MAID

Maid. Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody
 at present.

Mrs. Can. Did you tell her it was her friend
 Mrs. Candour?

Maid. Yes, ma'am; but she begs you will
 excuse her.

Mrs. Can. Do go again,—I shall be glad to
 see her, if it be only for a moment, for I am
 sure she must be in great distress. [*Exit* MAID.]
 Dear heart, how provoking! I'm not mistress
 of half the circumstances! We shall have the
 whole affair in the newspapers, with the names of
 the parties at length, before I have dropped the
 story at a dozen houses.

Enter Sir BENJAMIN BACKBITE

Oh, Sir Benjamin! you have heard, I suppose——

Sir Benj. B. Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface——

Mrs. Can. And Sir Peter's discovery——

Sir Benj. B. Oh! the strangest piece of business,
 to be sure!

Mrs. Can. Well, I never was so surprised in
 my life. I am so sorry for all parties, indeed.

Sir Benj. B. Now, I don't pity Sir Peter at all: he was so extravagantly partial to Mr. Surface.

Mrs. Can. Mr. Surface! Why, 'twas with Charles Lady Teazle was detected.

Sir Benj. B. No, no, I tell you—Mr. Surface is the gallant.

Mrs. Can. No such thing! Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr. Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

Sir Benj. B. I tell you I had it from one——

Mrs. Can. And I have it from one——

Sir Benj. B. Who had it from one, who had it——

Mrs. Can. From one immediately——but here comes Lady Sneerwell; perhaps she knows the whole affair.

Enter Lady SNEERWELL

Lady Sneer. So, my dear Mrs. Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle.

Mrs. Can. Ay, my dear friend, who would have thought——

Lady Sneer. Well, there is no trusting appearances; though, indeed, she was always too lively for me.

Mrs. Can. To be sure, her manners were a little too free: but then she was so young!

Lady Sneer. And had, indeed, some good qualities.

Mrs. Can. So she had, indeed. But have you heard the particulars?

Lady Sneer. No; but everybody says that Mr. Surface——

Sir Benj. B. Ay, there; I told you Mr. Surface was the man.

Mrs. Can. No, no: indeed the assignation was with Charles.

Lady Sneer. With Charles! You alarm me, Mrs. Candour!

Mrs. Can. Yes, yes, he was the lover. Mr. Surface, to do him justice, was only the informer.

Sir Benj. B. Well, I'll not dispute with you, Mrs. Candour; but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter's wound will not——

Mrs. Can. Sir Peter's wound! Oh, mercy! I didn't hear a word of their fighting.

Lady Sneer. Nor I, a syllable.

Sir Benj. B. No! what, no mention of the duel?

Mrs. Can. Not a word.

Sir Benj. B. Oh, yes: they fought before they left the room.

Lady Sneer. Pray, let us hear.

Mrs. Can. Ay, do oblige us with the duel.

Sir Benj. B. "Sir," says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, "you are a most ungrateful fellow."

Mrs. Can. Ay, to Charles——

Sir Benj. B. No, no—to Mr. Surface—"a most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir," says he, "I insist on immediate satisfaction."

Mrs. Can. Ay, that must have been to Charles; for 'tis very unlikely Mr. Surface should fight in his own house.

Sir Benj. B. Gad's life, ma'am, not at all—"Giving me immediate satisfaction." On this, ma'am, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for hartshorn and water; then, madam, they began to fight with swords——

Enter CRABTREE

Crabt. With pistols, nephew—pistols: I have it from undoubted authority.

Mrs. Can. O, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true!

Crabt. Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded——

Sir Benj. B. By a thrust in second quite through his left side——

Crabt. By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

Mrs. Can. Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

Crabt. Yes, madam; though Charles would have avoided the matter, if he could.

Mrs. Can. I knew Charles was the person.

Sir Benj. B. My uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

Crabt. But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude.

Sir Benj. B. That I told you, you know——

Crabt. Do, nephew, let me speak! and insisted on immediate——

Sir Benj. B. Just as I said——

Crabt. Odds life, nephew, allow others to know something too. A pair of pistols lay on the bureau (for Mr. Surface, it seems, had come

home the night before late from Salthill, where he had been to see the Montem with a friend, who has a son at Eton), so, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

Sir Benj. B. I heard nothing of this.

Crabt. Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles's shot took effect, as I tell you, and Sir Peter's missed; but what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Shakspeare that stood over the fireplace, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the post-man, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

Sir Benj. B. My uncle's account is more circumstantial, I confess; but I believe mine is the true one, for all that.

Lady Sneer. I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information. [Aside. Exit Lady SNEERWELL.

Sir Benj. B. Ah! Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily accounted for.

Crabt. Yes, yes, they certainly do say—but that's neither here nor there.

Mrs. Can. But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

Crabt. Oh! they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny him.

Mrs. Can. I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

Crabt. Yes, yes; and I saw one of the faculty enter just before me.

Sir Benj. B. Hey! who comes here?

Crabt. Oh, this is he: the physician, depend on't.

Mrs. Can. Oh, certainly: it must be the physician; and now we shall know.

Enter Sir OLIVER SURFACE

Crabt. Well, doctor, what hopes?

Mrs. Can. Ay, doctor, how's your patient?

Sir Benj. B. Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a small sword?

Crabt. A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred.

Sir Oliver S. Doctor! a wound with a small sword! and a bullet in the thorax! Oons! are you mad, good people?

Sir Benj. B. Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor?

Sir Oliver S. Truly, I am to thank you for my degree if I am.

Crabt. Only a friend of Sir Peter's, then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of his accident?

Sir Oliver S. Not a word!

Crabt. Not of his being dangerously wounded?

Sir Oliver S. The devil he is!

Sir Benj. B. Run through the body——

Crabt. Shot in the breast——

Sir Benj. B. By one Mr. Surface——

Crabt. Ay, the younger.

Sir Oliver S. Hey! what the plague! you seem to differ strangely in your accounts: how-

ever, you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded.

Sir Benj. B. Oh, yes, we agree there.

Crabt. Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.

Sir Oliver S. Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation, he is the most imprudent man alive; for here he comes, walking as if nothing at all was the matter.

Enter Sir PETER TEAZLE

Odds heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I promise you; for we had just given you over.

Sir Benj. B. Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

Sir Oliver S. Why, man, what do you out of bed with a small sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

Sir Peter T. A small sword, and a bullet!

Sir Oliver S. Ay, these gentlemen would have killed you without law, or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.

Sir Peter T. Why, what is all this?

Sir Benj. B. We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortune.

Sir Peter T. So, so; all over the town already. [*Aside.*]

Crabt. Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at your years.

Sir Peter T. Sir, what business is that of yours?

Mrs. Can. Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied.

Sir Peter T. Plague on your pity, ma'am! I desire none of it.

Sir Benj. B. However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on the occasion.

Sir Peter T. Sir, sir, I desire to be master in my own house.

Crabt. 'Tis no uncommon case, that's one comfort.

Sir Peter T. I insist on being left to myself: without ceremony—I insist on your leaving my house directly.

Mrs. Can. Well, well, we are going, and depend on't we'll make the best report of it we can. [Exit.

Sir Peter T. Leave my house!

Crabt. And tell how hardly you've been treated. [Exit.

Sir Peter T. Leave my house!

Sir Benj. B. And how patiently you bear it. [Exit.

Sir Peter T. Fiends! vipers! furies! Oh! that their own venom would choke them!

Sir Oliver S. They are very provoking, indeed, Sir Peter.

Enter ROWLEY

Rowley. I heard high words: what has ruffled you, sir?



E. S. W. 1846
76

Sir P. Fiends ! vipers ! furies !

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?

Rowley. Well, I'm not inquisitive.

Sir Oliver S. Well, Sir Peter, I have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.

Sir Peter T. A precious couple they are!

Rowley. Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgment was right, Sir Peter.

Sir Oliver S. Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.

Rowley. Ay, as Sir Peter says, he is a man of sentiment.

Sir Oliver S. And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

Rowley. It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, he's a model for the young men of the age!—But how's this, Sir Peter? you don't join us in your friend Joseph's praise, as I expected.

Sir Peter T. Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

Rowley. What! do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

Sir Peter T. Pshaw! Plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you!

Rowley. Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's, so humbled, that she deigned to request me to be her advocate with you.

Sir Peter T. And does Sir Oliver know all this?

Sir Oliver S. Every circumstance.

Sir Peter T. What, of the closet and the screen, hey?

Sir Oliver S. Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. Oh, I have been vastly diverted with the story! Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. 'Twas very pleasant.

Sir Oliver S. I never laughed more in my life, I assure you: ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Oh, vastly diverting! Ha! ha! ha!

Rowley. To be sure, Joseph with his sentiments: ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, his sentiments! Ha! ha! ha! Hypocritical villain!

Sir Oliver S. Ay, and that rogue Charles to pull Sir Peter out of the closet: ha! ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Ha! ha! 'twas devilish entertaining, to be sure!

Sir Oliver S. Ha! ha! ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha!

Sir Peter T. Yes, yes, my face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha! ha! Oh, I must never show my head again!

Sir Oliver S. But come, come, it isn't fair to laugh at you neither, my old friend; though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

Sir Peter T. Oh, pray don't restrain your mirth on my account: it does not hurt me at all! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintance a very happy situation. Oh, yes, and then of a

morning to read the paragraphs about Mr. S——, Lady T——, and Sir P——, will be so entertaining!

Rowley. Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools: but I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room; I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

Sir Oliver S. Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you; but he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's, where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

Sir Peter T. Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart; though 'tis a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

Rowley. We'll follow. [Exit SIR OLIVER.

Sir Peter T. She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

Rowley. No; but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears.

Sir Peter T. Certainly a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little?

Rowley. Oh, this is ungenerous in you!

Sir Peter T. Well, I know not what to think. You remember the letter I found of hers evidently intended for Charles?

Rowley. A mere forgery, Sir Peter, laid in your way on purpose. This is one of the points which I intend Snake shall give you conviction of.

Sir Peter T. I wish I were once satisfied of

that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has! Rowley, I'll go to her.

Rowley. Certainly.

Sir Peter T. Though when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more.

Rowley. Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

Sir Peter T. I'faith, so I will! and, if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

Rowley. Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion——

Sir Peter T. Hold, Master Rowley! if you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like a sentiment: I have had enough of them to serve me the rest of my life.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*The Library*

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE *and* Lady SNEERWELL

Lady Sneer. Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and of course no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me.

Joseph S. Can passion furnish a remedy?

Lady Sneer. No, nor cunning neither. Oh! I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer!

Joseph S. Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer ; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

Lady Sneer. Because the disappointment doesn't reach your heart ; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

Joseph S. But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment ?

Lady Sneer. Are you not the cause of it ? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in imposing upon Sir Peter, and supplanting your brother, but you must endeavour to seduce his wife ? I hate such an avarice of crimes ; 'tis an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.

Joseph S. Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, but I don't think we're so totally defeated neither.

Lady Sneer: No !

Joseph S. You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us.

Lady Sneer. I do believe so.

Joseph S. And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove, that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will serve to support.

Lady Sneer. This, indeed, might have assisted.

Joseph S. Come, come ; it is not too late yet. [Knocking at the door.] But hark ! this is probably

my uncle, Sir Oliver: retire to that room; we'll consult further when he is gone.

Lady Sneer. Well, but if *he* should find you out too?

Joseph S. Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his own credit's sake—and you may depend on it I shall soon discover Sir Oliver's weak side!

Lady S. I have no diffidence of your abilities! only be constant to one roguery at a time.

[*Exit* Lady SNEERWELL.]

Joseph S. I will, I will. So! 'tis confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one's confederate in evil. Well, at all events my character is so much better than Charles's, that I certainly—hey!—what!—this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on't that he should return to tease me just now—I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here—and——

Enter Sir OLIVER SURFACE

Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time? You must not stay now, upon my word.

Sir Oliver S. Sir, I hear your Uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so penurious to you, I'll try what he'll do for me.

Joseph S. Sir, 'tis impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg—— Come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be assisted.

Sir Oliver S. No: Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

Joseph S. Zounds, sir! then I insist on your quitting the room directly.

Sir Oliver S. Nay, sir——

Joseph S. Sir, I insist on't: here, William! show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir, not one moment—this is such insolence!

[*Going to push him out.*]

Enter CHARLES SURFACE

Charles S. Hey day! what's the matter now? What the devil, have you got hold of my little broker here? Zounds, brother! don't hurt little Premium. What's the matter, my little fellow?

Joseph S. So! he has been with you too, has he?

Charles S. To be sure he has. Why he's as honest a little—— But sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you?

Joseph S. Borrowing! no! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every——

Charles S. O Gad, that's true! Noll mustn't find the little broker here, to be sure.

Joseph S. Yet Mr. Stanley insists——

Charles S. Stanley! why his name's Premium.

Joseph S. No, sir, Stanley.

Charles S. No, no, Premium.

Joseph S. Well, no matter which—but——

Charles S. Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, 'tis the same thing, as you say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides A. B. at the coffee-house. [Knocking.]

Joseph S. 'Sdeath! here's Sir Oliver at the door. Now I beg, Mr. Stanley——

Charles S. Ay, ay, and I beg, Mr. Premium——

Sir Oliver S. Gentlemen——

Joseph S. Sir, by heaven you shall go!

Charles S. Ay, out with him, certainly!

Sir Oliver S. This violence——

Joseph S. Sir, 'tis your own fault.

Charles S. Out with him, to be sure.

[*Both forcing Sir OLIVER out.*]

*Enter Sir PETER and Lady TEAZLE, MARIA,
and ROWLEY*

Sir Peter T. My old friend, Sir Oliver—hey! What in the name of wonder—here are dutiful nephews—assault their uncle at a first visit!

Lady T. Indeed, Sir Oliver, 'twas well we came in to rescue you.

Rowley. Truly, it was; for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old Stanley was no protection to you.

Sir Oliver S. Nor of Premium either: the necessities of the former could not extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman; and now, egad, I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors, and being knocked down without being bid for.

Joseph S. Charles!

Charles S. Joseph!

Joseph S. 'Tis now complete!

Charles S. Very!

Sir Oliver S. Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley too—look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my



E. J. ... 1796
/ 36

Charles. *Out with him, to be sure.*

bounty; and you also know how gladly I would have regarded half my fortune as held in trust for him: judge then my disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of faith, charity, and gratitude.

Sir Peter T. Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration, if I had not myself found him to be mean, treacherous, and hypocritical.

Lady T. And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call *me* to his character.

Sir Peter T. Then, I believe, we need add no more: if he knows himself, he will consider it as the most perfect punishment, that he is known to the world.

Charles S. If they talk this way to honesty, what will they say to me, by and by? [*Aside.*]

Sir Oliver S. As for that prodigal, his brother, there——

Charles S. Ay, now comes my turn: the damned family pictures will ruin me. [*Aside.*]

Joseph S. Sir Oliver—uncle, will you honour me with a hearing?

Charles S. Now if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little. [*Aside.*]

Sir Peter T. I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself entirely? [*To JOSEPH.*]

Joseph S. I trust I could.

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir!—and you could justify yourself too, I suppose?

Charles S. Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

Sir Oliver S. What!—Little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I suppose?

Charles S. True, sir; but they were *family* secrets, and should not be mentioned again, you know.

Rowley. Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies with anger.

Sir Oliver S. Odds heart, no more I can; nor with gravity either.—Sir Peter, do you know, the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors; sold me judges and generals by the foot, and maiden aunts as cheap as broken china.

Charles S. To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with the family canvas, that's the truth on't. My ancestors may rise in judgment against me, there's no denying it; but believe me sincere when I tell you—and upon my soul I would not say so if I was not—that if I do not appear mortified at the exposure of my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction in seeing you, my liberal benefactor.

Sir Oliver S. Charles, I believe you; give me your hand again: the ill-looking little fellow over the settee has made your peace.

Charles S. Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased.

Lady T. Yet, I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

Sir Oliver S. Oh, I have heard of his attachment there; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right—that blush——

Sir Peter T. Well, child, speak your sentiments!



Enter Snake.

Maria. Sir, I have little to say, but that I shall rejoice to hear that he is happy; for me—whatever claim I had to his affection, I willingly resign to one who has a better title

Charles S. How, *Maria*!

Sir Peter T. Hey day! what's the mystery now?—While he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and now that he is likely to reform, I'll warrant you won't have him.

Maria. His own heart and *Lady Sneerwell* know the cause.

Charles S. *Lady Sneerwell*!

Joseph S. Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and *Lady Sneerwell's* injuries can no longer be concealed.

[*Opens the door.*]

Enter Lady SNEERWELL

Sir Peter T. So! another French milliner! Egad, he has one in every room in the house, I suppose.

Lady Sneer. Ungrateful *Charles*! Well may you be surprised, and feel for the indelicate situation your perfidy has forced me into.

Charles S. Pray, uncle, is this another plot of yours? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

Joseph S. I believe, sir, there is—but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear.

Sir Peter T. And that person, I imagine, is

Mr. Snake.—Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

Rowley. Walk in, Mr. Snake.

Enter SNAKE

I thought his testimony might be wanted: however, it happens unluckily, that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, not to support her.

Lady Sneer. A villain! Treacherous to me at last!—Speak, fellow; have you too conspired against me?

Snake. I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons: you paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I unfortunately have been offered double to speak the truth.

Sir Peter T. Plot and counter-plot, egad!

Lady Sneer. The torments of shame and disappointment on you all.—

Lady T. Hold, Lady Sneerwell,—before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken, in writing letters from me to Charles, and answering them yourself; and let me also request you to make my respects to the scandalous college, of which you are president, and inform them, that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they gave her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer.

Lady Sneer. You too, madam—provoking—insolent—May your husband live these fifty years!

[*Exit.*

Sir Peter T. Oons! what a fury!

Lady T. A malicious creature, indeed!



Lady Teazle. . . . Leaves off practice, and kills characters no longer.

Sir Peter T. Hey! Not for her last wish?

Lady T. Oh no!

Sir Oliver S. Well, sir, and what have you to say now?

Joseph S. Sir, I am so confounded, to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say: however, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. [Exit.

Sir Peter T. Moral to the last drop!

Sir Oliver S. Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can.—Oil and Vinegar, egad! you'll do very well together.

Rowley. I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present?

Snake. Before I go, I beg pardon once for all, for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

Sir Peter T. Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

Snake. But I must request of the company, that it shall never be known.

Sir Peter T. Hey!—What the plague!—Are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life?

Snake. Ah, sir! consider,—I live by the badness of my character; I have nothing but my infamy to depend on! and if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

Sir Oliver S. Well, well,—we'll not traduce

you by saying anything in your praise, never fear. [Exit SNAKE.]

Sir Peter T. There's a precious rogue!

Lady T. See, Sir Oliver, there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

Sir Oliver S. Ay, ay, that's as it should be, and egad we'll have the wedding to-morrow morning.

Charles S. Thank you, dear uncle!

Sir Peter T. What, you rogue! don't you ask the girl's consent first?

Charles S. Oh, I have done that a long time—a minute ago—and she has looked yes.

Maria. For shame, Charles!—I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word.

Sir Oliver S. Well, then, the fewer the better;—may your love for each other never know abatement!

Sir Peter T. And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I intend to do!

Charles S. Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me; and I suspect that I owe you much.

Sir Oliver S. You do indeed, Charles.

Rowley. If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt; but deserve to be happy, and you overpay me.

Sir Peter T. Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

Charles S. Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises, and that I take to be a proof that I intend to set about it; but here shall be my



E. P. BULLOCK
186

Sir P. *May you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I intend to do!*

monitor—my gentle guide—ah! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine?

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst wave thy beauty's sway,
Thou still must rule, because I will obey :
An humble fugitive from Folly view,
No sanctuary near but Love and you ;

[To the audience.]

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove,
For even Scandal dies if you approve.



EPILOGUE

BY MR. COLMAN

SPOKEN BY LADY TEAZLE

I, who was late so volatile and gay,
Like a trade wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
To one dull rusty weathercock—my spouse !
So wills our virtuous bard—the motley Bayes
Of crying epilogues and laughing plays !
Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
Learn from our play to regulate your lives :
Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her—
London will prove the very source of honour.
Plunged fairly in, like a cold bath it serves,
When principles relax, to brace the nerves :
Such is my case ; and yet I must deplore
That the gay dream of dissipation's o'er.
And say, ye fair, was ever lively wife,
Born with a genius for the highest life,
Like me untimely blasted in her bloom,
Like me condemn'd to such a dismal doom ?
Save money—when I just knew how to waste it !
Leave London—just as I began to taste it !

Must I then watch the early crowing cock,
 The melancholy ticking of a clock ;
 In a lone rustic hall for ever pounded,
 With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats sur-
 rounded ?

With humble curate can I now retire,
 (While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire),
 And at backgammon mortify my soul,
 That pants for loo, or flutters at a vole ?
 Seven's the main ! Dear sound that must expire,
 Lost at hot cockles round a Christmas fire !
 The transient hour of fashion too soon spent,
 Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content !
 Farewell the plumed head, the cushion'd tête,
 That takes the cushion from its proper seat !
 The spirit-stirring drum ! card drums I mean,
 Spadille — odd trick — pam — basto — king and
 queen !

