



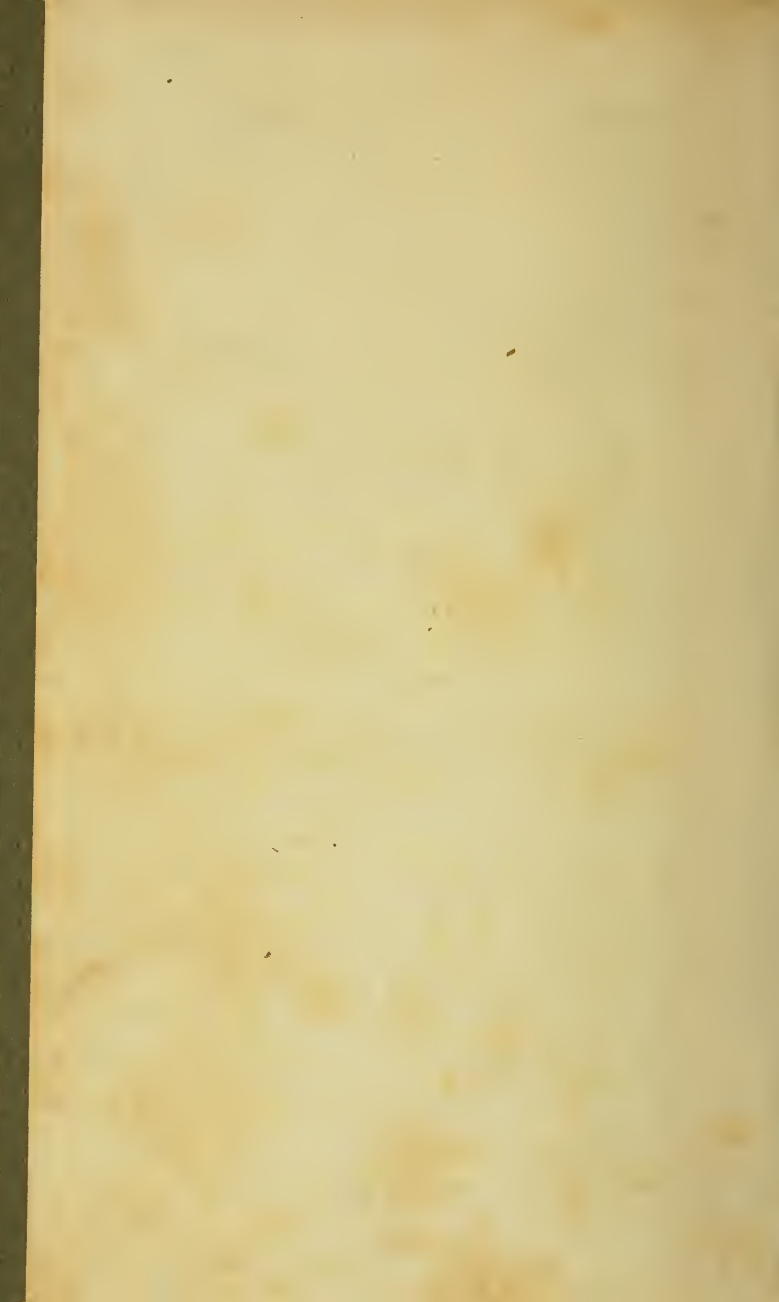
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THE MINOR DRAMA.

No. XXXIV.

WHO SPEAKS FIRST?

A Farce

IN ONE ACT.

BY CHARLES DANCE.

11

WITH THE STAGE BUSINESS, CAST OF CHARACTERS,
COSTUMES, RELATIVE POSITIONS, ETC.

PUBLISHED BY

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION.

THIS very elegant little piece has become a standard favorite throughout the Union, and a source of reputation and profit to all who have assisted at its representations, whether as auditors or actors. Its moral is good, and its language and situations amusing and instructive. Its being from the pen of that indefatigable dramatist, Dance, is guarantee sufficient for what we may say of its merits. "Who Speaks First" was originally produced at Madame Vestris' Lyceum, Mr. Charles Mathews playing the hero. In New York it has been successively and successfully performed at Mitchell's Olympic, Burton's, Chanfrau's National, and the Broadway Theatres.

Mr. Nickinson, (at the Olympic,) has, in *Captain Charles*, added another to his long list of original characters, while his fair and popular daughter Charlotte has created no little sensation—both in New York, Boston, and Albany—by her *naive* performance of *Smart*. At the National Mr. Huld was the *Captain*, and at Burton's and the Broadway our *Brother George* was personated by Mr. George Jordan, a young gentleman destined, at no very distant period, to become one of the best light comedians on the stage. Our limits prevent our doing justice to all the *artistes* we have seen in this clever trifle, but we can and do honestly recommend it to all the lovers of the light and amusing class of dramas, as the best farce of the season.