And you, ye knockers, that, with brazen throat,
 The welcome visitors' approach denote ;
 Farewell all quality of high renown,
 Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious town !
 Farewell ! your revels I partake no more,
 And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er !
 All this I told our bard ; he smiled, and said 'twas
 clear,

I ought to play deep tragedy next year.
 Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,
 And in these solemn periods stalk'd away :
 Blest were the fair like you ; her faults who stopt,
 And closed her follies when the curtain dropt !
 No more in vice or error to engage,
 Or play the fool at large on life's great stage.

THE RIVALS.



BY R. B. SHERIDAN.
ILLUSTRATED BY
EDMUND J. SULLIVAN.

PREFACE

A PREFACE to a play seems generally to be considered as a kind of closet-prologue, in which—if his piece has been successful—the author solicits that indulgence from the reader which he had before experienced from the audience: but as the scope and immediate object of a play is to please a mixed assembly in *representation* (whose judgment in the theatre at least is decisive), its degree of reputation is usually as determined as public, before it can be prepared for the cooler tribunal of the study. Thus any farther solicitude on the part of the writer becomes unnecessary at least, if not an intrusion: and if the piece has been condemned in the performance, I fear an address to the closet, like an appeal to posterity, is constantly regarded as the procrastination of a suit, from a consciousness of the weakness of the cause. From these considerations, the following comedy would certainly have been submitted to the reader, without any farther introduction than what it had in the representation, but that its success has probably been founded on a circumstance which the author is informed has not before

attended a theatrical trial, and which consequently ought not to pass unnoticed.

I need scarcely add, that the circumstance alluded to was the withdrawing of the piece, to remove those imperfections in the first representation which were too obvious to escape reprehension, and too numerous to admit of a hasty correction. There are few writers, I believe, who, even in the fullest consciousness of error, do not wish to palliate the faults which they acknowledge; and, however trifling the performance, to second their confession of its deficiencies, by whatever plea seems least disgraceful to their ability. In the present instance, it cannot be said to amount either to candour or modesty in me, to acknowledge an extreme inexperience and want of judgment on matters, in which, without guidance from practice, or spur from success, a young man should scarcely boast of being an adept. If it be said, that under such disadvantages no one should attempt to write a play, I must beg leave to dissent from the position, while the first point of experience that I have gained on the subject is, a knowledge of the candour and judgment with which an impartial public distinguishes between the errors of inexperience and incapacity, and the indulgence which it shows even to a disposition to remedy the defects of either.

It were unnecessary to enter into any farther extenuation of what was thought exceptionable in this play, but that it has been said, that the managers should have prevented some of the defects before its appearance to the public—and

in particular the uncommon length of the piece as represented the first night. It were an ill return for the most liberal and gentlemanly conduct on their side, to suffer any censure to rest where none was deserved. Hurry in writing has long been exploded as an excuse for an author;—however, in the dramatic line, it may happen, that both an author and a manager may wish to fill a chasm in the entertainment of the public with a hastiness not altogether culpable. The season was advanced when I first put the play into Mr. Harris's hands:—it was at that time at least double the length of any acting comedy. I profited by his judgment and experience in the curtailing of it—till, I believe, his feeling for the vanity of a young author got the better of his desire for correctness, and he left many excrescences remaining, because he had assisted in pruning so many more. Hence, though I was not uninformed that the acts were still too long, I flattered myself that, after the first trial, I might with safer judgment proceed to remove what should appear to have been most dissatisfactory. Many other errors there were, which might in part have arisen from my being by no means conversant with plays in general, either in reading or at the theatre. Yet I own that, in one respect, I did not regret my ignorance: for as my first wish in attempting a play was to avoid every appearance of plagiarism, I thought I should stand a better chance of effecting this from being in a walk which I had not frequented, and where, consequently, the progress of invention was less likely to be interrupted by starts of recollection:

for on subjects on which the mind has been much informed, invention is slow of exerting itself. Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted.

With regard to some particular passages which on the first night's representation seemed generally disliked, I confess, that if I felt any emotion of surprise at the disapprobation, it was not that they were disapproved of, but that I had not before perceived that they deserved it. As some part of the attack on the piece was begun too early to pass for the sentence of *judgment*, which is ever tardy in condemning, it has been suggested to me, that much of the disapprobation must have arisen from virulence of malice, rather than severity of criticism: but as I was more apprehensive of there being just grounds to excite the latter than conscious of having deserved the former, I continue not to believe that probable, which I am sure must have been unprovoked. However, if it was so, and I could even mark the quarter from whence it came, it would be ungenerous to retort; for no passion suffers more than malice from disappointment. For my own part, I see no reason why the author of a play should not regard a first night's audience as a candid and judicious friend attending, in behalf of the public, at his last rehearsal. If he can dispense with flattery, he is sure at least of sincerity, and even though the annotation be rude, he may rely upon the justness of the comment. Considered in this light, that audience, whose *fiat*

is essential to the poet's claim, whether his object be fame or profit, has surely a right to expect some deference to its opinion, from principles of politeness at least, if not from gratitude.

As for the little puny critics, who scatter their peevish strictures in private circles, and scribble at every author who has the eminence of being unconnected with them, as they are usually spleen-swoln from a vain idea of increasing their consequence, there will always be found a petulance and illiberality in their remarks, which should place them as far beneath the notice of a gentleman, as their original dulness had sunk them from the level of the most unsuccessful author.

It is not without pleasure that I catch at an opportunity of justifying myself from the charge of intending any national reflection in the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. If any gentlemen opposed the piece from that idea, I thank them sincerely for their opposition; and if the condemnation of this comedy (however misconceived the provocation) could have added one spark to the decaying flame of national attachment to the country supposed to be reflected on, I should have been happy in its fate; and might with truth have boasted, that it had done more real service in its failure, than the successful morality of a thousand stage-novels will ever effect.

It is usual, I believe, to thank the performers in a new play, for the exertion of their several abilities. But where (as in this instance) their merit has been so striking and uncontroverted, as to call for the warmest and truest applause from

a number of judicious audiences, the poet's after-praise comes like the feeble acclamation of a child to close the shouts of a multitude. The conduct, however, of the principals in a theatre cannot be so apparent to the public. I think it therefore but justice to declare, that from this theatre (the only one I can speak of from experience) those writers who wish to try the dramatic line will meet with that candour and liberal attention, which are generally allowed to be better calculated to lead genius into excellence, than either the precepts of judgment, or the guidance of experience.

THE AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN BY MR. WOODWARD AND MR. QUICK

Enter SERJEANT AT LAW, and ATTORNEY
following, and giving a paper

Serj. What's here!—a vile cramp hand! I
cannot see

Without my spectacles.—*Att.* He means his fee.
Nay, Mr. Serjeant, good sir, try again.

[*Gives money.*]

Serj. The scrawl improves! [*More.*] Oh come,
'tis pretty plain.

Hey! how's this? Dibble!—sure it cannot be!
A poet's brief! a poet and a fee!

Att. Yes, sir! though *you* without reward, I
know,
Would gladly plead the Muse's cause.—*Serj.* So!
—So!

Att. And if the fee offends, your wrath should
fall
On me.—*Serj.* Dear Dibble, no offence at all.

Att. Some sons of Phœbus in the courts we
meet,

Serj. And fifty sons of Phœbus in the Fleet !

Att. Nor pleads he worse, who with a decent
sprig

Of bays adorns his legal waste of wig.

Serj. Full-bottomed heroes thus, on signs,
unfurl

A leaf of laurel in a grove of curl !

Yet tell your client, that, in adverse days,

This wig is warmer than a bush of bays.

Att. Do you, then, sir, my client's place supply,
Profuse of robe, and prodigal of tie——

Do you, with all those blushing powers of face,

And wonted bashful hesitating grace,

Rise in the court, and flourish on the case. [*Exit.*

Serj. For practice then suppose—this brief
will show it,——

Me, Serjeant Woodward,—counsel for the poet.

Used to the ground, I know 'tis hard to deal

With this dread *court*, from whence there's *no*
appeal ;

No *tricking* here, to blunt the edge of *law*,

Or, damn'd in *equity*, escape by *flaw* :

But *judgment* given, *your sentence* must remain ;

No *writ of error* lies—to *Drury-lane* !

Yet when so kind you seem, 'tis past dispute

We gain some favour, if not *costs of suit*.

No spleen is here ! I see no hoarded fury ;

—I think I never faced a milder jury !

Sad else our plight ! where frowns are transporta-
tion,

A hiss the gallows, and a groan damnation !

But such the public candour, without fear
 My client waves all *right of challenge* here.
 No newsman from *our* session is dismiss'd,
 Nor wit nor critic *we* scratch off the list ;
 His faults can never hurt another's ease,
 His crime, at worst, *a bad attempt* to please :
 Thus, all respecting, he appeals to all,
 And by the general voice will *stand* or *fall*.

The play being withdrawn after the first night's representation, upon its second appearance the lines from "Hey ! how's this ?" to "no offence at all," were omitted, and the following inserted :

"How's this ! the poet's brief *again* ! Oh ho !
 Cast, I suppose ?—*Att.* Oh pardon me—No—No—
 We found the court, o'erlooking stricter laws,
Indulgent to the *merits* of the cause ;
 By *judges* mild, unused to harsh denial,
 A rule was granted for *another trial*.

Serj. Then hark'ee, Dibble, did you *mend* your *pleadings* ;
Errors, no few, we've *found* in our *proceedings*.

Att. Come, courage, sir, we did *amend* our *plea*,
 Hence your *new brief*, and this *refreshing fee*."

PROLOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN ON THE TENTH NIGHT BY MRS. BULKLEY

GRANTED our cause, our suit and trial o'er,
The worthy Serjeant need appear no more :
In pleasing I a different client choose,
He served the Poet,—I would serve the Muse :
Like him, I'll try to merit your applause,
A female counsel in a female's cause.

Look on this form,¹—where Humour, quaint
and sly,
Dimples the cheek, and points the beaming eye ;
Where gay Invention seems to boast its wiles
In amorous hint, and half-triumphant smiles ;
While her light mask or covers Satire's strokes,
Or hides the conscious blush her wit provokes.
—Look on her well—does she seem form'd to
teach ?
Should' you *expect* to hear this lady preach ?
Is gray experience suited to her youth ?
Do solemn sentiments become that mouth ?

¹ Pointing to the figure of Comedy.

Bid her be grave, those lips should rebel prove
To every theme that slanders mirth or love.

Yet thus adorn'd with every graceful art
To charm the fancy and yet reach the heart——
Must we displace her? And instead advance
The Goddess of the woful countenance——
The sentimental Muse!—Her emblems view,
The Pilgrim's Progress, and a sprig of rue!
View her—too chaste to look like flesh and blood——
Primly portrayed on emblematic wood!
There fix'd in usurpation should she stand,
She'll snatch the dagger from her sister's hand:
And having made her vot'ries *weep a flood*,
Good heaven! she'll end her comedies in blood——
Bid Harry Woodward break poor Dunstal's crown!
Imprison Quick, and knock Ned Shuter down;
While sad Barsanti, weeping o'er the scene,
Shall stab herself—or poison Mrs. Green.——

Such dire encroachments to prevent in time,
Demands the critic's voice—the poet's rhyme.
Can our light scenes add strength to holy laws!
Such puny patronage but hurts the cause:
Fair Virtue scorns our feeble aid to ask;
And moral Truth disdains the trickster's mask.
For here their fav'rite stands,¹ whose brow, severe
And sad, claims Youth's respect, and Pity's tear;
Who, when oppress'd by foes her worth creates,
Can point a poniard at the Guilt she hates.

¹ Pointing to Tragedy.

EPILOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN BY MRS. BULKLEY

LADIES, for *you*—I heard our poet say—
He'd try to coax some *moral* from his play :
“ One moral's plain;” cried I, “ without more fuss ;
Man's social happiness all rests on us :
Through all the drama—whether d—n'd or not—
Love gilds the *scene*, and *women* guide the *plot*.
From every rank obedience is our due—
D'ye doubt?—The world's great stage shall prove
it true.”

The Cit, well skill'd to shun domestic strife,
Will sup abroad ;—but first, he'll ask his *wife* :
John Trot, his friend, for once will do the same,
But then—he'll just *step home to tell his dame*.

The *surly Squire* at noon resolves to rule,
And half the day—Zounds ! Madam is a fool !
Convinced at night, the vanquish'd victor says,
Ah, Kate ! *you women have such coaxing ways !*

The *jolly Toper* chides each tardy blade,
Till reeling Bacchus calls on Love for aid :

Then with each toast he sees fair bumpers swim,
And kisses Chloe on the sparkling brim !

Nay, I have heard that Statesmen—great and
wise—

Will *sometimes* counsel with a lady's eyes ;
The servile suitors watch her various face,
She smiles preferment, or she frowns disgrace,
Curtsies a pension here—there nods a place.

Nor with less awe, in scenes of humbler life,
Is *view'd* the *mistress*, or is *heard* the *wife*.
The poorest Peasant of the poorest soil,
The child of poverty, and heir to toil,
Early from radiant Love's impartial light
Steals one small spark to cheer his world of night :
Dear spark ! that oft through winter's chilling woes
Is all the warmth his little cottage knows !

The wand'ring *Tar*, who not for *years* has
press'd

The widow'd partner of his *day* of rest,
On the cold deck, far from her arms removed,
Still hums the ditty which his Susan loved ;
And while around the cadence rude is blown,
The boatswain whistles in a softer tone.

The *Soldier*, fairly proud of wounds and toil,
Pants for the *triumph* of his Nancy's smile ;
But ere the battle should he list' her cries,
The lover trembles—and the hero dies !
That heart, by war and honour steel'd to fear,
Droops on a sigh, and sickens at a tear !

But ye more cautious, ye nice-judging few,
Who give to Beauty only Beauty's due,
Though friends to Love—ye view with deep regret
Our conquests marr'd, our triumphs incomplete,

Till polish'd Wit more lasting charms disclose,
And Judgment fix the darts which Beauty throws
—In female breasts did sense and merit rule,
The lover's mind would ask no other school ;
Shamed into sense, the scholars of our eyes,
Our beaux from *gallantry* would soon be wise ;
Would gladly light, their homage to improve,
The lamp of Knowledge at the torch of Love !

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE IN 1775

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE	.	.	<i>Mr. Shuter.</i>
CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE	.	.	<i>Mr. Woodward.</i>
FAULKLAND	.	.	<i>Mr. Lewis.</i>
ACRES	.	.	<i>Mr. Quick.</i>
SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER	.	.	<i>Mr. Lee.¹</i>
FAG	.	.	<i>Mr. Lee Lewes.</i>
DAVID	.	.	<i>Mr. Dunstal.</i>
COACHMAN	.	.	<i>Mr. Fearon.</i>

MRS. MALAPROP	.	.	<i>Mrs. Green.</i>
LYDIA LANGUISH	.	.	<i>Miss Barsanti.</i>
JULIA	.	.	<i>Mrs. Bulkley.</i>
LUCY	.	.	<i>Mrs. Lessingham</i>

Maid, Boy, Servants, etc.

Scene—Bath.

Time of Action—Five Hours.

¹ Afterwards by Mr. Clinch.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A Street in Bath*

COACHMAN *crosses the stage.*—*Enter FAG, looking after him*

Fag. What ! Thomas !—Sure 'tis he?—What ! Thomas ! Thomas !

Coach. Hey !—Odds life ! Mr. Fag !—give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

Fag. Excuse my glove, Thomas :—I'm devilish glad to see you, my lad : why, my prince of charioteers, you look as hearty !—but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath ?

Coach. Sure, master, Madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate, and the postillion, be all come.

Fag. Indeed !

Coach. Ay ! master thought another fit of the gout was coming to make him a visit ;—so he'd a mind to gi't the slip, and whip ! we were all off at an hour's warning.

Fag. Ay, ay ! hasty in everything, or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute !

Coach. But tell us, Mr. Fag, how does young master? Odd! Sir Anthony will stare to see the captain here!

Fag. I do not serve Captain Absolute now.—

Coach. Why sure!

Fag. At present I am employed by Ensign Beverley.

Coach. I doubt, Mr. Fag, you ha'n't changed for the better.

Fag. I have not changed, Thomas.

Coach. No! why, didn't you say you had left young master?

Fag. No.—Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no further:—briefly then—Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person.

Coach. The devil they are!

Fag. So it is indeed, Thomas; and the *ensign* half of my master being on guard at present—the *captain* has nothing to do with me.

Coach. So, so!—what, this is some freak, I warrant!—Do tell us, Mr. Fag, the meaning o't—you know I ha' trusted you.

Fag. You'll be secret, Thomas?

Coach. As a coach-horse.

Fag. Why then the cause of all this is—LOVE, —Love, Thomas, who (as you may get read to you) has been a masquerader ever since the days of Jupiter.

Coach. Ay, ay;—I guess'd there was a lady in the case:—but pray, why does your master pass only for *ensign*?—now if he had sham'd *general* indeed—

Fag. Ah! Thomas, there lies the mystery o' the matter. Hark'ee, Thomas, my master is in love with a lady of a very singular taste: a lady who likes him better as a *half-pay ensign* than if she knew he was son and heir to Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet of three thousand a year.

Coach. That is an odd taste indeed!—but has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag? is she rich, hey?

Fag. Rich!—why, I believe she owns half the stocks! Z—ds! Thomas, she could pay the national debt as easily as I could my washer-woman!—She has a lap-dog that eats out of gold,—she feeds her parrot with small pearls,—and all her thread-papers are made of banknotes!

Coach. Bravo, faith!—Odd! I warrant she has a set of thousands at least:—but does she draw kindly with the captain?

Fag. As fond as pigeons.

Coach. May one hear her name?

Fag. Miss Lydia Languish.—But there is an old tough aunt in the way;—though, by the bye, she has never seen my master—for we got acquainted with miss while on a visit in Gloucestershire.

Coach. Well—I wish they were once harnessed together in matrimony.—But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath?—I ha' heard a deal of it—here's a mort o' merry-making, hey?

Fag. Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well—'tis a good lounge; in the morning we go to the pump-room (though neither my master nor I drink the waters); after breakfast we saunter on the parades, or play a game at billiards; at night we dance;

but d—n the place, I'm tired of it : their regular hours stupefy me—not a fiddle nor a card after eleven !—however, Mr. Faulkland's gentleman and I keep it up a little in private parties ;—I'll introduce you there, Thomas—you'll like him much.

Coach. Sure I know Mr. Du-Peigne—you know his master is to marry Madam Julia.

Fag. I had forgot.—But, Thomas, you must polish a little—indeed you must——Here now—this wig !—what the devil do you do with a wig, Thomas?—none of the London whips of any degree of *ton* wear wigs now.

Coach. More's the pity ! more's the pity, I say—Odds life ! when I heard how the lawyers and doctors had took to their own hair, I thought how 'twould go next :—Odd rabbit it ! when the fashion had got foot on the Bar, I guess'd 'twould mount to the Box !—but 'tis all out of character, believe me, Mr. Fag : and look'ee, I'll never gi' up mine—the lawyers and doctors may do as they will.

Fag. Well, Thomas, we'll not quarrel about that.

Coach. Why, bless you, the gentlemen of they professions ben't all of a mind—for in our village now, thoff Jack Gauge the exciseman has ta'en to his carrots, there's little Dick the farrier swears he'll never forsake his bob, tho' all the college should appear with their own heads !

Fag. Indeed ! well said, Dick ! but hold—mark ! mark ! Thomas.

Coach. Zooks ! 'tis the captain—Is that the lady with him ?

Fag. No! no! that is Madam Lucy — my master's mistress's maid. They lodge at that house—but I must after him to tell him the news.

Coach. Odd! he's giving her money!—well, Mr. Fag——

Fag. Good-bye, Thomas. I have an appointment in Gyde's Porch this evening at eight; meet me there, and we'll make a little party.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A Dressing-room in Mrs. MALAPROP'S Lodgings*

LYDIA *sitting on a sofa, with a book in her hand*
LUCY, *as just returned from a message*

Lucy. Indeed, ma'am, I traversed half the town in search of it: I don't believe there's a circulating library in Bath I ha'n't been at.

Lydia. And could not you get "The Reward of Constancy"?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lydia. Nor "The Fatal Connexion"?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lydia. Nor "The Mistakes of the Heart"?

Lucy. Ma'am, as ill luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away.

Lydia. Heigh-ho!—Did you inquire for "The Delicate Distress"?

Lucy. ——Or "The Memoirs of Lady Wood-

ford"? Yes, indeed, ma'am. I asked everywhere for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soiled and dog's-ear'd it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

Lydia. Heigh-ho!—Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me. She has a most observing thumb; and, I believe, cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes.—Well, child, what have you brought me?

Lucy. Oh! here, ma'am.

[*Taking books from under her cloak, and from her pockets.*]

This is "The Gordian Knot,"—and this "Peregrine Pickle." Here are "The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker." This is "The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality, written by herself," and here the second volume of "The Sentimental Journey."

Lydia. Heigh-ho!—What are those books by the glass?

Lucy. The great one is only "The Whole Duty of Man," where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

Lydia. Very well—give me the *sal volatile*.

Lucy. Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

Lydia. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

Lucy. Oh, the drops!—here, ma'am.

Lydia. Hold!—here's some one coming—quick, see who it is—— [Exit *Lucy*.
Surely I heard my cousin Julia's voice!

[*Re-enter Lucy.*]

Lucy. Lud! ma'am, here is Miss Melville.

Lydia. Is it possible!—



Lucy. This is "The Gordian Knot,"—and this "Peregrine Pickle." Here are
"The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker."

Enter JULIA

Lydia. My dearest Julia, how delighted am I!
(*Embrace.*) How unexpected was this happiness!

Julia. True, Lydia—and our pleasure is the greater;—but what has been the matter?—you were denied to me at first!

Lydia. Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you!—but first inform me what has conjured you to Bath?—Is Sir Anthony here?

Julia. He is—we are arrived within this hour—and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dress'd.

Lydia. Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to you some of my distress!—I know your gentle nature will sympathise with me, though your prudence may condemn me!—My letters have informed you of my whole connection with Beverley;—but I have lost him, Julia!—my aunt has discovered our intercourse by a note she intercepted, and has confined me ever since!—Yet, would you believe it? she has fallen absolutely in love with a tall Irish baronet she met one night since we have been here at Lady Macshuffle's rout.

Julia. You jest, Lydia!

Lydia. No, upon my word.—She really carries on a kind of correspondence with him, under a feigned name though, till she chooses to be known to him;—but it is a Delia or a Celia, I assure you.

Julia. Then, surely, she is now more indulgent to her niece.

Lydia. Quite the contrary. Since she has discovered her own frailty, she is become more suspicious of mine. Then I must inform you of another plague!—That odious Acres is to be in Bath to-day; so that I protest I shall be teased out of all spirits!

Julia. Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best—Sir Anthony shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop.

Lydia. But you have not heard the worst. Unfortunately I had quarrelled with my poor Beverley, just before my aunt made the discovery, and I have not seen him since, to make it up.

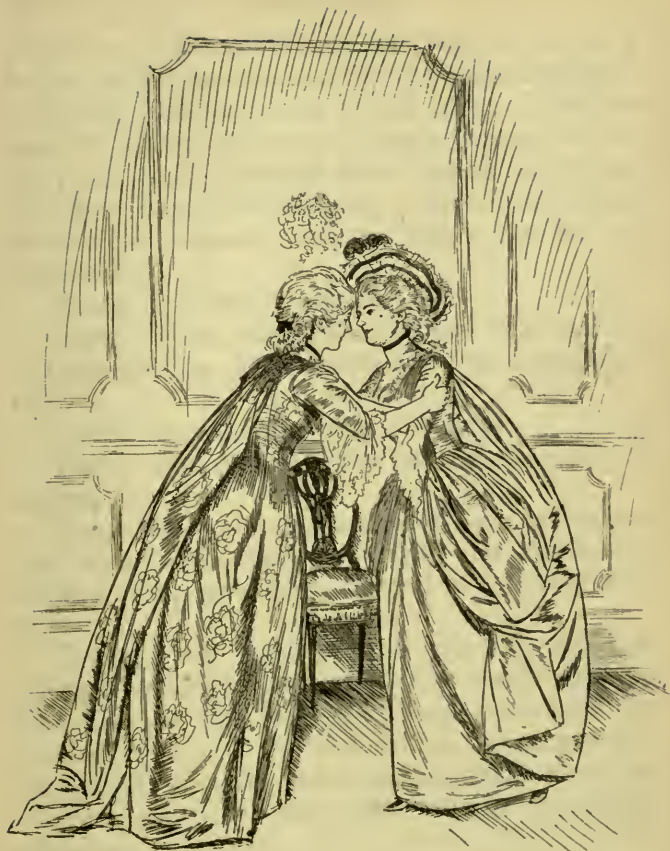
Julia. What was his offence?

Lydia. Nothing at all!—But, I don't know how it was, as often as we had been together, we had never had a quarrel!—And, somehow, I was afraid he would never give me an opportunity.—So, last Thursday, I wrote a letter to myself, to inform myself that Beverley was at that time paying his addresses to another woman. I signed it “your friend unknown,” showed it to Beverley, charged him with his falsehood, put myself in a violent passion, and vowed I'd never see him more.

Julia. And you let him depart so, and have not seen him since?

Lydia. 'Twas the next day my aunt found the matter out. I intended only to have teased him three days and a half, and now I've lost him for ever.

Julia. If he is as deserving and sincere as you have represented him to me, he will never give



E. Sullivan
18

Lydia. *My dearest Julia, how delighted am I!*

you up so. Yet consider, Lydia, you tell me he is but an ensign, and you have thirty thousand pounds!

Lydia. But you know I lose most of my fortune if I marry without my aunt's consent, till of age; and that is what I have determined to do, ever since I knew the penalty. Nor could I love the man, who would wish to wait a day for the alternative.

Julia. Nay, this is caprice!

Lydia. What, does Julia tax me with caprice?—I thought her lover Faulkland had inured her to it.

Julia. I do not love even *his* faults.

Lydia. But apropos—you have sent to him, I suppose?

Julia. Not yet, upon my word—nor has he the least idea of my being in Bath. Sir Anthony's resolution was so sudden, I could not inform him of it.

Lydia. Well, Julia, you are your own mistress (though under the protection of Sir Anthony), yet have you, for this long year, been a slave to the caprice, the whim, the jealousy of this ungrateful Faulkland, who will ever delay assuming the right of a husband, while you suffer him to be equally imperious as a lover.

Julia. Nay, you are wrong entirely. We were contracted before my father's death. That, and some consequent embarrassments, have delayed what I know to be my Faulkland's most ardent wish. He is too generous to trifle on such a point.—And for his character, you wrong him there too. No, Lydia, he is too proud, too noble

to be jealous ; if he is captious, 'tis without dissembling ; if fretful, without rudeness. Unused to the fopperies of love, he is negligent of the little duties expected from a lover—but being unhackneyed in the passion, his affection is ardent and sincere ; and as it engrosses his whole soul, he expects every thought and emotion of his mistress to move in unison with his. Yet, though his pride calls for this full return, his humility makes him undervalue those qualities in him which would entitle him to it ; and not feeling why he should be loved to the degree he wishes, he still suspects that he is not loved enough :—This temper, I must own, has cost me many unhappy hours ; but I have learned to think myself his debtor, for those imperfections which arise from the ardour of his attachment.

Lydia. Well, I cannot blame you for defending him. But tell me candidly, Julia, had he never saved your life, do you think you should have been attached to him as you are?—Believe me, the rude blast that upset your boat was a prosperous gale of love to him.

Julia. Gratitude may have strengthened my attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I loved him before he had preserved me ; yet surely that alone were an obligation sufficient——

Lydia. Obligation !——Why a water-spaniel would have done as much !——Well, I should never think of giving my heart to a man because he could swim !

Julia. Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

Lydia. Nay, I do but jest.—What's here ?

Enter LUCY in a hurry

Lucy. Oh ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute just come home with your aunt.

Lydia. They'll not come here.—*Lucy,* do you watch. [*Exit LUCY.*

Julia. Yet I must go. Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he'll detain me, to show me the town. I'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words so ingeniously *misapplied*, without being *mispronounced*.

Re-enter LUCY

Lucy. O Lud! ma'am, they are both coming upstairs.

Lydia. Well, I'll not detain you, coz.—Adieu, my dear Julia, I'm sure you are in haste to send to Faulkland.—There—through my room you'll find another staircase.

Julia. Adieu!—(*Embrace.*) [*Exit JULIA.*

Lydia. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick.—Fling “Peregrine Pickle” under the toilet—throw “Roderick Random” into the closet—put “The Innocent Adultery” into “The Whole Duty of Man”—thrust “Lord Aimworth” under the sofa—cram “Ovid” behind the bolster—there—put “The Man of Feeling” into your pocket—so, so—now lay “Mrs. Chapone” in sight, and leave “Fordyce's Sermons” open on the table.

Lucy. Oh burn it, ma'am, the hair-dresser has torn away as far as Proper Pride.

Lydia. Never mind — open at Sobriety.— Fling me “Lord Chesterfield’s Letters.”—Now for ’em.

*Enter Mrs. MALAPROP and Sir ANTHONY
ABSOLUTE*

Mrs. Mal. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton, who wants to disgrace her family, and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

Lydia. Madam, I thought you once——

Mrs. Mal. You thought, miss! I don’t know any business you have to think at all—thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow—to illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory.

Lydia. Ah, madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

Mrs. Mal. But I say it is, miss; there is nothing on earth so easy as to *forget*, if a person chooses to set about it. I’m sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle, as if he had never existed—and I thought it my duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don’t become a young woman.

Sir Anth. Why sure she won’t pretend to remember what she’s order’d not!—ay, this comes of her reading!



Mrs. Mal. *There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton.*

Lydia. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

Mrs. Mal. Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it.—But tell me, will you promise to do as you're bid? Will you take a husband of your friends' choosing?

Lydia. Madam, I must tell you plainly, that had I no preference for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

Mrs. Mal. What business have you, miss, with *preference* and *aversion*? They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know, that as both always wear off, 'tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little *aversion*. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he'd been a black-a-moor—and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made!—and when it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what tears I shed!—But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

Lydia. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

Mrs. Mal. Take yourself to your room.—You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humours.

Lydia. Willingly, ma'am—I cannot change for the worse. [Exit LYDIA.

Mrs. Mal. There's a little intricate hussy for you!

Sir Anth. It is not to be wondered at, ma'am,

—all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet!

Mrs. Mal. Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

Sir. Anth. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library!—She had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers!—From that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

Mrs. Mal. Those are vile places, indeed!

Sir Anth. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year!—And depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

Mrs. Mal. Fie, fie, Sir Anthony, you surely speak laconically.

Sir Anth. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation, now, what would you have a woman know?

Mrs. Mal. Observe me, Sir Anthony.—I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments:—But, Sir Anthony, I would

send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell, and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know;—and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

Sir Anth. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess, that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point in debate,—you say, you have no objection to my proposal.

Mrs. Mal. None, I assure you. I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres, and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

Sir Anth. Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

Mrs. Mal. We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

Sir Anth. Objection!—let him object if he

dare!—No, no, Mrs. Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple—in their younger days, 'twas “Jack do this”;—if he demurred, I knocked him down—and if he grumbled at that I always sent him out of the room.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, and the properest way, o' my conscience!—nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity.—Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations;—and I hope you will represent *her* to the captain as an object not altogether illegible.

Sir Anth. Madam, I will handle the subject prudently.—Well, I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl;—take my advice—keep a tight hand: if she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she'd come about.

[*Exit Sir ANTH.*

Mrs. Mal. Well, at anyrate I shall be glad to get her from under my intuition. She has somehow discovered my partiality for Sir Lucius O'Trigger—sure, Lucy can't have betrayed me!—No, the girl is such a simpleton, I should have made her confess it.—Lucy!—Lucy!—(*Calls*). Had she been one of your artificial ones, I should never have trusted her.





Lucy. Let me see to what account have I turned my simplicity lately.

Enter LUCY

Lucy. Did you call, ma'am?

Mrs. Mal. Yes, girl.—Did you see Sir Lucius while you was out?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am, not a glimpse of him.

Mrs. Mal. You are sure, Lucy, that you never mentioned——

Lucy. O Gemini! I'd sooner cut my tongue out.

Mrs. Mal. Well, don't let your simplicity be imposed on.

Lucy. No, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. So, come to me presently, and I'll give you another letter to Sir Lucius; but mind, Lucy—if ever you betray what you are entrusted with (unless it be other people's secrets to me), you forfeit my malevolence for ever; and your being a simpleton shall be no excuse for your locality. [*Exit Mrs. MAL.*

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha!—So, my dear *simplicity*, let me give you a little respite—(*altering her manner*)—let girls in my station be as fond as they please of appearing expert, and knowing in their trusts; commend me to a mask of *silliness*, and a pair of sharp eyes for my own interest under it!—Let me see to what account have I turned my *simplicity* lately—(*looks at a paper*). For *abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign!*—in money, sundry times, twelve pound twelve; gowns, five; hats,

ruffles, caps, etc., etc., numberless!—From the said *ensign*, within this last month, six guineas and a half.—About a quarter's pay!—Item, from *Mrs. Malaprop*, for betraying the young people to her—when I found matters were likely to be discovered—*two guineas, and a black padusoy*.—Item, from *Mr. Acres*, for carrying divers letters—which I never delivered—*two guineas, and a pair of buckles*.—Item, from *Sir Lucius O'Trigger*, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box!—Well done, *simplicity!*—yet I was forced to make my *Hibernian* believe, that he was corresponding, not with the *aunt*, but with the *niece*: for though not over rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortunes. [Exit.



Fag. Oh, I lied, sir—I forget the precise lie.

ACT II

SCENE I.—Captain ABSOLUTE'S *Lodgings*

Captain ABSOLUTE and FAG

Fag. Sir, while I was there Sir Anthony came in: I told him, you had sent me to inquire after his health, and to know if he was at leisure to see you.

Abs. And what did he say, on hearing I was at Bath?

Fag. Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished! He started back two or three paces, rapt out a dozen interjectural oaths, and asked, what the devil had brought you here?

Abs. Well, sir, and what did you say?

Fag. Oh, I lied, sir—I forget the precise lie; but you may depend on't, he got no truth from me. Yet, with submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what *has* brought us to Bath; in order that we may lie a little consistently.—Sir Anthony's servants were curious, sir, very curious indeed.

Abs. You have said nothing to them——?

Fag. Oh, not a word, sir,—not a word. Mr. Thomas, indeed, the coachman (whom I take to be the discreetest of whips)——

Abs. 'Sdeath!—you rascal! you have not trusted him!

Fag. Oh, *no*, sir—no—no—not a syllable, upon my veracity!—He was, indeed, a little inquisitive; but I was sly, sir—devilish sly! My master (said I), honest Thomas (you know, sir, one says *honest* to one's inferiors), is come to Bath to *recruit*—Yes, sir, I said *to recruit*—and whether for men, money, or constitution, you know, sir, is nothing to him, nor any one else.

Abs. Well, *recruit* will do—let it be so.

Fag. Oh, sir, *recruit* will do surprisingly—indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas, that your honour had already enlisted five disbanded chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard-markers.

Abs. You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

Fag. I beg pardon, sir—I beg pardon—But, with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge indorsements as well as the bill.

Abs. Well, take care you don't hurt your credit, by offering too much security.—Is Mr. Faulkland returned?

Fag. He is above, sir, changing his dress.

Abs. Can you tell whether he has been informed of Sir Anthony's and Miss Melville's arrival?

Fag. I fancy not, sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his gentleman, who was with him at Bristol.—I think, sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down——

Abs. Go, tell him, I am here.

Fag. Yes, sir—(*going*)—I beg pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favour to remember, that we are *recruiting*, if you please.

Abs. Well, well.

Fag. And in tenderness to my character, if your honour could bring in the chairmen and waiters, I should esteem it as an obligation; for though I never scruple a lie to serve my master, yet it hurts one's conscience to be found out.

[*Exit.*

Abs. Now for my whimsical friend—if he does not know that his mistress is here, I'll tease him a little before I tell him——

Enter FAULKLAND

Faulkland, you're welcome to Bath again; you are punctual in your return.

Faulk. Yes; I had nothing to detain me, when I had finished the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you? How stand matters between you and Lydia?

Abs. Faith, much as they were; I have not seen her since our quarrel; however, I expect to be recalled every hour.

Faulk. Why don't you persuade her to go off with you at once?

Abs. What, and lose two-thirds of her fortune? You forget that, my friend.—No, no, I could have brought her to that long ago.

Faulk. Nay then, you trifle too long—if you are sure of *her*, propose to the aunt *in your own character*, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

Abs. Softly, softly; for though I am convinced my little Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet am I by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side: no, no; I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her, before I risk it.—Well, but Faulkland, you'll dine with us to-day at the Hotel?

Faulk. Indeed I cannot; I am not in spirits to be of such a party.

Abs. By heavens! I shall forswear your company. You are the most teasing, captious, incorrigible lover!—Do love like a man.

Faulk. I own I am unfit for company.

Abs. Am not *I* a lover; ay, and a romantic one too? Yet do I carry everywhere with me such a confounded farrago of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain?

Faulk. Ah! Jack, your heart and soul are not, like mine, fixed immutably on one only object. You throw for a large stake, but losing, you could stake, and throw again:—but I have set my sum of happiness on this cast, and not to succeed, were to be stript of all.

Abs. But, for Heaven's sake! what grounds for apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present?

Faulk. What grounds for apprehension, did you say? Heavens! are there not a thousand! I fear for her spirits—her health—her life.—My absence may fret her; her anxiety for my return, her fears for me, may oppress her gentle temper. And for her health, does not every hour bring me cause to be alarmed? If it rains, some shower may even then have chilled her delicate frame! If the wind be keen, some rude blast may have affected her! The heat of noon, the dews of the evening, may endanger the life of her, for whom only I value mine. Oh Jack! when delicate and feeling souls are separated, there is not a feature in the sky, not a movement of the elements, not an aspiration of the breeze, but hints some cause for a lover's apprehension!

Abs. Ay, but we may choose whether we will take the hint or not.—So, then, Faulkland, if you were convinced that Julia were well and in spirits, you would be entirely content.

Faulk. I should be happy beyond measure—I am anxious only for that.

Abs. Then to cure your anxiety at once—Miss Melville is in perfect health, and is at this moment in Bath.

Faulk. Nay, Jack—don't trifle with me.

Abs. She is arrived here with my father within this hour.

Faulk. Can you be serious?

Abs. I thought you knew Sir Anthony better

than to be surprised at a sudden whim of this kind.—Seriously then, it is as I tell you—upon my honour.

Faulk. My dear friend!—Hollo, Du Peigne! my hat—my dear Jack—now nothing on earth can give me a moment's uneasiness.

Enter FAG

Fag. Sir, Mr. Acres, just arrived, is below.

Abs. Stay, Faulkland, this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your mistress has been ever since you left her.—*Fag*, show the gentleman up. [*Exit FAG.*]

Faulk. What, is he much acquainted in the family?

Abs. Oh, very intimate: I insist on your not going: besides, his character will divert you.

Faulk. Well, I should like to ask him a few questions.

Abs. He is likewise a rival of mine—that is, of my *other self's*, for he does not think his friend Captain Absolute ever saw the lady in question; and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of *one Beverley*, a concealed skulking rival, who——

Faulk. Hush!—He's here.

Enter ACRES

Acres. Hah! my dear friend, noble captain, and honest Jack, how do'st thou? just arrived, faith, as you see.—Sir, your humble servant.—

Warm work on the roads, Jack—Odds whips and wheels! I've travelled like a comet, with a tail of dust all the way as long as the Mall.

Abs. Ah! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric planet, but we know your attraction hither—Give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

Acres. Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you: Sir, I solicit your connexions.—Hey, Jack—what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who——

Abs. Ay, Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

Acres. Odd so! she and your father can be but just arrived before me—I suppose you have seen them. Ah! Mr. Faulkland, you are indeed a happy man.

Faulk. I have not seen Miss Melville yet, sir;—I hope she enjoyed full health and spirits in Devonshire?

Acres. Never knew her better in my life, sir,—never better. Odds blushes and blooms! she has been as healthy as the German Spa.

Faulk. Indeed!—I did hear that she had been a little indisposed.

Acres. False, false, sir—only said to vex you: quite the reverse, I assure you.

Faulk. There, Jack, you see she has the advantage of me; I had almost fretted myself ill.

Abs. Now are you angry with your mistress for not having been sick.

Faulk. No, no, you misunderstand me:—yet surely a little trifling indisposition is not an unnatural consequence of absence from those we love.

—Now confess—isn't there something unkind in this violent, robust, unfeeling health?

Abs. Oh, it was very unkind of her to be well in your absence, to be sure!

Acres. Good apartments, Jack.

Faulk. Well, sir, but you was saying that Miss Melville has been so *exceedingly* well—what then she has been merry and gay, I suppose?—Always in spirits—hey?

Acres. Merry, odds crickets! she has been the belle and spirit of the company wherever she has been—so lively and entertaining! so full of wit and humour!

Faulk. There, Jack, there.—Oh, by my soul! there is an innate levity in women, that nothing can overcome.—What! happy, and I away!

Abs. Have done:—How foolish this is! just now you were only apprehensive for your mistress's *spirits*.

Faulk. Why, Jack, have I been the joy and spirit of the company?

Abs. No indeed, you have not.

Faulk. Have I been lively and entertaining?

Abs. Oh, upon my word, I acquit you.

Faulk. Have I been full of wit and humour?

Abs. No, faith, to do you justice, you have been confoundedly stupid indeed.

Acres. What's the matter with the gentleman?

Abs. He is only expressing his great satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy—that's all—hey, Faulkland?

Faulk. Oh! I am rejoiced to hear it—yes, yes, she has a *happy* disposition!

Acres. That she has indeed—then she is so accomplished—so sweet a voice—so expert at her harpsichord—such a mistress of flat and sharp, squallante, rumblante, and quiverante!—there was this time month—Odds minnums and crotchets! how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert!

Faulk. There again, what say you to this? you see she has been all mirth and song—not a thought of me!

Abs. Pho! man, is not music the food of love?

Faulk. Well, well, it may be so.—Pray, Mr. —, what's his d—d name!—Do you remember what songs Miss Melville sung?

Acres. Not I indeed.

Abs. Stay now, they were some pretty melancholy purling-stream airs, I warrant; perhaps you may recollect;—did she sing, “When absent from my soul's delight”?