N. R. G.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

	<i>Lyceum</i> , 1849.	<i>Olympic</i> , 1849.	<i>Broadway</i> , 1849.
<i>Captain Charles</i>	Mr. C. Mathews.	Mr. Nickinson.	Mr. Lester.
<i>Ernest Militant</i>	" R. Roxby.	" Palmer.	" Dyott.
<i>Potter</i>	" Meadows.	" Stafford.	" Matthews.
<i>Mrs. Militant</i>	Mrs. Yates.	Miss C. Roberts	Miss F. Wallack.
<i>Smart</i>	Miss Marshall.	" Nickinson.	Mrs. Watts.

COSTUMES.

The Costumes are those of the present day.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*;
S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.

R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*;
L. C. *Left of Centre*.

WHO SPEAKS FIRST?

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The drawing room of a country house.—Large folding doors in c. ; at back, open lawn and view of the country beyond.—Doors on R. and L. leading to inner rooms : on one side, a table, with drawing materials ; on the other, a work table with embroidery frame, &c.*

MR. MILITANT *discovered at drawing table L., drawing—*
MRS. MILITANT *engaged at work table R.—their backs are towards each other.*

Mrs. M. What a blessing it is to be able to hold one's tongue : and what a comfort to feel that, in that particular, I am an exception to the general rule of my sex ! I mean that odious, unjust and false rule, which those beautiful lords of creation are pleased to say belong exclusively to us. They must surely forget that there are such things as newspapers—when we see that they never meet without talking till they are obliged to cough one another down. Oh, how often I wish to be there, if it were only just to tell them of it ! Lords of the creation indeed ! lords of their own creation ! There sits *my* beautiful lord, thinking himself, no doubt, mighty wise, and flattering himself that I shall be the first to break the bargain of silence we have made. How little does the gentleman know of the woman he has married ; but that's a common case. Why I could sit here for a month without once opening my lips.

Mr. M. Who would have credited that my wife, or

indeed any man's wife, could have held her tongue for a week? and yet she has, she actually has. It's a wonderful fact in modern history.

Mrs. M. I don't call talking to one's self *talking*; it's merely thinking aloud—and relief of some sort, one must have.

Mil. Starving a garrison is better than storming a fortress; you gain your object, without endangering your life. In that, as in many other things, time stands your friend.

Mrs. M. Perseverance in a man is obstinacy, I *presume*, in a woman—for we—heaven help us! have ever the worst of it. No matter, no matter—obstinacy or perseverance, I think I know who will be tired first.

Mil. A man hungers for knowledge and thirsts for information; but the pangs of those are nothing compared to a woman craving for conversation. She won't be able to stand it much longer, and then she will open her beak like a young black-bird.

Mrs. M. "On human actions, reason though you can, It may be reason, but it is not man."

Mil. "I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey."

Mrs. M. [*Looking round.*] He's not looking this way, I'll take a peep at what he's doing.

[*Militant coughs—she resumes her work.*]

Mil. [*Looking round.*] She seems uncommonly busy; I should like to see what she is about.

[*He rises gently and edges towards her table; she does the same towards his. They meet half way, and, without seeing, touch each other—both start, ejaculate, and bounce off—Mrs. Militant L., Mr. Militant R.*]

POTTER puts his head out from door R.; SMART puts her head in from door, L.

Pot. (R. c.) [*Angrily.*] Is that you, Smart? Is it possible?

Smart. (L. c.) You may well say that.

Pot. [*Coming forward.*] Come here this moment, and tell me why you were peeping from behind that door.

Smart. I was looking at you.

Pot. [*Relaxing.*] At me! At me! Were you looking at me? [*Aside.*] Can I believe my senses? [*Aloud, and approaching her.*] Is that true, you little rogue?

Smart. Perfectly true, Mr. Potter.

Pot. Don't say *Mr.* Potter.

Smart. Well, then—perfectly true, *old* Potter.

Pot. Don't say *old* Potter.

Smart. Perfectly true, young Potter.

Pot. Well, well, say what you like. But tell me, why were you looking at me?

Smart. I'm ashamed.

Pot. There's nothing to be ashamed of.

Smart. Nothing to be ashamed of, when a servant is detected prying into the private affairs of his master and mistress?

Pot. Well, that was certainly wrong, but still—

Smart. Oh! don't attempt to excuse it; you've owned it was wrong, and now never let me catch you doing such a thing again—

Pot. Me! Catch me? Why, I caught you.

Smart. For if you do, I shall be compelled, however painful it may be to betray a fellow servant, to show you up—in short—

Pot. Well, I never! You certainly have your full share of assurance. Now come here; I don't want to be angry with you, but haven't I often told you that you must not listen in this way.