Acres. No, that wa'n't it.

Abs. Or, “Go, gentle gales!”—“Go, gentle gales!”—(*Sings.*)

Acres. Oh no! nothing like it.—Odds! now I recollect one of them—“My heart's my own, my will is free.”—(*Sings.*)

Faulk. Fool, fool that I am! to fix all my happiness on such a trifle! 'Sdeath! to make herself the pipe and ballad-monger of a circle! to soothe her light heart with catches and glees!—What can you say to this, sir?

Abs. Why, that I should be glad to hear my mistress had been so merry, *sir*.

Faulk. Nay, nay, nay,—I'm not sorry that she has been happy—no, no, I am glad of that—I

would not have had her sad or sick—yet surely a sympathetic heart would have shown itself even in the choice of a song—she might have been temperately healthy, and somehow, plaintively gay;—but she has been dancing too, I doubt not!

Acres. What does the gentleman say about dancing?

Abs. He says the lady we speak of dances as well as she sings.

Acres. Ay truly, does she—there was at our last race ball——

Faulk. Hell and the devil! There! there—I told you so! I told you so! Oh! she thrives in my absence!—Dancing! but her whole feelings have been in opposition with mine;—I have been anxious, silent, pensive, sedentary—my days have been hours of care, my nights of watchfulness.—She has been all health! spirit! laugh! song! dance!—Oh! d—n'd, d—n'd levity!

Abs. For Heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't expose yourself so.—Suppose she has danced, what then?—does not the ceremony of society often oblige——

Faulk. Well, well, I'll contain myself—perhaps as you say—for form sake.—What, Mr. Acres, you were praising Miss Melville's manner of dancing a *minuet*—hey?

Acres. Oh, I dare insure her for that—but what I was going to speak of was her *country-dancing*:—Odds swimings! she has such an air with her!

Faulk. Now disappointment on her! defend this, Absolute; why don't you defend this?—

Country-dances! jigs and reels! am I to blame now? A minuet I could have forgiven—I should not have minded that—I say I should not have regarded a minuet—but *country-dances*!—Z—ds! had she made one in a *cotillion*—I believe I could have forgiven even that—but to be monkey-led for a night!—to run the gauntlet through a string of amorous palming puppies!—to show paces like a managed filly!—Oh Jack, there never can be but *one* man in the world, whom a truly modest and delicate woman ought to pair with in a *country-dance*; and even then, the rest of the couples should be her great-uncles and aunts!

Abs. Ay, to be sure!—grandfathers and grandmothers!

Faulk. If there be but one vicious mind in the set, 'twill spread like a contagion—the action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movement of the jig—their quivering, warm-breathed sighs impregnate the very air—the atmosphere becomes electrical to love, and each amorous spark darts through every link of the chain!—I must leave you—I own I am somewhat flurried—and that confounded looby has perceived it. (*Going.*)

Abs. Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good news.

Faulk. D—n his news! [*Exit FAULKLAND.*]

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! poor Faulkland five minutes since—“nothing on earth could give him a moment's uneasiness!”

Acres. The gentleman wa'n't angry at my praising his mistress, was he?

Abs. A little jealous, I believe, Bob.

Acres. You don't say so? Ha! ha! jealous of me—that's a good joke.

Abs. There's nothing strange in that, Bob; let me tell you, that sprightly grace and insinuating manner of yours will do some mischief among the girls here.

Acres. Ah! you joke—ha! ha! mischief—ha! ha! but you know I am not my own property, my dear Lydia has forestalled me.—She could never abide me in the country, because I used to dress so badly—but odds frogs and tambours! I shan't take matters so here—now ancient madam has no voice in it—I'll make my old clothes know who's master—I shall straightway cashier the hunting-frock—and render my leather breeches incapable—My hair has been in training some time.

Abs. Indeed!

Acres. Ay—and thoff the side curls are a little restive, my hind-part takes it very kindly.

Abs. Oh, you'll polish, I doubt not.

Acres. Absolutely I propose so—then if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, odds triggers and flints! I'll make him know the difference o't.

Abs. Spoke like a man—but pray, Bob, I observe you have got an odd kind of a new method of swearing——

Acres. Ha! ha! you've taken notice of it—'tis genteel, isn't it?—I didn't invent it myself though; but a commander in our militia—a great scholar, I assure you—says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable;—because,

he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say, by Jove! or by Bacchus! or by Mars! or by Venus! or by Pallas! according to the sentiment—so that to swear with propriety, says my little major, the “oath should be an echo to the sense”; and this we call the *oath referential*, or *sentimental swearing*—ha! ha! ha! ’tis genteel, isn’t it?

Abs. Very genteel, and very new indeed—and I daresay will supplant all other figures of imprecation.

Acres. Ay, ay, the best terms will grow obsolete—Damns have had their day.

Enter FAG

Fag. Sir, there is a gentleman below desires to see you—Shall I show him into the parlour?

Abs. Ay—you may.

Acres. Well, I must be gone——

Abs. Stay; who is it, Fag?

Fag. Your father, sir.

Abs. You puppy, why didn’t you show him up directly? [*Exit FAG.*

Acres. You have business with Sir Anthony.—I expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop at my lodgings—I have sent also to my dear friend Sir Lucius O’Trigger.—Adieu, Jack, we must meet at night, when you shall give me a dozen bumpers to little Lydia.

Abs. That I will with all my heart.

[*Exit ACRES.*

Now for a parental lecture—I hope he has heard

nothing of the business that has brought me here—I wish the gout had held him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul!

Enter Sir ANTHONY

Sir, I am delighted to see you here; and looking so well! your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

Sir Anth. Very apprehensive, I daresay, Jack.—What, you are recruiting here, hey?

Abs. Yes, sir, I am on duty.

Sir Anth. Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I did not expect it, for I was going to write to you on a little matter of business.—Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

Abs. Pardon me, sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty; and I pray frequently that you may continue so.

Sir Anth. I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty, I may continue to plague you a long time.—Now, Jack, I am sensible that the income of your commission, and what I have hitherto allowed you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit.

Abs. Sir, you are very good.

Sir Anth. And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

Abs. Sir, your kindness overpowers me—such

generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensations even of filial affection.

Sir Anth. I am glad you are so sensible of my attention—and you shall be master of a large estate in a few weeks.

Abs. Let my future life, sir, speak my gratitude; I cannot express the sense I have of your munificence.—Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army?

Sir Anth. Oh, that shall be as your wife chooses.

Abs. My wife, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay, ay, settle that between you—settle that between you.

Abs. A wife, sir, did you say?

Sir Anth. Ay, a wife—why, did not I mention her before?

Abs. Not a word of her, sir.

Sir Anth. Odd so!—I mustn't forget *her* though.—Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of is by a marriage—the fortune is saddled with a wife—but I suppose that makes no difference.

Abs. Sir! sir!—you amaze me!

Sir Anth. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool? Just now you were all gratitude and duty.

Abs. I was, sir,—you talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

Sir Anth. Why—what difference does that make? Odds life, sir! if you have the estate, you must take it with the live stock on it, as it stands.

Abs. If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase.—Pray, sir, who is the lady?

Sir Anth. What's that to you, sir?—Come, give me your promise to love, and to marry her directly.

Abs. Sure, sir, this is not very reasonable, to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of!

Sir Anth. I am sure, sir, 'tis more unreasonable in you to *object* to a lady you know nothing of.

Abs. Then, sir, I must tell you plainly, that my inclinations are fixed on another—my heart is engaged to an angel.

Sir Anth. Then pray let it send an excuse.—It is very sorry—but *business* prevents its waiting on her.

Abs. But my vows are pledged to her.

Sir Anth. Let her foreclose, Jack; let her foreclose; they are not worth redeeming; besides, you have the angel's vows in exchange, I suppose; so there can be no loss there.

Abs. You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Hark'ee, Jack;—I have heard you for some time with patience—I have been cool—quite cool; but take care—you know I am compliance itself—when I am not thwarted;—no one more easily led—when I have my own way;—but don't put me in a frenzy.

Abs. Sir, I must repeat it—in this I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Now d—n me! if ever I call you *Jack* again while I live!

Abs. Nay, sir, but hear me.

Sir Anth. Sir, I won't hear a word—not a



Sir Anthony. Now d—n me! if ever I call you Jack again!

word! not one word! so give me your promise by a nod—and I'll tell you what, Jack—I mean, you dog—if you don't by——

Abs. What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness! to——

Sir Anth. Z—ds! sirrah! the lady shall be as ugly as I choose: she shall have a hump on each shoulder; she shall be as crooked as the Crescent; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew—she shall be all this, sirrah!—yet I will make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets on her beauty.

Abs. This is reason and moderation indeed!

Sir Anth. None of your sneering, puppy! no grinning, jackanapes!

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was in a worse humour for mirth in my life.

Sir Anth. 'Tis false, sir, I know you are laughing in your sleeve; I know you'll grin when I am gone, sirrah!

Abs. Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

Sir Anth. None of your passion, sir! none of your violence; if you please—It won't do with me, I promise you.

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

Sir Anth. 'Tis a confounded lie!—I know you are in a passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog! but it won't do.

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word.

Sir Anth. So you will fly out! can't you be cool like me? What the devil good can *passion* do?—*Passion* is of no service, you impudent,

insolent, overbearing reprobate!—There you sneer again!—don't provoke me!—but you rely upon the mildness of my temper—you do, you dog! you play upon the meekness of my disposition! Yet take care—the patience of a saint may be overcome at last!—but mark! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this: if you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why—confound you! I may in time forgive you—If not, z—ds! don't enter the same hemisphere with me! don't dare to breathe the same air, or use the same light with me; but get an atmosphere and a sun of your own! I'll strip you of your commission; I'll lodge a five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and you shall live on the interest.—I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you! and d—n me! if ever I call you Jack again!

[*Exit* Sir ANTHONY.]

ABSOLUTE *solus*

Abs. Mild, gentle, considerate father—I kiss your hands.—What a tender method of giving his opinion in these matters Sir Anthony has! I dare not trust him with the truth.—I wonder what old wealthy hag it is that he wants to bestow on me!—yet he married himself for love! and was in his youth a bold intriguer, and a gay companion!

Enter FAG

Fag. Assuredly, sir, your father is wrath to a

degree ; he comes downstairs eight or ten steps at a time—muttering, growling, and thumping the banisters all the way : I and the cook's dog stand bowing at the door—rap ! he gives me a stroke on the head with his cane ; bids me carry that to my master ; then kicking the poor turnspit into the area, d—ns us all, for a puppy triumvirate !—Upon my credit, sir, were I in your place, and found my father such very bad company, I should certainly drop his acquaintance.

Abs. Cease your impertinence, sir, at present.—Did you come in for nothing more ?——Stand out of the way !
[*Pushes him aside, and exit.*]

FAG *solus*

Fag. Soh ! Sir Anthony trims my master : he is afraid to reply to his father—then vents his spleen on poor Fag !—When one is vexed by one person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, is the vilest injustice ! Ah ! it shows the worst temper—the basest——

Enter ERRAND BOY

Boy. Mr. Fag ! Mr. Fag ! your master calls you.

Fag. Well ! you little dirty puppy, you need not bawl so !—The meanest disposition ! the——

Boy. Quick, quick, Mr. Fag.

Fag. Quick ! quick ! you impudent jackanapes ! am I to be commanded by you too ? you little, impertinent, insolent, kitchen-bred——

[*Exit kicking and beating him.*]

SCENE II.—*The North Parade*

Enter LUCY

Lucy. So—I shall have another rival to add to my mistress's list—Captain Absolute. However, I shall not enter his name till my purse has received notice in form. Poor Acres is dismissed!—Well, I have done him a last friendly office, in letting him know that Beverley was here before him.—Sir Lucius is generally more punctual, when he expects to hear from his *dear Delia*, as he calls her: I wonder he's not here!—I have a little scruple of conscience from this deceit; though I should not be paid so well, if my hero knew that *Delia* was near fifty, and her own mistress.

Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

Sir Luc. Hah! my little ambassadress—upon my conscience, I have been looking for you; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

Lucy. (*Speaking simply.*) O Gemini! and I have been waiting for your worship here on the North.

Sir Luc. Faith!—may be, that was the reason we did not meet; and it is very comical too, how you could go out and I not see you—for I was only taking a nap at the Parade Coffee-house, and I chose the *window* on purpose that I might not miss you.

Lucy. My stars! Now I'd wager a sixpence I went by while you were asleep.

Sir Luc. Sure enough it must have been so—and I never dreamt it was so late, till I waked. Well, but my little girl, have you got nothing for me?

Lucy. Yes, but I have—I've got a letter for you in my pocket.

Sir Luc. Oh faith! I guessed you weren't come empty-handed—well—let me see what the dear creature says.

Lucy. There, Sir Lucius. (*Gives him a letter.*)

Sir Luc. (*Reads*) "*Sir—there is often a sudden incentive impulse in love, that has a greater induction than years of domestic combination: such was the commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O'Trigger.*"—Very pretty, upon my word.—"*Female punctuation forbids me to say more; yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last criterion of my affections.*"

DELIA."

Upon my conscience! Lucy, your lady is a great mistress of language. Faith, she's quite the queen of the dictionary!—for the devil a word dare refuse coming at her call—though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

Lucy. Ay, sir, a lady of her experience.

Sir Luc. Experience? what, at seventeen?

Lucy. Oh true, sir—but then she reads so—my stars! how she will read off hand!

Sir Luc. Faith, she must be very deep read to write this way—though she is rather an arbitrary writer too—for here are a great many poor

words pressed into the service of this note, that would get their *habeas corpus* from any court in Christendom.

Lucy. Ah ! Sir Lucius, if you were to hear how she talks of you !

Sir Luc. Oh tell her I'll make her the best husband in the world, and Lady O'Trigger into the bargain !—But we must get the old gentlewoman's consent—and do everything fairly.

Lucy. Nay, Sir Lucius, I thought you wa'n't rich enough to be so nice !

Sir Luc. Upon my word, young woman, you have hit it :—I am so poor, that I can't afford to do a dirty action.—If I did not want money, I'd steal your mistress and her fortune with a great deal of pleasure.—However, my pretty girl (*gives her money*), here's a little something to buy you a riband ; and meet me in the evening, and I'll give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand, to put you in mind. (*Kisses her.*)

Lucy. O lud ! Sir Lucius—I never seed such a gemman ! My lady won't like you if you're so impudent.

Sir Luc. Faith she will, Lucy—that same—pho ! what's the name of it ?—*Modesty* !—is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked ; so, if your mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her fifty—my dear.

Lucy. What, would you have me tell her a lie ?

Sir Luc. Ah then, you baggage ! I'll make it a truth presently.

Lucy. For shame now ; here is some one coming.



Sir Lucius. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand, to put you in mind.

Sir Luc. Oh faith, I'll quiet your conscience !
 [*Sees FAG.—Exit, humming a tune.*]

Enter FAG

Fag. So, so, ma'am. I humbly beg pardon.

Lucy. O lud ! now, Mr. Fag—you flurry one so.

Fag. Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by—so a little less simplicity, with a grain or two more sincerity, if you please.—You play false with us, madam.—I saw you give the baronet a letter.—My master shall know this—and if he don't call him out, I will.

Lucy. Ha ! ha ! ha ! you gentlemen's gentlemen are so hasty.—That letter was from Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton.—She is taken with Sir Lucius's address.

Fag. How ! what tastes some people have !—Why, I suppose I have walked by her window an hundred times.—But what says our young lady ? Any message to my master ?

Lucy. Sad news ! Mr. Fag.—A worse rival than Acres ! Sir Anthony Absolute has proposed his son.

Fag. What, Captain Absolute ?

Lucy. Even so—I overheard it all.

Fag. Ha ! ha ! ha ! very good, faith. Good-bye, Lucy, I must away with this news.

Lucy. Well, you may laugh—but it is true, I assure you. (*Going.*) But—Mr. Fag—tell your master not to be cast down by this.

Fag. Oh, he'll be so disconsolate !

Lucy. And charge him not to think of quarrelling with young Absolute.

Fag. Never fear!—never fear!

Lucy. Be sure—bid him keep up his spirits.

Fag. We will—we will. [*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT III

SCENE I.—*The North Parade*

Enter ABSOLUTE

Abs. 'Tis just as Fag told me, indeed.—Whimsical enough, faith! My father wants to *force* me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with!—He must not know of my connexion with her yet awhile.—He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters.—However, I'll read my recantation instantly.—My conversion is something sudden, indeed—but I can assure him it is very *sincere*.—So, so,—here he comes.—He looks plaguy gruff.

[*Steps aside.*

Enter Sir ANTHONY

Sir Anth. No—I'll die sooner than forgive him.—*Die*, did I say? I'll live these fifty years to plague him.—At our last meeting, his impudence had almost put me out of temper.—An obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy!—Who can he take

after? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters!—for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, ever since!—But I have done with him;—he's anybody's son for me.—I never will see him more,—never—never—never—never.

Abs. Now for a penitential face.

Sir Anth. Fellow, get out of my way.

Abs. Sir, you see a penitent before you.

Sir Anth. I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

Abs. A sincere penitent.—I am come, sir, to acknowledge my error, and to submit entirely to your will.

Sir Anth. What's that?

Abs. I have been revolving, and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness, and kindness, and condescension to me.

Sir Anth. Well, sir?

Abs. I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleased to mention concerning duty, and obedience, and authority.

Sir Anth. Well, puppy?

Abs. Why then, sir, the result of my reflections is—a resolution to sacrifice every inclination of my own to your satisfaction.

Sir Anth. Why now you talk sense—absolute sense—I never heard anything more sensible in my life.—Confound you! you shall be Jack again.

Abs. I am happy in the appellation.

Sir Anth. Why then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is.—Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly



Sir Anthony. *I see an impudent scoundrel before me.*

fellow, prevented my telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and rapture—prepare.—What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

Abs. Languish? What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

Sir Anth. Worcestershire! No. Did you never meet Mrs. Malaprop and her niece, Miss Languish, who came into our country just before you were last ordered to your regiment?

Abs. Malaprop! Languish! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yet, stay—I think I do recollect something.—*Languish! Languish!* She squints, don't she?—A little red-haired girl?

Sir Anth. Squints!—A red-haired girl!—Z—ds! no.

Abs. Then I must have forgot; it can't be the same person.

Sir Anth. Jack! Jack! what think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen?

Abs. As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent.—If I can please you in the matter, 'tis all I desire.

Sir Anth. Nay, but, Jack, such eyes! such eyes! so innocently wild! so bashfully irresolute! Not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love!—Then, Jack, her cheeks! her cheeks, Jack! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes!—Then, Jack, her lips! Oh Jack, lips smiling at their own discretion; and if not smiling, more sweetly pouting; more lovely in sullenness!

Abs. That's she indeed.—Well done, old gentleman!

[*Aside.*

Sir Anth. Then, Jack, her neck!—Oh Jack! Jack!

Abs. And which is to be mine, sir, the niece or the aunt?

Sir Anth. Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you. When I was of your age, such a description would have made me fly like a rocket! The *aunt*, indeed!—Odds life! when I ran away with your mother, I would not have touched anything old or ugly to gain an empire.

Abs. Not to please your father, sir?

Sir Anth. To please my father!—Z—ds! not to please—Oh, my father—Odd so!—yes—yes; if my father indeed had desired—that's quite another matter.—Though he wa'n't the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

Abs. I daresay not, sir.

Sir Anth. But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful?

Abs. Sir, I repeat it—if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but, sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind—now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs, and a limited quantity of back: and though *one* eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of *two*, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article.

Sir Anth. What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite!—a vile, insensible



F. P. SULLIVAN
/86

Capt. Absolute. *Not to please your father, sir?*

stock.—You a soldier!—you're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on!—Odds life! I've a great mind to marry the girl myself!

Abs. I am entirely at your disposal, sir: if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the *aunt*; or if you should change your mind, and take the old lady—'tis the same to me—I'll marry the *niece*.

Sir Anth. Upon my word, Jack, thou'rt either a very great hypocrite, or—but, come, I know your indifference on such a subject must be all a lie—I'm sure it must—come, now—damn your demure face!—come, confess, Jack—you have been lying—ha'n't you? You have been playing the hypocrite, hey?—I'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the hypocrite.

Abs. I'm sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you should be so mistaken.

Sir Anth. Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me, I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you,—come along, I'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience—if you don't, egad, I'll marry the girl myself!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—JULIA'S *Dressing-room*

FAULKLAND *solus*

Faulk. They told me Julia would return

directly ; I wonder she is not yet come !—How mean does this captious, unsatisfied temper of mine appear to my cooler judgment ! Yet I know not that I indulge it in any other point :—but on this one subject, and to this one subject, whom I think I love beyond my life, I am ever ungenerously fretful and madly capricious !—I am conscious of it—yet I cannot correct myself ! What tender honest joy sparkled in her eyes when we met !—How delicate was the warmth of her expressions !—I was ashamed to appear less happy—though I had come resolved to wear a face of coolness and upbraiding. Sir Anthony's presence prevented my proposed expostulations :—yet I must be satisfied that she has not been so *very* happy in my absence.—She is coming !—Yes !—I know the nimbleness of her tread, when she thinks her impatient Faulkland counts the moments of her stay.

Enter JULIA

Julia. I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

Faulk. Could I, Julia, be contented with my first welcome—restrained as we were by the presence of a third person ?

Julia. Oh Faulkland, when your kindness can make me thus happy, let me not think that I discovered something of coldness in your first salutation.

Faulk. 'Twas but your fancy, Julia.—I *was* rejoiced to see you—to see you in such health—Sure I had no cause for coldness ?

Julia. Nay then, I see you have taken something ill.—You must not conceal from me what it is.

Faulk. Well, then—shall I own to you that my joy at hearing of your health and arrival here, by your neighbour Acres, was somewhat damped by his dwelling much on the high spirits you had enjoyed in Devonshire—on your mirth—your singing—dancing, and I know not what!—For such is my temper, Julia, that I should regard every mirthful moment in your absence as a treason to constancy:—The mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers is a compact, that no smile shall live there till they meet again.

Julia. Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland with this teasing minute caprice?—Can the idle reports of a silly boor weigh in your breast against my tried affection?

Faulk. They have no weight with me, Julia: No, no—I am happy if you have been so—yet only say, that you did not sing with *mirth*—say that you *thought* of Faulkland in the dance.

Julia. I never can be happy in your absence.—If I wear a countenance of content, it is to show that my mind holds no doubt of my Faulkland's truth.—If I seemed sad, it were to make malice triumph; and say, that I had fixed my heart on one, who left me to lament his roving, and my own credulity.—Believe me, Faulkland, I mean not to upbraid you, when I say, that I have often dressed sorrow in smiles, lest my friends should guess whose unkindness had caused my tears.

Faulk. You were ever all goodness to me.— Oh, I am a brute, when I but admit a doubt of your true constancy!

Julia. If ever without such cause from you, as I will not suppose possible, you find my affections veering but a point, may I become a proverbial scoff for levity and base ingratitude.

Faulk. Ah! Julia, that last word is grating to me. I would I had no title to your *gratitude!* Search your heart, Julia; perhaps what you have mistaken for love, is but the warm effusion of a too thankful heart!

Julia. For what quality must I love you?

Faulk. For no quality! To regard me for any quality of mind or understanding, were only to *esteem* me. And for person—I have often wished myself deformed, to be convinced that I owed no obligation *there* for any part of your affection.

Julia. Where nature has bestowed a show of nice attention in the features of a man, he should laugh at it as misplaced. I have seen men, who in *this* vain article, perhaps, might rank above you; but my heart has never asked my eyes if it were so or not.

Faulk. Now this is not well from *you*, Julia,— I despise person in a man—yet, if you loved me as I wish, though I were an Æthiop, you'd think none so fair.

Julia. I see you are determined to be unkind— The *contract* which my poor father bound us in gives you more than a lover's privilege.

Faulk. Again, Julia, you raise ideas that feed

and justify my doubts.—I would not have been more free—no—I am proud of my restraint.—Yet—yet—perhaps your high respect alone for this solemn compact has fettered your inclinations, which else had made a worthier choice.—How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought and promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love?

Julia. Then try me now.—Let us be free as strangers as to what is past :—*my* heart will not feel more liberty!

Faulk. There now! so hasty, Julia! so anxious to be free!—If your love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not loose your hold, even though I wished it!

Julia. Oh! you torture me to the heart! I cannot bear it.

Faulk. I do not mean to distress you.—If I loved you less, I should never give you an uneasy moment.—But hear me.—All my fretful doubts arise from this.—Women are not used to weigh, and separate the motives of their affections: the cold dictates of prudence, gratitude, or filial duty, may sometimes be mistaken for the pleadings of the heart.—I would not boast—yet let me say, that I have neither age, person, nor character, to found dislike on;—my fortune such as few ladies could be charged with *indiscretion* in the match.—Oh Julia! when *Love* receives such countenance from *Prudence*, nice minds will be suspicious of its birth.

Julia. I know not whither your insinuations would tend :—But as they seem pressing to insult

me, I will spare you the regret of having done so.—I have given you no cause for this!

[*Exit in tears.*]

Faulk. In tears! Stay, Julia: stay but for a moment.—The door is fastened!—Julia!—my soul—but for one moment: I hear her sobbing!—'Sdeath! what a brute am I to use her thus! Yet stay.—Ay—she is coming now:—how little resolution there is in woman!—how a few soft words can turn them!—No, faith!—she is *not* coming either.—Why, Julia—my love—say but that you forgive me—come but to tell me that—now this is being *too* resentful: stay! she is coming too—I thought she would—no *steadiness* in anything! her going away must have been a mere trick then—she shan't see that I was hurt by it.—I'll affect indifference—(*hums a tune; then listens*)—No—Z—ds! she's *not* coming!—nor don't intend it, I suppose.—This is not *steadiness* but *obstinacy*! Yet I deserve it.—What, after so long an absence to quarrel with her tenderness!—'twas barbarous and unmanly!—I should be ashamed to see her now.—I'll wait till her just resentment is abated—and when I distress her so again, may I lose her for ever! and be linked instead to some antique virago, whose gnawing passions, and long-hoarded spleen, shall make me curse my folly half the day and all the night.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—Mrs. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings*

Mrs. MALAPROP, *with a letter in her hand*, and
Captain ABSOLUTE

Mrs. Mal. Your being Sir Anthony's son, captain, would itself be a sufficient accommodation; but from the ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

Abs. Permit me to say, madam, that as I never yet have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honour of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop; of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected learning, no tongue is silent.

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you do me infinite honour!—I beg, captain, you'll be seated.—(*Sit.*)—Ah! few gentlemen, nowadays, know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman! few think how a little knowledge becomes a gentlewoman!—Men have no sense now but for the worthless flower of beauty!

Abs. It is but too true indeed, ma'am;—yet I fear our ladies should share the blame—they think our admiration of *beauty* so great, that *knowledge* in *them* would be superfluous. Thus, like garden-trees, they seldom show fruit, till time has robbed them of the more specious blossom.—Few, like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, are rich in both at once!

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you overpower me with good-breeding—He is the very pine-apple of politeness! You are not ignorant, captain, that this giddy girl has somehow contrived to fix her affections on a beggarly, strolling, eaves-dropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

Abs. Oh, I have heard the silly affair before.—I'm not at all prejudiced against her on *that* account.

Mrs. Mal. You are very good and very considerate, captain.—I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair; long ago I laid my positive conjunctions on her, never to think on the fellow again;—I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her; but, I am sorry to say, she seems resolved to decline every particle that I enjoin her.

Abs. It must be very distressing, indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Oh! it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree;—I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow; I believe I have it in my pocket.

Abs. Oh the devil! my last note. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. Ay, here it is.

Abs. Ay, my note indeed! Oh, the little traitress Lucy! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. There, perhaps you may know the writing. [*Gives him the letter.*

Abs. I think I have seen the hand before—yes, I certainly must have seen this hand before——

Mrs. Mal. Nay, but read it, captain.

Abs. (*Reads.*) “*My soul’s idol, my adored Lydia!*”—Very tender indeed!

Mrs. Mal. Tender! ay, and profane too, o’ my conscience!

Abs. “*I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival——*”

Mrs. Mal. That’s you, sir.

Abs. “*Has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman, and a man of honour.*”—Well, that’s handsome enough.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, the fellow has some design in writing so.

Abs. That he had, I’ll answer for him, ma’am.

Mrs. Mal. But go on, sir,—you’ll see presently.

Abs. “*As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon who guards you*”—Who can he mean by that?

Mrs. Mal. Me, sir—*me*—he means *me* there—what do you think now?—but go on a little farther.

Abs. Impudent scoundrel!—“*it shall go hard but I will elude her vigilance, as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity, which makes her dress up her coarse features, and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don’t understand——*”

Mrs. Mal. There, sir, an attack upon my language! what do you think of that?—an aspersion upon my parts of speech! was ever such a brute! Sure if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs!

Abs. He deserves to be hanged and quartered! let me see—“*same ridiculous vanity——*”

Mrs. Mal. You need not read it again, sir.

Abs. I beg pardon, ma'am—"does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from flattery and pretended admiration"—an impudent coxcomb!—"so that I have a scheme to see you shortly with the old harridan's consent, and even to make her a go-between in our interview."—Was ever such assurance!

Mrs. Mal. Did you ever hear anything like it?—he'll elude my vigilance, will he—yes, yes! ha! ha! he's very likely to enter these doors!—we'll try who can plot best!

Abs. So we will, ma'am—so we will.—Ha! ha! ha! a conceited puppy, ha! ha! ha!—Well, but Mrs. Malaprop, as the girl seems so infatuated by this fellow, suppose you were to wink at her corresponding with him for a little time—let her even plot an elopement with him—then do you connive at her escape—while *I*, just in the nick, will have the fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his stead.

Mrs. Mal. I am delighted with the scheme; never was anything better perpetrated!

Abs. But, pray, could not I see the lady for a few minutes now?—I should like to try her temper a little.

Mrs. Mal. Why, I don't know—I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind.—There is a decorum in these matters.

Abs. Oh Lord! she won't mind *me*—only tell her Beverley—

Mrs. Mal. Sir!

Abs. Gently, good tongue.

[*Aside,*

Mrs. Mal. What did you say of Beverley?

Abs. Oh, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below—she'd come down fast enough then—ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Mal. 'Twould be a trick she well deserves—besides, you know the fellow tells her he'll get my consent to see her—ha! ha!—Let him if he can, I say again.—Lydia, come down here!—*(Calling.)*—He'll make me a *go-between* in their interviews!—ha! ha! ha!—Come down, I say, Lydia! I don't wonder at your laughing, ha! ha! ha! his impudence is truly ridiculous.

Abs. 'Tis very ridiculous, upon my soul, ma'am, ha! ha! ha!

Mrs. Mal. The little hussy won't hear.—Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is—she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait on her.—And I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

Abs. As you please, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. For the present, captain, your servant—Ah!—you've not done laughing yet, I see—*elude my vigilance!* yes, yes; ha! ha! ha!

[*Exit.*

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! one would think now that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my prize with security—but such is Lydia's caprice, that to undeceive were probably to lose her.—I'll see whether she knows me.

[*Walks aside, and seems engaged in looking at the pictures.*

Enter LYDIA

Lydia. What a scene am I now to go through! surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart.—I have heard of girls persecuted as I am, who have appealed in behalf of their favoured lover to the generosity of his rival: suppose I were to try it—there stands the hated rival—an officer too!—but oh, how unlike my Beverley!—I wonder he don't begin—truly he seems a very negligent wooer!—quite at his ease, upon my word!—I'll speak first—Mr. Absolute.

Abs. Ma'am.

[*Turns round.*

Lydia. Oh heavens! Beverley!

Abs. Hush!—hush, my life! softly! be not surprised!

Lydia. I am so astonished! and so terrified! and so overjoyed!—for heaven's sake! how came you here?

Abs. Briefly, I have deceived your aunt—I was informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and contriving to have him kept away, have passed myself on *her* for Captain Absolute.

Lydia. Oh, charming!—And she really takes you for young Absolute?

Abs. Oh, she's convinced of it.

Lydia. Ha! ha! ha! I can't forbear laughing to think how her sagacity is overreached!

Abs. But we trifle with our precious moments



Captain Absolute and Lydia.



—such another opportunity may not occur—then let me now conjure my kind, my condescending angel, to fix the time when I may rescue her from undeserving persecution, and with a licensed warmth plead for my reward.

Lydia. Will you then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth?—that burden on the wings of love?

Abs. Oh, come to me—rich only thus—in loveliness—Bring no portion to me but thy love—'twill be generous in you, Lydia—for well you know, it is the only dower your poor Beverley can repay.

Lydia. How persuasive are his words!—how charming will poverty be with him!

Abs. Ah! my soul, what a life will we then live! Love shall be our idol and support! we will worship him with a monastic strictness; abjuring all worldly toys, to centre every thought and action there.—Proud of calamity, we will enjoy the wreck of wealth; while the surrounding gloom of adversity shall make the flame of our pure love show doubly bright—By heavens! I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to my bosom, and say, the world affords no smile to me but here——

[*Embracing her.*

If she holds out now, the devil is in it! [*Aside.*

Lydia. Now could I fly with him to the antipodes! but my persecution is not yet come to a crisis.

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP, listening

Mrs. Mal. I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself. [*Aside.*

Abs. So pensive, Lydia!—is then your warmth abated?

Mrs. Mal. Warmth abated!—so!—she has been in a passion, I suppose.

Lydia. No—nor ever can while I have life.

Mrs. Mal. An ill-tempered little devil!—She'll be in a passion all her life—will she?

Lydia. Think not the idle threats of my ridiculous aunt can ever have any weight with me.

Mrs. Mal. Very dutiful, upon my word!

Lydia. Let her choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine.

Mrs. Mal. I am astonished at her assurance!—to his face—this is to his face!

Abs. Thus then let me enforce my suit.

[*Kneeling.*

Mrs. Mal. Ay, poor young man!—down on his knees entreating for pity!—I can contain no longer.—Why, thou vixen!—I have overheard you.

Abs. Oh, confound her vigilance! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. Captain Absolute, I know not how to apologise for her shocking rudeness.

Abs. So—all's safe, I find. [*Aside.*
I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady—

Mrs. Mal. Oh, there's nothing to be hoped for from her! she's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of Nile.



E. J. Sullivan.
40

Mrs. Mal. *Ay, poor young man!—down on his knees entreating for pity!*

Lydia. Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now?

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou unblushing rebel—didn't you tell this gentleman to his face that you loved another better?—didn't you say you never would be his?

Lydia. No, madam—I did not.

Mrs. Mal. Good heavens! what assurance!—Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that lying don't become a young woman!—Didn't you boast that Beverley, that stroller Beverley, possessed your heart?—Tell me that, I say.

Lydia. 'Tis true, ma'am, and none but Beverley—

Mrs. Mal. Hold!—hold, Assurance!—you shall not be so rude.

Abs. Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop the young lady's speech:—she's very welcome to talk thus—it does not hurt *me* in the least, I assure you.

Mrs. Mal. You are *too* good, captain—*too* amiably patient—but come with me, miss.—Let us see you again soon, captain—remember what we have fixed.

Abs. I shall, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Come, take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

Lydia. May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bev—

Mrs. Mal. Hussy! I'll choke the word in your throat!—come along—come along.

[*Exeunt severally.* ABSOLUTE kissing his hand to LYDIA—MRS. MALAPROP stopping her from speaking.]

SCENE IV.—ACRES'S *Lodgings*

ACRES and DAVID—ACRES *as just dressed*

Acres. Indeed, David—do you think I become it so?

David. You are quite another creature, believe me, master, by the mass! an' we've any luck we shall see the Devon monkerony in all the print-shops in Bath!

Acres. Dress *does* make a difference, David.

David. 'Tis all in all, I think—difference! why, an' you were to go now to Clod Hall, I am certain the old lady wouldn't know you: Master Butler wouldn't believe his own eyes, and Mrs. Pickle would cry, "Lard presarve me!" our dairy-maid would come giggling to the door, and I warrant Dolly Tester, your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat—Oons! I'll hold a gallon, there an't a dog in the house but would bark, and I question whether Phillis would wag a hair of her tail!

Acres. Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.

David. So I says of your honour's boots; but the boy never heeds me!

Acres. But, David, has Mr. De-la-grace been here? I must rub up my balancing, and chasing, and boring.

David. I'll call again, sir.

Acres. Do—and see if there are any letters for me at the post-office.



F. J. Sullivan
18

Acres. *Dress does make a difference, David.*



David. I will.—By the mass, I can't help looking at your head!—if I hadn't been by at the cooking, I wish I may die if I should have known the dish again myself. [Exit.

[*ACRES comes forward, practising a dancing step.*

Acres. Sink, slide—coupee—Confound the first inventors of cotillion! say I—they are as bad as algebra to us country gentlemen—I can walk a minuet easy enough when I am forced!—and I have been accounted a good stick in a country-dance.—Odds jigs and tabors! I never valued your cross-over to couple—figure in—right and left—and I'd foot it with e'er a captain in the county!—but these outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillions are quite beyond me!—I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure—mine are true-born English legs—they don't understand their curst French lingo!—their *pàs* this, and *pàs* that, and *pàs* t'other!—damn me! my feet don't like to be called paws! no, 'tis certain I have most Anti-Gallican toes!

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Here is Sir Lucius O'Trigger to wait on you, sir.

Acres. Show him in.

Enter Sir LUCIUS

Sir Luc. Mr. Acres, I am delighted to embrace you.

Acres. My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.

Sir Luc. Pray, my friend, what has brought you so suddenly to Bath?

Acres. Faith! I have followed Cupid's Jack-a-lantern, and find myself in a quagmire at last.—In short, I have been very ill-used, Sir Lucius.—I don't choose to mention names, but look on me as on a very ill-used gentleman.

Sir Luc. Pray, what is the case?—I ask no names.

Acres. Mark me, Sir Lucius, I fall as deep as need be in love with a young lady—her friends take my part—I follow her to Bath—send word of my arrival; and receive answer, that the lady is to be otherwise disposed of—This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill-used.

Sir Luc. Very ill, upon my conscience—Pray, can you divine the cause of it?

Acres. Why, there's the matter: she has another lover, one Beverley, who, I am told, is now in Bath.—Odds slanders and lies! he must be at the bottom of it.

Sir Luc. A rival in the case, is there?—and you think he has supplanted you unfairly?

Acres. Unfairly! to be sure he has.—He never could have done it fairly.

Sir Luc. Then sure you know what is to be done!

Acres. Not I, upon my soul!

Sir Luc. We wear no swords here, but you understand me.

Acres. What! fight him!

Sir Luc. Ay, to be sure: what can I mean else?

Acres. But he has given me no provocation.

Sir Luc. Now, I think he has given you the greatest provocation in the world.—Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another than to fall in love with the same woman? Oh, by my soul! it is the most unpardonable breach of friendship.

Acres. Breach of friendship! Ay, ay; but I have no acquaintance with this man. I never saw him in my life.

Sir Luc. That's no argument at all—he has the less right then to take such a liberty.

Acres. Gad, that's true—I grow full of anger, Sir Lucius!—I fire apace! Odds hilts and blades! I find a man may have a deal of valour in him, and not know it! But couldn't I contrive to have a little right of my side?

Sir Luc. What the devil signifies *right*, when your *honour* is concerned? Do you think Achilles, or my little Alexander the Great, ever inquired where the right lay? No, by my soul, they drew their broad-swords, and left the lazy sons of peace to settle the justice of it.

Acres. Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart! I believe courage must be catching!—I certainly do feel a kind of valour rising as it were—a kind of courage, as I may say—Odds flints, pans, and triggers! I'll challenge him directly.

Sir Luc. Ah, my little friend! if I had *Blunderbuss Hall* here, I could show you a range of ancestry, in the O'Trigger line, that would furnish the new room: every one of whom had killed

his man!—For though the mansion-house and dirty acres have slipt through my fingers, I thank heaven our honour and the family-pictures are as fresh as ever.

Acres. Oh Sir Lucius! I have had ancestors too!—every man of 'em colonel or captain in the militia!—Odds balls and barrels! say no more—I'm braced for it.—The thunder of your words has soured the milk of human kindness in my breast!—Z—ds! as the man in the play says, "I could do such deeds——"

Sir Luc. Come, come, there must be no passion at all in the case—these things should always be done civilly.

Acres. I must be in a passion, Sir Lucius—— I must be in a rage.—Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a rage, if you love me.—Come, here's pen and paper.—(*Sits down to write.*)—I would the ink were red!—Indite, I say indite!—How shall I begin? Odds bullets and blades! I'll write a good bold hand, however.

Sir Luc. Pray compose yourself.

Acres. Come—now, shall I begin with an oath. Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme.

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now—"Sir,"——

Acres. That's too civil by half.

Sir Luc. "To prevent the confusion that might arise——"

Acres. Well——

Sir Luc. "From our both addressing the same lady——"



Acres. Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme.

Acres. Ay—there's the reason—"same lady"—
Well——

Sir Luc. "I shall expect the honour of your
company——"

Acres. Z—ds! I'm not asking him to dinner.

Sir Luc. Pray be easy.

Acres. Well then, "honour of your company"—

Sir Luc. "To settle our pretensions——"

Acres. Well.

Sir Luc. Let me see, ay, King's Mead-field
will do——"in King's Mead-fields."

Acres. So that's done.——Well, I'll fold it up
presently; my own crest—a hand and dagger shall
be the seal.

Sir Luc. You see now this little explanation
will put a stop at once to all confusion or mis-
understanding that might arise between you.

Acres. Ay, we fight to prevent any misunder-
standing.

Sir Luc. Now, I'll leave you to fix your own
time.—Take my advice, and you'll decide it this
evening if you can; then let the worst come of it,
'twill be off your mind to-morrow.

Acres. Very true.

Sir Luc. So I shall see nothing more of you,
unless it be by letter, till the evening.——I would
do myself the honour to carry your message; but,
to tell you a secret, I believe I shall have just such
another affair on my own hands. There is a gay
captain here, who put a jest on me lately, at the
expense of my country, and I only want to fall in
with the gentleman, to call him out.

Acres. By my valour, I should like to see you

fight first! Odds life! I should like to see you kill him, if it was only to get a little lesson.

Sir Luc. I shall be very proud of instructing you.—Well, for the present—but remember now, when you meet your antagonist, do everything in a mild and agreeable manner.—Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time as polished as your sword. [Exeunt severally.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—ACRES'S *Lodgings*

ACRES *and* DAVID

David. Then, by the mass, sir! I would do no such thing—ne'er a Sir Lucius O'Trigger in the kingdom should make me fight, when I wa'n't so minded. Oons! what will the old lady say, when she hears o't?

Acres. Ah! David, if you had heard Sir Lucius!—Odds sparks and flames! he would have roused your valour.

David. Not he, indeed. I hates such blood-thirsty cormorants. Look'ee, master, if you'd wanted a bout at boxing, quarter-staff, or short-staff, I should never be the man to bid you cry off: but for your curst sharps and snaps, I never knew any good come of 'em.

Acres. But my honour, David, my honour! I must be very careful of my honour.

David. Ay, by the mass! and I would be very careful of it; and I think in return my *honour* couldn't do less than to be very careful of *me*.

Acres. Odds blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour!

David. I say then, it would be but civil in *honour* never to risk the loss of a *gentleman*.—Look'ee, master, this *honour* seems to me to be a marvellous false friend: ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant.—Put the case, I was a gentleman (which, thank God, no one can say of me); well—my honour makes me quarrel with another gentleman of my acquaintance.—So—we fight. (Pleasant enough that.) Boh!—I kill him—(the more's my luck). Now, pray who gets the profit of it?—Why, my *honour*. But put the case that he kills me!—by the mass! I go to the worms, and my honour whips over to my enemy.

Acres. No, David—in that case!—Odds crowns and laurels! your honour follows you to the grave.

David. Now, that's just the place where I could make a shift to do without it.

Acres. Z—ds! David, you are a coward!—It doesn't become my valour to listen to you.—What, shall I disgrace my ancestors?—Think of that, David—think what it would be to disgrace my ancestors!

David. Under favour, the surest way of not disgracing them, is to keep as long as you can out of their company. Look'ee now, master, to go to them in such haste—with an ounce of lead in your brains—I should think might as well be let alone. Our ancestors are very good kind of folks; but they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with.

Acres. But, David, now, you don't think there is such very, very, *very* great danger, hey?—Odds life! people often fight without any mischief done!

David. By the mass, I think 'tis ten to one against you!—Oons! here to meet some lion-headed fellow, I warrant, with his d—n'd double-barrelled swords, and cut-and-thrust pistols!—Lord bless us! it makes me tremble to think o't!—Those be such desperate bloody-minded weapons! Well, I never could abide 'em—from a child I never could fancy 'em!—I suppose there an't been so merciless a beast in the world as your loaded pistol!

Acres. Z—ds! I *won't* be afraid—Odds fire and fury! you shan't make me afraid.—Here is the challenge, and I have sent for my dear friend Jack Absolute to carry it for me.

David. Ay, i' the name of mischief, let *him* be the messenger.—For my part, I wouldn't lend a hand to it for the best horse in your stable. By the mass! it don't look like another letter!—It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious-looking letter;—and I warrant smells of gunpowder like a soldier's pouch!—Oons! I wouldn't swear it mayn't go off!

Acres. Out, you poltroon!—you han't the valour of a grasshopper.

David. Well, I say no more—'twill be sad news, to be sure, at Clod Hall!—but I ha' done.—How Phillis will howl when she hears about it!—Ay, poor bitch, she little thinks what shooting her master's going after!—And I warrant old Crop,

who has carried your honour, field and road, these ten years, will curse the hour he was born.

[*Whimpering.*

Acres. It won't do, David—I am determined to fight—so get along, you coward, while I'm in the mind.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Captain Absolute, sir.

Acres. Oh, show him up. [*Exit SERVANT.*

David. Well, heaven send we be all alive this time to-morrow.

Acres. What's that!—Don't provoke me, David!

David. Good-bye, master. [*Whimpering.*

Acres. Get along, you cowardly, dastardly, croaking raven. [*Exit DAVID.*

Enter ABSOLUTE

Abs. What's the matter, Bob?

Acres. A vile, sheep-hearted blockhead!—If I hadn't the valour of St. George and the dragon to boot——

Abs. But what did you want with me, Bob?

Acres. Oh!—There. [*Gives him the challenge.*

Abs. "To Ensign Beverley." So—what's going on now! [*Aside.*

Well, what's this?

Acres. A challenge!

Abs. Indeed!—Why, you won't fight him, will you, Bob?

Acres. Egad, but I will, Jack.—Sir Lucius



W. SULLIVAN
176

David. *Good-bye, master.* (Whimpering.)

has wrought me to it. He has left me full of rage—and I'll fight this evening, that so much good passion mayn't be wasted.

Abs. But what have I to do with this?

Acres. Why, as I think you know something of this fellow, I want you to find him out for me, and give him this mortal defiance.

Abs. Well, give it to me, and trust me he gets it.

Acres. Thank you, my dear friend, my dear Jack; but it is giving you a great deal of trouble.

Abs. Not in the least—I beg you won't mention it.—No trouble in the world, I assure you.

Acres. You are very kind.—What it is to have a friend!—You couldn't be my second—could you, Jack?

Abs. Why no, Bob—not in *this* affair—it would not be quite so proper.

Acres. Well, then, I must get my friend Sir Lucius. I shall have your good wishes, however, Jack?

Abs. Whenever he meets you, believe me.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Sir Anthony Absolute is below, inquiring for the captain.

Abs. I'll come instantly.—Well, my little hero, success attend you. [*Going.*

Acres. Stay—stay, Jack.—If Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow—will you, Jack?

Abs. To be sure I shall.—I'll say you are a determined dog—hey, Bob?

Acres. Ay, do, do—and if that frightens him, egad, perhaps he mayn't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a-week; will you, Jack?

Abs. I will, I will; I'll say you are called in the country "*Fighting Bob.*"

Acres. Right—right—'tis all to prevent mischief; for I don't want to take his life if I clear my honour.

Abs. No!—that's very kind of you.

Acres. Why, you don't wish me to kill him—do you, Jack?

Abs. No, upon my soul, I do not.—But a devil of a fellow, hey? [*Going.*

Acres. True, true—but stay—stay, Jack—you may add, that you never saw me in such a rage before—a most devouring rage!

Abs. I will, I will.

Acres. Remember, Jack—a determined dog!

Abs. Ay, ay, "*Fighting Bob!*"

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—Mrs. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings*

Mrs. MALAPROP and LYDIA

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou perverse one!—tell me what you can object to him?—Isn't he a handsome man?—tell me that.—A genteel man? a pretty figure of a man?

Lydia. She little thinks whom she is praising! (*Aside.*)—So is Beverley, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. No caparisons, miss, if you please.



F. J. SULLIVAN
1860

Acres. Remember, Jack—a determined dog!
Capt. Absolute. Ay, ay, "Fighting Bob!"

—Caparisons don't become a young woman.—
No! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine gentleman!

Lydia. Ay, the Captain Absolute *you* have seen. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Mal. Then he's *so* well bred;—*so* full of alacrity and adulation!—and has *so much* to say for himself:—in such good language too!—His physiognomy so grammatical!—Then his presence is so noble!—I protest when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play:—“Hesperian curls—the front of *Job* himself!—an eye, like *March*, to threaten at command!—a station, like Harry Mercury, new——” Something about kissing—on a hill—however, the similitude struck me directly.

Lydia. How enraged she'll be presently when she discovers her mistake! [*Aside.*

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are below, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Show them up here.

[*Exit* SERVANT.

Now, Lydia, I insist on your behaving as becomes a young woman.—Show your good breeding, at least, though you have forgot your duty.

Lydia. Madam, I have told you my resolution!—I shall not only give him no encouragement, but I won't even speak to, or look at him.

[*Flings herself into a chair, with her face from the door.*

Enter Sir ANTHONY and ABSOLUTE

Sir Anth. Here we are, Mrs. Malaprop; come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty,—and difficulty enough I had to bring this fellow.—I don't know what's the matter; but if I had not held him by force, he'd have given me the slip.

Mrs. Mal. You have infinite trouble, Sir Anthony, in the affair.—I am ashamed for the cause! Lydia, Lydia, rise, I beseech you!—pay your respects!

[*Aside to her.*]

Sir Anth. I hope, madam, that Miss Languish has reflected on the worth of this gentleman, and the regard due to her aunt's choice, and *my* alliance.—Now, Jack, speak to her.

[*Aside to him.*]

Abs. What the d—l shall I do! (*Aside.*) You see, sir, she won't even look at me, whilst you are here.—I knew she wouldn't!—I told you so—Let me entreat you, sir, to leave us together!

[*ABSOLUTE seems to expostulate with his father.*]

Lydia. (*Aside.*) I wonder I han't heard my aunt exclaim yet! sure she can't have looked at him!—perhaps their regimentals are alike, and she is something blind.

Sir Anth. I say, sir, I won't stir a foot yet.

Mrs. Mal. I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my affluence over my niece is very small.—Turn round, Lydia; I blush for you!

[*Aside to her.*]

Sir Anth. May I not flatter myself, that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my son!—Why don't you begin, Jack?—Speak, you puppy—speak!

[*Aside to him.*]

Mrs. Mal. It is impossible, Sir Anthony, she can have any.—She will not say she has.—Answer, hussy! why don't you answer?

[*Aside to her.*

Sir Anth. Then, madam, I trust that a childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness.—Z—ds! sirrah! why don't you speak!

[*Aside to him.*

Lydia. (*Aside.*) I think my lover seems as little inclined to conversation as myself.—How strangely blind my aunt must be!

Abs. Hem! hem! madam—hem! (*ABSOLUTE attempts to speak, then returns to Sir ANTHONY*)—Faith! sir, I am so confounded!—and—so—so—confused!—I told you I should be so, sir,—I knew it.—The—the—tremor of my passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

Sir Anth. But it don't take away your voice, fool, does it?—Go up, and speak to her directly!

[*ABSOLUTE makes signs to Mrs. MALA-PROP to leave them together.*

Mrs. Mal. Sir Anthony, shall we leave them together?—Ah! you stubborn little vixen!

[*Aside to her.*

Sir Anth. Not yet, ma'am, not yet!—what the d—I are you at? unlock your jaws, sirrah, or—

[*Aside to him.*

[*ABSOLUTE draws near LYDIA.*

Abs. Now heaven send she may be too sullen to look round!—I must disguise my voice. [*Aside.*

[*Speaks in a low hoarse tone.*

—Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true love?—Will not——

Sir Anth. What the d—l ails the fellow?—Why don't you speak out?—not stand croaking like a frog in a quinsy!

Abs. The—the—excess of my awe, and my—my—my modesty, quite choke me!

Sir Anth. Ah! your *modesty* again! I'll tell you what, Jack; if you don't speak out directly, and glibly too, I shall be in such a rage!—Mrs. Malaprop, I wish the lady would favour us with something more than a side-front.

[Mrs. MALAPROP *seems to chide* LYDIA.

Abs. So all will out, I see!

[*Goes up to* LYDIA, *speaks softly.*

Be not surprised, my Lydia, suppress all surprise at present.

Lydia. (*Aside.*) Heavens! 'tis Beverley's voice!—Sure he can't have imposed on Sir Anthony too!

[*Looks round by degrees, then starts up.*

Is this possible!—my Beverley!—how can this be?—my Beverley?

Abs. Ah! 'tis all over.

[*Aside.*

Sir Anth. Beverley!—the devil—Beverley!—What can the girl mean?—This is my son Jack Absolute.

Mrs. Mal. For shame, hussy! for shame!—your head runs so on that fellow, that you have him always in your eyes!—beg Captain Absolute's pardon directly.

Lydia. I see no Captain Absolute, but my loved Beverley!

Sir Anth. Z—ds! the girl's mad!—her brain's turned by reading!

Mrs. Mal. O' my conscience, I believe so!—

What do you mean by Beverley, hussy?—You saw Captain Absolute before to-day; there he is—your husband that shall be.

Lydia. With all my soul, ma'am—when I refuse my Beverley—

Sir Anth. Oh! she's as mad as Bedlam!—or has this fellow been playing us a rogue's trick?—Come here, sirrah, who the d—l are you?

Abs. Faith, sir, I am not quite clear myself; but I'll endeavour to recollect.

Sir Anth. Are you my son or not?—answer for your mother, you dog, if you won't for me.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, who are you? Oh mercy! I begin to suspect!—

Abs. Ye powers of Impudence, befriend me! (*Aside.*) Sir Anthony, most assuredly I am your wife's son; and that I sincerely believe myself to be *yours* also, I hope my duty has always shown.—Mrs. Malaprop, I am your most respectful admirer—and shall be proud to add affectionate nephew.—I need not tell my Lydia, that she sees her faithful Beverley, who, knowing the singular generosity of her temper, assumed that name, and a station, which has proved a test of the most disinterested love, which he now hopes to enjoy in a more elevated character.

Lydia. So!—there will be no elopement after all! [*Sullenly.*]

Sir Anth. Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow! to do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance!

Abs. Oh, you flatter me, sir,—you compliment

—'tis my *modesty*, you know, sir—my *modesty* that has stood in my way.

Sir Anth. Well, I am glad you are not the dull, insensible varlet you pretended to be, however!—I'm glad you have made a fool of your father, you dog—I am——So this was your *penitence*, your *duty*, and *obedience*!—I thought it was d—n'd sudden!—You *never heard their names before*, not you!—*What*, The LANGUISHES of Worcestershire, hey?—*if you could please me in the affair, 'twas all you desired*!—Ah! you dissembling villain!—What! (*pointing to LYDIA*) *she squints, don't she?*—*a little red-haired girl!*—hey?—Why, you hypocritical young rascal!—I wonder you an't ashamed to hold up your head!

Abs. 'Tis with difficulty, sir—I *am* confused—very much confused, as you must perceive.

Mrs. Mal. Oh Lud! Sir Anthony!—a new light breaks in upon me!—hey!—how! what! captain, did *you* write the letters then?—What—am I to thank *you* for the elegant compilation of "*an old weather-beaten she-dragon*"—hey?—Oh mercy!—was it *you* that reflected on my parts of speech?

Abs. Dear sir! my *modesty* will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me.—I shall certainly not be able to stand it!

Sir Anth. Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive;—odds life! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find in my heart to be so good-humoured! and so gallant! hey! Mrs. Malaprop!

Mrs. Mal. Well, Sir Anthony, since *you* desire it, we will not anticipate the past;—so mind,





E. J. SULLIVAN.
1866

Sir Anthony. "Youth's the season made for joy."

young people—our retrospection will be all to the future.

Sir Anth. Come, we must leave them together ; Mrs. Malaprop, they long to fly into each other's arms, I warrant !—Jack—isn't the cheek as I said, hey ?—and the eye, you rogue !—and the lip—hey ? Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness—theirs is the time of life for happiness !——“ Youth's the season made for joy ”—(*sings*)—hey !—Odds life ! I'm in such spirits,—I don't know what I could not do !—Permit me, ma'am—(*gives his hand to Mrs. MALAPROP*)—(*sings*) Tol-de-rol—'gad, I should like to have a little fooling myself—Tol-de-rol ! de-rol !

[*Exit singing and handing Mrs. MALAPROP.*

[*LYDIA sits sullenly in her chair.*

Abs. So much thought bodes me no good. (*Aside.*)—So grave, Lydia !

Lydia. Sir !

Abs. So !—egad ! I thought as much !—that d—n'd monosyllable has froze me ! (*Aside.*)—What, Lydia, now that we are as happy in our friends' consent, as in our mutual vows——

Lydia. Friends' consent indeed ! [*Peevishly.*

Abs. Come, come, we must lay aside some of our romance—a little *wealth* and *comfort* may be endured after all. And for your fortune, the lawyers shall make such settlements as——

Lydia. Lawyers ! I hate lawyers !

Abs. Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering forms, but instantly procure the licence, and——

Lydia. The licence !—I hate licence !

Abs. Oh, my love! be not so unkind!—thus let me entreat—— [Kneeling.

Lydia. Pshaw!—what signifies kneeling when you know I *must* have you?

Abs. (*Rising.*) Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you.—If I have lost your heart—I resign the rest.—Gad, I must try what a little *spirit* will do.

[*Aside.*

Lydia. (*Rising.*) Then, sir, let me tell you, the interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposition, and deserves the punishment of fraud.—What, you have been treating *me* like a child!—humouring my romance! and laughing, I suppose, at your success!

Abs. You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me—only hear——

Lydia. So, while *I* fondly imagined we were deceiving my relations, and flattering myself that I should outwit and incense them all—behold my hopes are to be crushed at once, by my aunt's consent and approbation—and *I* am myself the only dupe at last! (*Walking about in a heat.*)—But here, sir, here is the picture—Beverley's picture! (*taking a miniature from her bosom*) which I have worn, night and day, in spite of threats and entreaties!—There, sir (*flings it to him*), and be assured I throw the original from my heart as easily.

Abs. Nay, nay, ma'am, we will not differ as to that—Here (*taking out a picture*), here is Miss Lydia Languish.—What a difference!—ay, *there* is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave

soul and spirit to my hopes!—those are the lips which sealed a vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's calendar!—and there the half-resentful blush, that *would* have checked the ardour of my thanks—Well, all that's past!—all over indeed!—There, madam—in beauty, that copy is not equal to you, but in my mind its merit over the original, in being still the same, is such—that—I cannot find in my heart to part with it. [*Puts it up again.*]

Lydia. (*Softening.*) 'Tis *your own* doing, sir—I, I, I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

Abs. Oh, most certainly—sure, now, this is much better than being in love!—ha! ha! ha!—there's some spirit in *this*!—What signifies breaking some scores of solemn promises:—all that's of no consequence, you know.—To be sure people will say, that miss didn't know her own mind—but never mind that!—or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint, that the gentleman grew tired of the lady and forsook her—but don't let that fret you.

Lydia. There's no bearing his insolence.

[*Bursts into tears.*]

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP and Sir ANTHONY

Mrs. Mal. (*Entering.*) Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

Lydia. This is worse than your treachery and deceit, you base ingrate. [*Sobbing.*]

Sir Anth. What the devil's the matter now!—Z—ds! Mrs. Malaprop, this is the *oddest billing*

and *cooing* I ever heard!—but what the deuce is the meaning of it?—I am quite astonished!

Abs. Ask the lady, sir.

Mrs. Mal. Oh mercy!—I'm quite analysed, for my part!—why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

Lydia. Ask the gentleman, ma'am.

Sir Anth. Z—ds! I shall be in a frénzy!—why, Jack, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, there's no more trick, is there?—you are not like Cerberus, *three* gentlemen at once, are you?

Abs. You'll not let me speak—I say the lady can account for this much better than I can.

Lydia. Ma'am, you once commanded me never to think of Beverley again—there is the man—I now obey you:—for, from this moment, I renounce him for ever. [Exit LYDIA.]

Mrs. Mal. Oh mercy! and miracles! what a turn here is—why sure, captain, you haven't behaved disrespectfully to my niece.

Sir Anth. Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—Ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—you have been too lively, Jack.

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word——

Sir Anth. Come, no lying, Jack—I'm sure 'twas so.

Mrs. Mal. Oh Lud! Sir Anthony!—Oh fie, captain!

Abs. Upon my soul, ma'am——

Sir Anth. Come, no excuses, Jack;—why, your father, you rogue, was so before you:—the blood



P. L. BOUTMAN

13

Mrs. Mal. *Oh! Sir Anthony!—Oh fie, captain!*

of the Absolutes was always impatient.—Ha! ha! ha! poor little Lydia!—why, you've frightened her, you dog, you have.

Abs. By all that's good, sir——

Sir Anth. Z—ds! say no more, I tell you—Mrs. Malaprop shall make your peace.—You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop:—you must tell her 'tis Jack's way—tell her 'tis all our ways—it runs in the blood of our family!—Come away, Jack—Ha! ha! ha! Mrs. Malaprop—a young villain!

[*Pushes him out.*]

Mrs. Mal. Oh! Sir Anthony!—Oh fie, captain!

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.—*The North Parade*

Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

Sir Luc. I wonder where this Captain Absolute hides himself.—Upon my conscience! these officers are always in one's way in love affairs:—I remember I might have married Lady Dorothy Carmine, if it had not been for a little rogue of a major, who ran away with her before she could get a sight of me!—And I wonder too what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them—unless it be a touch of the old serpent in 'em, that makes the little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth.—Hah! isn't this the captain coming?—faith it is!—There is a probability of succeeding about that fellow, that is

mighty provoking ! Who the devil is he talking to ? [Steps aside.

Enter Captain ABSOLUTE

Abs. To what fine purpose I have been plotting ! a noble reward for all my schemes, upon my soul !—a little gipsy !—I did not think her romance could have made her so d—n'd absurd either.—'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my life !—I could cut my own throat, or any other person's, with the greatest pleasure in the world !

Sir Luc. Oh, faith ! I'm in the luck of it.—I never could have found him in a sweeter temper for my purpose—to be sure I'm just come in the nick ! Now to enter into conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly.

[*Sir LUCIUS goes up to ABSOLUTE.*
—With regard to that matter, captain, I must beg leave to differ in opinion with you.

Abs. Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant :—because, sir, I happened just then to be giving no opinion at all.

Sir Luc. That's no reason—For give me leave to tell you, a man may *think* an untruth as well as speak one.

Abs. Very true, sir ; but if a man never utters his thoughts, I should think they might stand a chance of escaping controversy.

Sir Luc. Then, sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing.

Abs. Hark'ee, Sir Lucius,—if I had not before

known you to be a gentleman, upon my soul, I should not have discovered it at this interview :—for what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive !

Sir Luc. I humbly thank you, sir, for the quickness of your apprehension—(*Bowing*)—you have named the very thing I would be at.

Abs. Very well, sir—I shall certainly not balk your inclinations :—but I should be glad you would please to explain your motives.

Sir Luc. Pray, sir, be easy—the quarrel is a very pretty quarrel as it stands—we should only spoil it, by trying to explain it.—However, your memory is very short—or you could not have forgot an affront you passed on me within this week.—So, no more, but name your time and place.

Abs. Well, sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better ;—let it be this evening—here by the Spring Gardens.—We shall scarcely be interrupted.

Sir Luc. Faith ! that same interruption in affairs of this nature shows very great ill-breeding.—I don't know what's the reason, but in England, if a thing of this kind gets wind, people make such a pother, that a gentleman can never fight in peace and quietness.—However, if it's the same to you, captain, I should take it as a particular kindness, if you'd let us meet in King's Mead-fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may despatch both matters at once.

Abs. 'Tis the same to me exactly.—A little

after six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously.

Sir Luc. If you please, sir ; there will be very pretty small-sword light, though it won't do for a long shot.—So that matter's settled ! and my mind's at ease. [*Exit* Sir LUCIUS.

Enter FAULKLAND, *meeting* ABSOLUTE

Abs. Well met.—I was going to look for you.—Oh, Faulkland ! all the demons of spite and disappointment have conspired against me ! I'm so vexed, that if I had not the prospect of a resource in being knocked o' the head by and by, I should scarce have spirits to tell you the cause.

Faulk. What can you mean?—Has Lydia changed her mind?—I should have thought her duty and inclination would now have pointed to the same object.

Abs. Ay, just as the eyes do of a person who squints :—when her love-eye was fixed on me—t'other—her eye of duty, was finely obliqued :—but when duty bid her point that the same way—off t'other turned on a swivel, and secured its retreat with a frown !

Faulk. But what's the resource you——

Abs. Oh, to wind up the whole, a good-natured Irishman here has (*mimicking* Sir Lucius) begged leave to have the pleasure of cutting my throat—and I mean to indulge him—that's all.

Faulk. Prithee, be serious.

Abs. 'Tis fact, upon my soul.—Sir Lucius O'Trigger—you know him by sight—for some

affront, which I am sure I never intended, has obliged me to meet him this evening at six o'clock :—'tis on that account I wished to see you—you must go with me.

Faulk. Nay, there must be some mistake, sure.—Sir Lucius shall explain himself—and I daresay matters may be accommodated :—but this evening, did you say?—I wish it had been any other time.

Abs. Why?—there will be light enough :—there will (as Sir Lucius says) “be very pretty small-sword light, though it will not do for a long shot.”—Confound his long shots!

Faulk. But I am myself a good deal ruffled, by a difference I have had with Julia—my vile tormenting temper has made me treat her so cruelly, that I shall not be myself till we are reconciled.

Abs. By heavens! Faulkland, you don't deserve her.

Enter SERVANT, gives FAULKLAND a letter

Faulk. Oh Jack! this is from Julia—I dread to open it—I fear it may be to take a last leave—perhaps to bid me return her letters—and restore—Oh! how I suffer for my folly!

Abs. Here—let me see.

[Takes the letter and opens it.

Ay, a final sentence, indeed!—'tis all over with you, faith!

Faulk. Nay, Jack—don't keep me in suspense.

Abs. Hear then.—“*As I am convinced that my dear Faulkland's own reflections have already*

upbraided him for his last unkindness to me, I will not add a word on the subject.—I wish to speak with you as soon as possible.—Yours ever and truly, JULIA.”——There’s stubbornness and resentment for you! [Gives him the letter.

Why, man, you don’t seem one whit the happier at this.

Faulk. Oh, yes, I am—but—but——

Abs. Confound your *buts*!—You never hear anything that would make another man bless himself, but you immediately d—n it with a *but*.

Faulk. Now, Jack, as you are my friend, own honestly—don’t you think there is something forward—something indelicate in this haste to forgive?—Women should never sue for reconciliation:—that should always come from us.—They should retain their coldness till *woo’d* to kindness—and their *pardon*, like their *love*, should “not unsought be won.”

Abs. I have not patience to listen to you:—thou’rt incorrigible!—so say no more on the subject.—I must go to settle a few matters—let me see you before six—remember—at my lodgings.—A poor industrious devil like me, who have toiled, and drudged, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people’s folly—may in pity be allowed to swear and grumble a little;—but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and whim—who has no difficulties but of his own creating—is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion.

[Exit ABSOLUTE.

Faulk. I feel his reproaches:—yet I would not

change this too exquisite nicety, for the gross content with which *he* tramples on the thorns of love.—His engaging me in this duel has started an idea in my head, which I will instantly pursue.—I'll use it as the touchstone of Julia's sincerity and disinterestedness—if her love prove pure and sterling ore, my name will rest on it with honour!—and once I've stamped it there, I lay aside my doubts for ever:—but if the dross of selfishness, the alloy of pride predominate—'twill be best to leave her as a toy for some less cautious fool to sigh for.

[*Exit* FAULKLAND.]

ACT V

SCENE I.—JULIA'S *Dressing-room*

JULIA *sola.*

—How this message has alarmed me! what dreadful accident can he mean? why such charge to be alone? — Oh Faulkland! — how many unhappy moments—how many tears have you cost me!

Enter FAULKLAND

Julia. What means this?—why this caution, Faulkland?

Faulk. Alas! Julia, I am come to take a long farewell.

Julia. Heavens! what do you mean?

Faulk. You see before you a wretch, whose life is forfeited.—Nay, start not!—the infirmity of my temper has drawn all this misery on me.—I left you fretful and passionate—an untoward accident drew me into a quarrel—the event is, that I must fly this kingdom instantly. Oh Julia, had I been

so fortunate as to have called you mine entirely, before this mischance had fallen on me, I should not so deeply dread my banishment!

Julia. My soul is oppressed with sorrow at the nature of your misfortune: had these adverse circumstances arisen from a less fatal cause, I should have felt strong comfort in the thought that I could now chase from your bosom every doubt of the warm sincerity of my love.—My heart has long known no other guardian—I now intrust my person to your honour—we will fly together.—When safe from pursuit, my father's will may be fulfilled—and I receive a legal claim to be the partner of your sorrows, and tenderest comforter. Then on the bosom of your wedded Julia, you may lull your keen regret to slumbering? while virtuous love, with a cherub's hand, shall smooth the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck the thorn from compunction.

Faulk. Oh Julia! I am bankrupt in gratitude! but the time is so pressing, it calls on you for so hasty a resolution.—Would you not wish some hours to weigh the advantages you forego, and what little compensation poor Faulkland can make you beside his solitary love?

Julia. I ask not a moment.—No, Faulkland, I have loved you for yourself: and if I now, more than ever, prize the solemn engagement which so long has pledged us to each other, it is because it leaves no room for hard aspersions on my fame, and puts the seal of duty to an act of love.—But let us not linger.—Perhaps this delay——

Faulk. 'Twill be better I should not venture

out again till dark.—Yet am I grieved to think what numberless distresses will press heavy on your gentle disposition!

Julia. Perhaps your fortune may be forfeited by this unhappy act.—I know not whether 'tis so—but sure that alone can never make us unhappy.—The little I have will be sufficient to support us; and exile never should be splendid.

Faulk. Ay, but in such an abject state of life, my wounded pride perhaps may increase the natural fretfulness of my temper, till I become a rude, morose companion, beyond your patience to endure. Perhaps the recollection of a deed my conscience cannot justify may haunt me in such gloomy and unsocial fits, that I shall hate the tenderness that would relieve me, break from your arms, and quarrel with your fondness!

Julia. If your thoughts should assume so unhappy a bent, you will the more want some mild and affectionate spirit to watch over and console you:—one who, by bearing *your* infirmities with gentleness and resignation, may teach you *so* to bear the evils of your fortune.

Faulk. Julia, I have proved you to the quick! and with this useless device I throw away all my doubts. How shall I plead to be forgiven this last unworthy effect of my restless, unsatisfied disposition?

Julia. Has no such disaster happened as you related?

Faulk. I am ashamed to own that it was pretended; yet in pity, Julia, do not kill me with resenting a fault which never can be repeated:

but sealing, this once, my pardon, let me tomorrow, in the face of Heaven, receive my future guide and monitress, and expiate my past folly, by years of tender adoration.

Julia. Hold, Faulkland!—that you are free from a crime, which I before feared to name, Heaven knows how sincerely I rejoice!—These are tears of thankfulness for that! But that your cruel doubts should have urged you to an imposition that has wrung my heart, gives me now a pang, more keen than I can express!

Faulk. By heavens! Julia——

Julia. Yet hear me.——My father loved you, Faulkland! and you preserved the life that tender parent gave me; in his presence I pledged my hand—joyfully pledged it—where before I had given my heart. When, soon after, I lost that parent, it seemed to me that Providence had, in Faulkland, shown me whither to transfer, without a pause, my grateful duty, as well as my affection: hence I have been content to bear from you what pride and delicacy would have forbid me from another.—I will not upbraid you, by repeating how you have trifled with my sincerity.——

Faulk. I confess it all! yet hear——

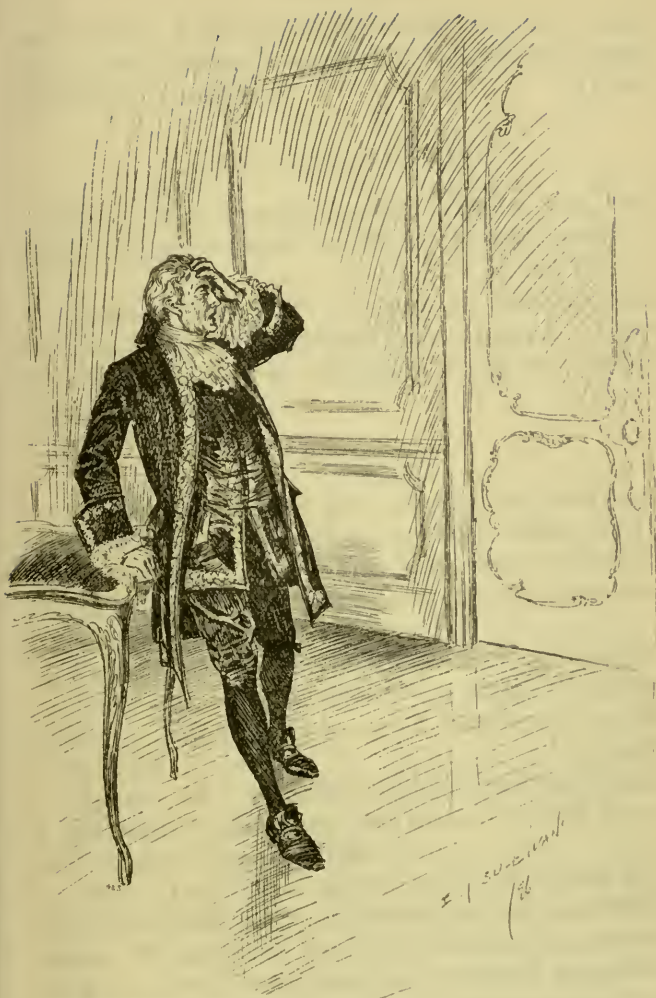
Julia. After such a year of trial, I might have flattered myself that I should not have been insulted with a new probation of my sincerity, as cruel as unnecessary! I now see it is not in your nature to be content, or confident in love. With this conviction—I never will be yours. While I had hopes that my persevering attention, and

unreproaching kindness, might in time reform your temper, I should have been happy to have gained a dearer influence over you ; but I will not furnish you with a licensed power to keep alive an incorrigible fault, at the expense of one who never would contend with you.

Faulk. Nay, but, Julia, by my soul and honour, if after this——

Julia. But one word more.—As my faith has once been given to you, I never will barter it with another.—I shall pray for your happiness with the truest sincerity ; and the dearest blessing I can ask of Heaven to send you will be to charm you from that unhappy temper, which alone has prevented the performance of our solemn engagement.—All I request of *you* is, that you will yourself reflect upon this infirmity, and when you number up the many true delights it has deprived you of—let it not be your *least* regret, that it lost you the love of one—who would have followed you in beggary through the world ! [*Exit.*

Faulk. She's gone!—for ever!—There was an awful resolution in her manner, that riveted me to my place.—O fool!—dolt!—barbarian!—Curst as I am, with more imperfections than my fellow-wretches, kind Fortune sent a heaven-gifted cherub to my aid, and, like a ruffian, I have driven her from my side!—I must now haste to my appointment.—Well, my mind is tuned for such a scene.—I shall wish only to become a principal in it, and reverse the tale my cursed folly put me upon forging here.—O Love!—tormentor!—fiend!—whose influence, like the moon's, acting on



Faulk, *She's gone!—for ever!*



men of dull souls, makes idiots of them, but meeting subtler spirits, betrays their course, and urges sensibility to madness! [Exit.

Enter MAID and LYDIA

Maid. My mistress, ma'am, I know, was here just now—perhaps she is only in the next room.

[Exit MAID.

Lydia. Heigh ho!—Though he has used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my head. I believe one lecture from my grave cousin will make me recall him.

Enter JULIA

Lydia. Oh, Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for consolation.—Lud! child, what's the matter with you?—You have been crying!—I'll be hanged, if that Faulkland has not been tormenting you!

Julia. You mistake the cause of my uneasiness!—Something *has* flurried me a little.—Nothing that you can guess at.—I would not accuse Faulkland to a sister! [Aside.

Lydia. Ah! whatever vexations you may have, I can assure you mine surpass them.—You know who Beverley proves to be?

Julia. I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr. Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair. Had young Absolute been the person you took him for, I should not have accepted your confidence on the subject, without a serious endeavour to counteract your caprice.

Lydia. So, then, I see I have been deceived by every one!—but I don't care—I'll never have him.

Julia. Nay, Lydia——

Lydia. Why, is it not provoking? when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last.——There, had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements!—so becoming a disguise!—so amiable a ladder of ropes!—Conscious moon—four horses—Scotch parson—with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop—and such paragraphs in the newspapers!——Oh, I shall die with disappointment!

Julia. I don't wonder at it!

Lydia. Now—sad reverse!—what have I to expect, but, after a deal of flimsy preparation with a bishop's licence, and my aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the altar; or perhaps be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, spinster! Oh, that I should live to hear myself called Spinster!

Julia. Melancholy, indeed!

Lydia. How mortifying, to remember the dear delicious shifts I used to be put to, to gain half a minute's conversation with this fellow!—How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue!—There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically! he shivering with cold and I with apprehension!



Mrs. Mal, So! so! here's fine work!—here's fine suicide, paracide, and simulation!

and while the freezing blast numbed our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame, and glow with mutual ardour!—Ah, Julia, that was something like being in love.

Julia. If I were in spirits, Lydia, I should chide you only by laughing heartily at you; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to entreat you not to let a man, who loves you with sincerity, suffer that unhappiness from your caprice, which I know too well caprice can inflict.

Lydia. Oh Lud! what has brought my aunt here?

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP, FAG, and DAVID

Mrs. Mal. So! so! here's fine work!—here's fine suicide, paracide, and simulation going on in the fields! and Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the antistrophe!

Julia. For Heaven's sake, madam, what's the meaning of this?

Mrs. Mal. That gentleman can tell you—'twas he enveloped the affair to me.

Lydia. Do, sir, will you, inform us? [*To FAG.*]

Fag. Ma'am, I should hold myself very deficient in every requisite that forms the man of breeding, if I delayed a moment to give all the information in my power to a lady so deeply interested in the affair as you are.

Lydia. But quick! quick, sir!

Fag. True, ma'am, as you say, one should be quick in divulging matters of this nature; for should we be tedious, perhaps while we are

flourishing on the subject, two or three lives may be lost!

Lydia. Oh patience!—Do, ma'am, for Heaven's sake! tell us what is the matter?

Mrs. Mal. Why! murder's the matter! slaughter's the matter! killing's the matter!—but he can tell you the perpendiculars.

Lydia. Then, prithee, sir, be brief.

Fag. Why then, ma'am, as to murder—I cannot take upon me to say—and as to slaughter, or manslaughter, that will be as the jury finds it.

Lydia. But who, sir,—who are engaged in this?

Fag. Faith, ma'am, one is a young gentleman whom I should be very sorry anything was to happen to—a very pretty-behaved gentleman!—We have lived much together, and always on terms.

Lydia. But who is this? who! who! who!

Fag. My master, ma'am—my master—I speak of my master.

Lydia. Heavens! What, Captain Absolute!

Mrs. Mal. Oh, to be sure, you are frightened now!

Julia. But who are with him, sir?

Fag. As to the rest, ma'am, this gentleman can inform you better than I.

Julia. Do speak, friend. [To DAVID.]

David. Look'ee, my lady—by the mass! there's mischief going on. Folks don't use to meet for amusement with fire-arms, firelocks, fire-engines, fire-screens, fire-office, and the devil knows what other crackers beside!—This, my lady, I say, has an angry favour.

Julia. But who is there beside Captain Absolute, friend?

David. My poor master—under favour for mentioning him first.—You know me, my lady—I am David—and my master of course is, or *was*, 'Squire Acres.—Then comes 'Squire Faulkland.

Julia. Do, ma'am, let us instantly endeavour to prevent mischief.

Mrs. Mal. Oh fie—it would be very inelegant in us : we should only participate things.

David. Ah! do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives—they are desperately given, believe me.—Above all, there is that blood-thirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger!—Oh mercy! have they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius into the scrape?—Why, how you stand, girl! you have no more feeling than one of the Derbyshire petrefactions!

Lydia. What are we to do, madam?

Mrs. Mal. Why, fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief!—here, friend—you can show us the place?

Fag. If you please, ma'am, I will conduct you—David, do you look for Sir Anthony.

[*Exit* DAVID.]

Mrs. Mal. Come, girls!—this gentleman will exhort us.—Come, sir, you're our envoy—lead the way, and we'll precede.

Fag. Not a step before the ladies for the world!

Mrs. Mal. You're sure you know the spot.

Fag. I think I can find it, ma'am; and one good thing is, we shall hear the report of the

pistols as we draw near, so we can't well miss them ;—never fear, ma'am, never fear.

[*Exeunt, he talking.*]

SCENE II.—*South Parade*

Enter ABSOLUTE, putting his sword under his great-coat

Abs. A sword seen in the streets of Bath would raise as great an alarm as a mad dog.—How provoking this is in Faulkland!—never punctual! I shall be obliged to go without him at last. Oh, the devil! here's Sir Anthony!—how shall I escape him?

[*Muffles up his face, and takes a circle to go off.*]

Enter Sir ANTHONY

Sir Anth. How one may be deceived at a little distance! only that I see he don't know me, I could have sworn that was Jack!—Hey!—Gad's life! it is.—Why, Jack,—what are you afraid of? hey!—sure I'm right.—Why, Jack—Jack Absolute!

[*Goes up to him.*]

Abs. Really, sir, you have the advantage of me :—I don't remember ever to have had the honour—my name is Saunderson, at your service.

Sir Anth. Sir, I beg your pardon—I took you—hey?—why, z—ds! it is—Stay—

[*Looks up to his face.*]

So, so—your humble servant, Mr. Saunderson!—Why, you scoundrel, what tricks are you after now?

Abs. Oh! a joke, sir, a joke!—I came here on purpose to look for you, sir.

Sir Anth. You did! well, I am glad you were so lucky: but what are you muffled up so for?—what's this for?—hey?

Abs. 'Tis cool, sir; isn't it?—rather chilly somehow: but I shall be late—I have a particular engagement.

Sir Anth. Stay.—Why, I thought you were looking for me?—Pray, Jack, where is't you are going?

Abs. Going, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay—where are you going?

Abs. Where am I going?

Sir Anth. You unmannerly puppy!

Abs. I was going, sir, to—to—to—to Lydia—sir, to Lydia—to make matters up if I could;—and I was looking for you, sir,—to—to——

Sir Anth. To go with you, I suppose.—Well, come along.

Abs. Oh! z—ds! no, sir, not for the world!—I wished to meet with you, sir—to—to—to——You find it cool, I'm sure, sir—you'd better not stay out.

Sir Anth. Cool!—not at all—Well, Jack—and what will you say to Lydia?

Abs. Oh, sir, beg her pardon, humour her—promise and vow:—but I detain you, sir—consider the cold air on your gout.

Sir Anth. Oh, not at all!—not at all!—I'm in no hurry.—Ah! Jack, you youngsters, when once you are wounded here——

[*Putting his hand to ABSOLUTE's breast.*
Hey! what the deuce have you got here?

Abs. Nothing, sir—nothing.

Sir Anth. What's this?—here's something d—n'd hard.

Abs. Oh, trinkets, sir! trinkets—a bauble for Lydia!

Sir Anth. Nay, let me see your taste.

[*Pulls his coat open, the sword falls.*

Trinkets!—a bauble for Lydia!—Z—ds! sirrah, you are not going to cut her throat, are you?

Abs. Ha! ha! ha!—I thought it would divert you, sir, though I didn't mean to tell you till afterwards.

Sir Anth. You didn't!—Yes, this is a very diverting trinket, truly.

Abs. Sir, I'll explain to you.—You know, sir, Lydia is romantic—dev'lish romantic, and very absurd, of course:—now, sir, I intend, if she refuses to forgive me—to unsheath this sword—and swear—I'll fall upon its point, and expire at her feet!

Sir Anth. Fall upon a fiddle-stick's end!—why, I suppose it is the very thing that would please her—Get along, you fool!

Abs. Well, sir, you shall hear of my success—you shall hear.—“Oh, Lydia!—forgive me, or this pointed steel”—says I.

Sir Anth. “Oh, booby! stab away, and welcome”—says she.—Get along!—and d—n your trinkets!

[*Exit ABSOLUTE.*

Enter DAVID, running

David. Stop him! stop him! Murder! Thief!

Fire!—Stop fire! Stop fire!—Oh! Sir Anthony—call! call! bid 'm stop! Murder! Fire!

Sir Anth. Fire! Murder! where?

David. Oons! he's out of sight! and I'm out of breath! for my part! Oh, Sir Anthony, why didn't you stop him? why didn't you stop him?

Sir Anth. Z—ds! the fellow's mad!—Stop whom? stop Jack?

David. Ay, the captain, sir!—there's murder and slaughter——

Sir Anth. Murder!

David. Ay, please you, Sir Anthony, there's all kinds of murder, all sorts of slaughter to be seen in the fields: there's fighting going on, sir—bloody sword-and-gun fighting!

Sir Anth. Who are going to fight, dunce?

David. Everybody that I know of, Sir Anthony:—everybody is going to fight, my poor master, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, your son, the captain——

Sir Anth. Oh, the dog!—I see his tricks;—do you know the place?

David. King's Mead-fields.

Sir Anth. You know the way?

David. Not an inch;—but I'll call the mayor—aldermen—constables—churchwardens—and beadles—we can't be too many to part them.

Sir Anth. Come along—give me your shoulder! we'll get assistance as we go—the lying villain!—Well, I shall be in such a frenzy—So—this was the history of his trinkets! I'll bauble him!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*King's Mead-fields*Sir LUCIUS and ACRES, *with pistols*

Acres. By my valour! then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance—Odds levels and aims!—I say it is a good distance.

Sir Luc. Is it for muskets or small field-pieces? upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, you must leave those things to me.—Stay now—I'll show you.

[*Measures paces along the stage.*]

There now, that is a very pretty distance—a pretty gentleman's distance.

Acres. Z—ds! we might as well fight in a sentry-box! I tell you, Sir Lucius, the farther he is off, the cooler I shall take my aim.

Sir Luc. Faith! then I suppose you would aim at him best of all if he was out of sight!

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, but I should think forty or eight-and-thirty yards——

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! nonsense! three or four feet between the mouths of your pistols is as good as a mile.

Acres. Odds bullets, no!—by my valour! there is no merit in killing him so near: do, my dear Sir Lucius, let me bring him down at a long shot:—a long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me!

Sir Luc. Well—the gentleman's friend and I must settle that.—But tell me now, Mr. Acres, in case of an accident, is there any little will or commission I could execute for you?

Acres. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius—but I don't understand——

Sir Luc. Why, you may think there's no being shot at without a little risk—and if an unlucky bullet should carry a quietus with it—I say it will be no time then to be bothering you about family matters.

Acres. A quietus!

Sir Luc. For instance, now—if that should be the case—would you choose to be pickled and sent home?—or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey?—I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

Acres. Pickled!—Snug lying in the Abbey!—Odds tremors! Sir Lucius, don't talk so!

Sir Luc. I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engaged in an affair of this kind before?

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, never before.

Sir Luc. Ah! that's a pity!—there's nothing like being used to a thing.—Pray now, how would you receive the gentleman's shot?

Acres. Odds files!—I've practised that—there, Sir Lucius—there (*Puts himself in an attitude*)—a side front, hey?—Odd! I'll make myself small enough:—I'll stand edgeways.

Sir Luc. Now—you're quite out—for if you stand so when I take my aim——

[*Levelling at him.*]

Acres. Z—ds! Sir Lucius—are you sure it is not cock'd?

Sir Luc. Never fear.

Acres. But—but—you don't know—it may go off of its own head!

Sir Luc. Pho! be easy—Well, now if I hit you in the body, my bullet has a double chance—for if it misses a vital part of your right side—'twill be very hard if it don't succeed on the left!

Acres. A vital part!

Sir Luc. But, there—fix yourself so—(*Placing him*)—let him see the broad-side of your full front—there—now a ball or two may pass clean through your body, and never do any harm at all.

Acres. Clean through me!—a ball or two clean through me!

Sir Luc. Ay—may they—and it is much the genteelest attitude into the bargain.

Acres. Look'ee! Sir Lucius—I'd just as lief be shot in an awkward posture as a genteel one—so, by my valour! I will stand edgeways.

Sir Luc. (*Looking at his watch.*) Sure they don't mean to disappoint us—Hah!—no faith—I think I see them coming.

Acres. Hey!—what!—coming!—

Sir Luc. Ay—Who are those yonder getting over the stile?

Acres. There are two of them indeed!—well—let them come—hey, Sir Lucius!—we—we—we—we—won't run.

Sir Luc. Run!

Acres. No—I say—we *won't* run, by my valour!

Sir Luc. What the devil's the matter with you?

Acres. Nothing—nothing—my dear friend—my dear Sir Lucius—but I—I—I don't feel quite so bold, somehow, as I did.

Sir Luc. Oh fie!—consider your honour.



SULLIVAN
-66

Acres. Hey, Sir Lucius!—we—we—we—we—won't run.

Acres. Ay—true—my honour—Do, Sir Lucius, edge in a word or two every now and then about my honour.

Sir Luc. Well, here they're coming. [*Looking.*

Acres. Sir Lucius—if I wa'n't with you, I should almost think I was afraid—if my valour should leave me!—Valour will come and go.

Sir Luc. Then pray keep it fast, while you have it.

Acres. Sir Lucius—I doubt it is going—yes—my valour is certainly going!—it is sneaking off!—I feel it oozing out as it were at the palms of my hands!

Sir Luc. Your honour—your honour.—Here they are.

Acres. Oh mercy!—now—that I was safe at Clod Hall! or could be shot before I was aware!

Enter FAULKLAND and ABSOLUTE

Sir Luc. Gentlemen, your most obedient.—Hah!—what, Captain Absolute!—So, I suppose, sir, you are come here, just like myself—to do a kind office, first for your friend—then to proceed to business on your own account.

Acres. What, Jack!—my dear Jack!—my dear friend!

Abs. Hark'ee, Bob, Beverley's at hand.

Sir Luc. Well, Mr. Acres—I don't blame your saluting the gentleman civilly.—So, Mr. Beverley (*to FAULKLAND*), if you'll choose your weapons, the captain and I will measure the ground.

Faulk. My weapons, sir!

Acres. Odds life! Sir Lucius, I'm not going to fight Mr. Faulkland; these are my particular friends.

Sir Luc. What, sir, did not you come here to fight Mr. Acres?

Faulk. Not I, upon my word, sir.

Sir Luc. Well, now, that's mighty provoking! But I hope, Mr. Faulkland, as there are three of us come on purpose for the game—you won't be so cantankerous as to spoil the party by sitting out.

Abs. Oh, pray, Faulkland, fight to oblige Sir Lucius.

Faulk. Nay, if Mr. Acres is so bent on the matter——

Acres. No, no, Mr. Faulkland—I'll bear my disappointment like a Christian—Look'ee, Sir Lucius, there's no occasion at all for me to fight; and if it is the same to you, I'd as lief let it alone.

Sir Luc. Observe me, Mr. Acres—I must not be trifled with. You have certainly challenged somebody—and you came here to fight him—Now, if that gentleman is willing to represent him—I can't see, for my soul, why it isn't just the same thing.

Acres. Why no—Sir Lucius—I tell you, 'tis one Beverley I've challenged—a fellow, you see, that dare not show his face! If *he* were here, I'd make him give up his pretensions directly!—

Abs. Hold, Bob—let me set you right—there is no such man as Beverley in the case.—The person who assumed that name is before you;

and as his pretensions are the same in both characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please.

Sir Luc. Well, this is lucky—Now you have an opportunity——

Acres. What, quarrel with my dear friend Jack Absolute—not if he were fifty Beverleys! Z—ds! Sir Lucius, you would not have me so unnatural.

Sir Luc. Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, your valour has *oozed* away with a vengeance!

Acres. Not in the least! Odds backs and abettors! I'll be your second with all my heart—and if you should get a *quietus*, you may command me entirely. I'll get you *snug lying* in the *Abbey* here; or *pickle* you, and send you over to Blunderbuss Hall, or anything of the kind, with the greatest pleasure.

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! you are little better than a coward.

Acres. Mind, gentlemen, he calls me a *coward*; coward was the word, by my valour!

Sir Luc. Well, sir?

Acres. Look'ee, Sir Lucius, 't isn't that I mind the word coward—*coward* may be said in joke—But if you had called me a *poltroon*, odds daggers and balls——

Sir Luc. Well, sir?

Acres. ——I should have thought you a very ill-bred man.

Sir Luc. Pho! you are beneath my notice.

Abs. Nay, Sir Lucius, you can't have a better second than my friend Acres—He is a most *determined dog*—called in the country, *Fighting Bob*.

—He generally *kills a man a week*—don't you, Bob?

Acres. Ay—at home!—

Sir Luc. Well then, captain, 'tis we must begin—so come out, my little counsellor—(*draws his sword*)—and ask the gentleman, whether he will resign the lady, without forcing you to proceed against him?

Abs. Come on then, sir—(*draws*); since you won't let it be an amicable suit, here's my reply.

Enter Sir ANTHONY, DAVID, and the WOMEN

David. Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony; knock down my master in particular—and bind his hands over to their good behaviour!

Sir Anth. Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in a frenzy—how came you in a duel, sir?

Abs. Faith, sir, that gentleman can tell you better than I; 'twas he called on me, and you know, sir, I serve his majesty.

Sir Anth. Here's a pretty fellow! I catch him going to cut a man's throat, and he tells me, he serves his majesty!—Zounds! sirrah, then how durst you draw the king's sword against one of his subjects?

Abs. Sir, I tell you! that gentleman called me out, without explaining his reasons.

Sir Anth. Gad! sir, how came you to call my son out, without explaining your reasons?

Sir Luc. Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook.



Capt. Absolute. *Come on then, sir—(draws); . . . here's my reply.*

Sir Anth. Zounds! Jack, how durst you insult the gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook?

Mrs. Mal. Come, come, let's have no honour before ladies—Captain Absolute, come here—How could you intimidate us so?—Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you.

Abs. For fear I should be killed, or escape, ma'am?

Mrs. Mal. Nay, no delusions to the past—Lydia is convinced; speak, child.

Sir Luc. With your leave, ma'am, I must put in a word here—I believe I could interpret the young lady's silence—Now mark——

Lydia. What is it you mean, sir?

Sir Luc. Come, come, Delia, we must be serious now—this is no time for trifling.

Lydia. 'Tis true, sir; and your reproof bids me offer this gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections.

Abs. Oh! my little angel, say you so?—Sir Lucius—I perceive there must be some mistake here, with regard to the affront which you affirm I have given you. I can only say, that it could not have been intentional. And as you must be convinced, that I should not fear to support a real injury—you shall now see that I am not ashamed to atone for an inadvertency—I ask your pardon.—But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever.

Sir Anth. Well said, Jack, and I'll stand by you, my boy.

Acres. Mind, I give up all my claim—I make no pretensions to anything in the world—and if I can't get a wife, without fighting for her, by my valour! I'll live a bachelor.

Sir Luc. Captain, give me your hand—an affront handsomely acknowledged becomes an obligation—and as for the lady—if she chooses to deny her own handwriting, here——

[*Takes out letters.*]

Mrs. Mal. Oh, he will dissolve my mystery!—Sir Lucius, perhaps there's some mistake—perhaps I can illuminate——

Sir Luc. Pray, old gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business.—Miss Languish, are you my Delia, or not?

Lydia. Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not.

[*LYDIA and ABSOLUTE walk aside.*]

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger—ungrateful as you are—I own the soft impeachment—pardon my blushes, I am Delia.

Sir Luc. You Delia—pho! pho! be easy.

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou barbarous Vandyke—those letters are mine—When you are more sensible of my benignity—perhaps I may be brought to encourage your addresses.

Sir Luc. Mrs. Malaprop, I am extremely sensible of your condescension; and whether you or Lucy have put this trick upon me, I am equally beholden to you.—And, to show you I am not ungrateful, Captain Absolute, since you have taken that lady from me, I'll give you my Delia into the bargain.

Abs. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius;



*Mrs. Mal. Pardon my blushes, I am Delia.
Sir Luc. You Delia—pho! pho! be easy.*

but here's my friend, Fighting Bob, unprovided for.

Sir Luc. Hah! little Valour—here, will you make your fortune?

Acres. Odds wrinkles! No.—But give me your hand, Sir Lucius, forget and forgive; but if ever I give you a chance of *pickling* me again, say Bob Acres is a dunce, that's all.

Sir Anth. Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, Sir Anthony!—men are all barbarians. [*All retire but JULIA and FAULKLAND.*]

Julia. He seems dejected and unhappy—not sullen—there was some foundation, however, for the tale he told me—O woman! how true should be your judgment, when your resolution is so weak!

Faulk. Julia!—how can I sue for what I so little deserve? I dare not presume—yet Hope is the child of Penitence.

Julia. Oh! Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind treatment of me, than I am now in wanting inclination to resent it. As my heart honestly bids me place my weakness to the account of love, I should be ungenerous not to admit the same plea for yours.

Faulk. Now I shall be blest indeed!

[*Sir ANTHONY comes forward.*]

Sir Anth. What's going on here?—So you have been quarrelling too, I warrant.—Come, Julia, I never interfered before; but let me have a hand in the matter at last.—All the faults I have ever seen in my friend Faulkland seemed to proceed

from what he calls the *delicacy* and *warmth* of his affection for you—There, marry him directly, Julia ; you'll find he'll mend surprisingly !

[*The rest come forward.*

Sir Luc. Come now, I hope there is no dissatisfied person, but what is content ; for as I have been disappointed myself, it will be very hard if I have not the satisfaction of seeing other people succeed better——

Acres. You are right, Sir Lucius.—So, Jack, I wish you joy—Mr. Faulkland the same.—Ladies, —come now, to show you I'm neither vexed nor angry, odds tabors and pipes ! I'll order the fiddles in half an hour to the New Rooms—and I insist on your all meeting me there.

Sir Anth. Gad ! sir, I like your spirit ; and at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

Faulk. Our partners are stolen from us, Jack—I hope to be congratulated by each other—*yours* for having checked in time the errors of an ill-directed imagination, which might have betrayed an innocent heart ; and *mine*, for having, by her gentleness and candour, reformed the unhappy temper of one, who by it made wretched whom he loved most, and tortured the heart he ought to have adored.

Abs. Well, Jack, we have both tasted the bitters, as well as the sweets, of love—with this difference only, that *you* always prepared the bitter cup for yourself, while *I*——

Lydia. Was always obliged to *me* for it, hey ! Mr. Modesty ?——But come, no more of that—our happiness is now as unallayed as general.

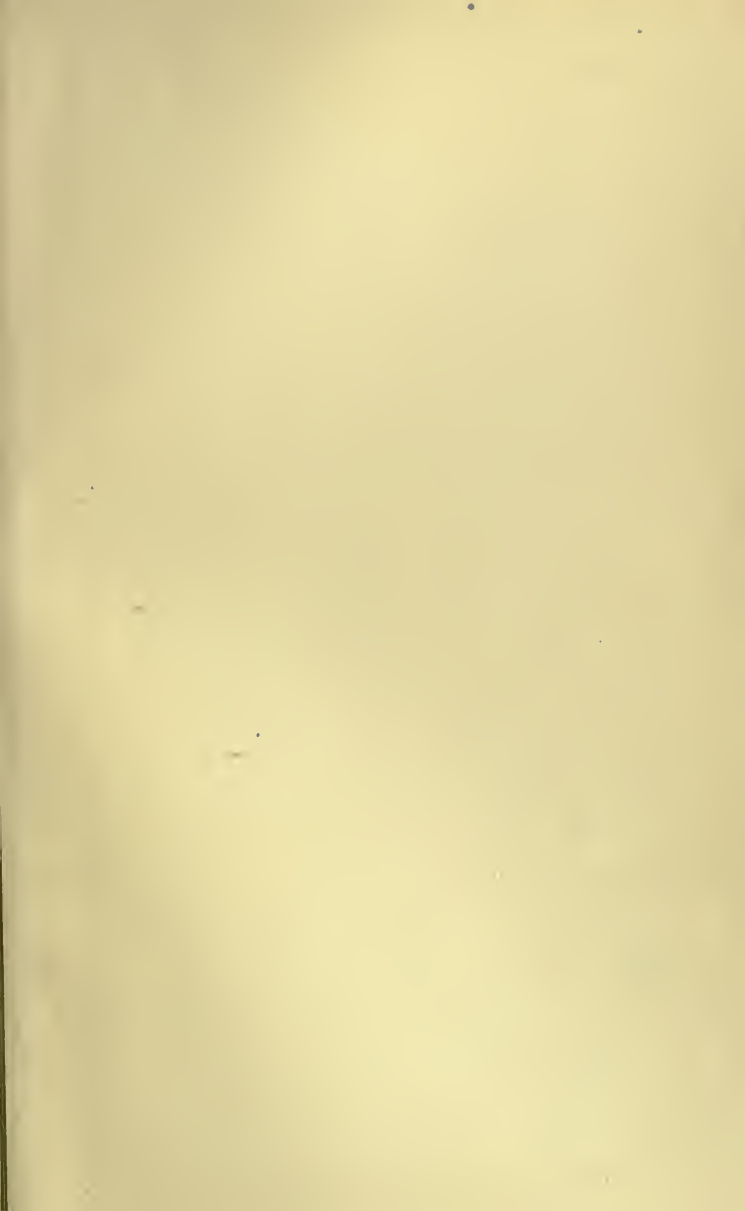


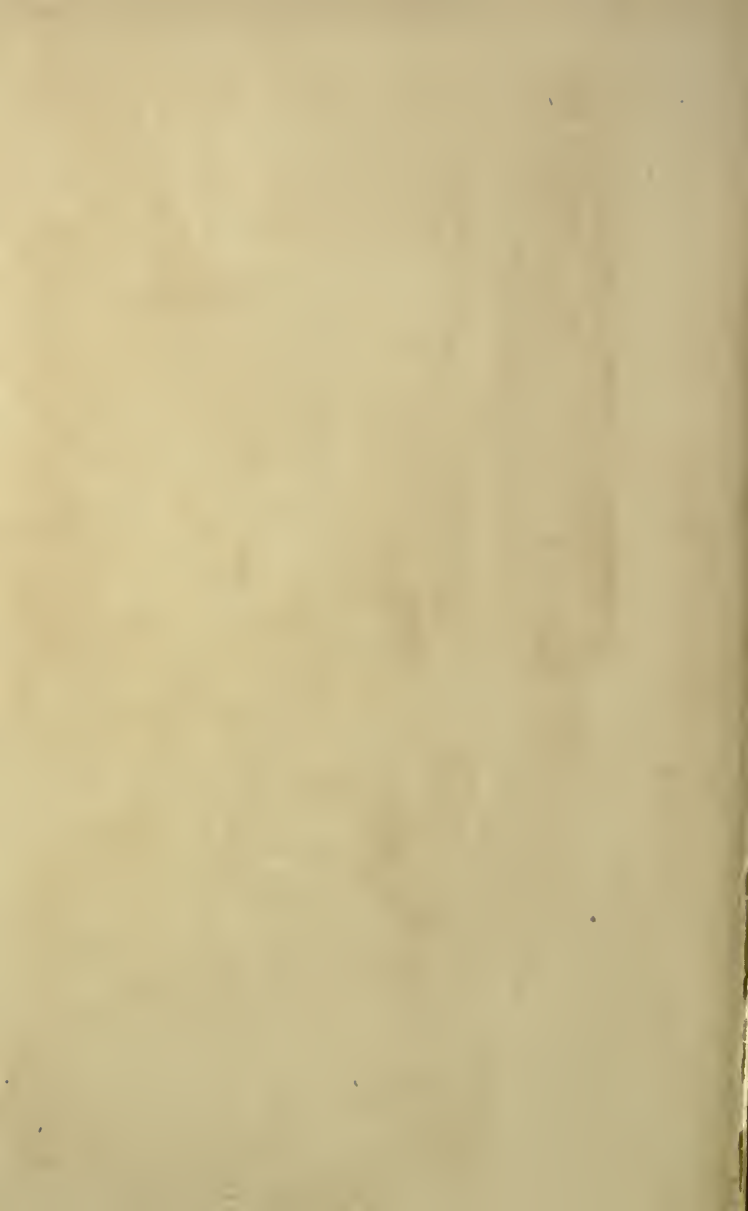
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Sir Anth. *At night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.*

Julia. Then let us study to preserve it so : and while Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting.—When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers ; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them, when its leaves are dropt !

THE END





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