Smart. And yet you continue to do it.

Pot. Now how can you say so? I haven't heard one word they said.

Smart. That's not for the want of trying, but only because you're a little deaf.

Pot. Did you hear?

Smart. Every word.

Pot. What did they say to one another?

Smart. Nothing to one another—they were talking to themselves, at least, so I judge from what master said—mistress was on your side of the house.

CAPTAIN CHARLES *appears at the c. entrance, from the lawn, he is dressed in a frock coat, wears moustachios, and a wig different in color from his natural hair. He carries a carpet bag in his hand.*

Cap. (c.) Some signs of living beings at last.

[Potter and Smart start.

Pot. (r.) Bless me! A stranger.

Cap. (c.) Don't be alarmed at me; I don't bite.

Smart. (L.) Who did you please to want, sir?

Cap. Oh! anybody; only I could find nobody. There was nobody at the lodge gate, so I walked through—nobody in the grounds, so I walked on—nobody at the window, so I walked in—and now, after all that walking, if you'll take my bag, I'll take a chair.

[He holds his bag towards Potter.

Smart. [Taking it.] Allow me, sir. [Aside, and examining the bag.] No name upon it, I declare. [Aloud.] Don't you think it a bad plan, sir, not to have your name and address on your carpet bag.

Cap. For those who wish to find out who I am, *very*.

Pot. [Aside.] Egad, he's a match for her, if I'm not.

Smart. If you will oblige me with one of your cards, I'll sew it on.

Cap. *When* I do, you *shall*. But there's no hurry, I shall most likely stay here some time.

Smart. A friend of master's, sir?

Cap. I hope to prove so.

Pot. Of my mistress then, sir?

Cap. I'm a friend of the whole family.

Smart. They have only been married four months, sir.

Cap. And so there can't be any family. Come, that's pretty smart.

Smart. [Aside.] Pretty Smart! I declare, he knows my name.

Pot. Will you favor me with your name, sir?

Cap. Charles, Potter.

Pot. Potter is *my* name, sir.

Cap. I know it, and mine is Captain Charles. Are your master and mistress at home?

Pot. Yes, sir. Which shall I take your name to?

Cap. Both. I wish to see them together. [Sits c.]

Smart. Ah, sir, so do we. But I fear we shall never see them together.

Pot. What are you saying, Smart? All she means to say is this—

Smart. Take care what you're about, Mr. Potter—don't you be letting out the secrets of the family. If master and mistress don't agree, what have strangers to do with it?

Cap. [*Aside.*] The report I have heard, then, is true. I'm glad I've done as I have. [*Aloud.*] Come, you need have no secrets from me. I am a sincere friend of both parties, and may be of service.

Pot. I'm sure, sir, if I thought *that*—but you see it's very awkward—we don't know who or what you are.

Cap. I'm a gentleman.

Pot. Well, I must say you look like one; but, la, sir, good clothes are no proofs now-a-days.

Cap. I'll offer better. [*To Potter.*] Did a snob ever give you a five pound note?

Pot. No, sir; nor a gentleman neither.

Cap. If I give you one, what will you say I am?

Pot. A real gentleman.

Cap. There, then. [*Holding one to him—he takes it.*

Smart. Stop, Mr. Potter. If you think it right to trust this gentleman, do so, but never accept a bribe for doing your duty. [*Takes the note out of his hand.*

Cap. Nay! I gave the money to him.

Smart. It's all right, sir. I'll put it in the savings' bank for him. [*Puts it in her pocket.*

Cap. [*To Potter.*] Well, never mind—tell me the truth, assist me, and you shall have another. Mr. and Mrs. Militant don't agree?

Pot. I fear not, sir.

Cap. What do they quarrel about?

Smart. Straws.

Cap. I'm glad to hear it, for then there's nothing serious.

Smart. It's so serious as this—they haven't spoken for the last week.

Cap. So much the better—they can't have quarrelled during that time.

Pot. No, sir, no; but it's terrible to see married people

on such terms. [*Looking at Smart.*] I'm sure if I had a nice little wife—

Smart. Do be quiet, you silly old man!

Pot. I will not. I'm sure this gentleman means well, and I will up and tell him all. They have made an agreement, and by listening, I am ashamed to say, at the door—

Smart. He has discovered what it is, sir.

Pot. [*Astonished.*] I?

Cap. Come, come—the agreement.

Pot. Well, sir, it's this. Whoever speaks to the other *first*, is to own to having been in the wrong, to apologize to the other, and to give way for the future.

Cap. And which do you think suffers most from this agreement?

Smart. Well, sir, I don't think that either of them like it; but it's scarcely a fair one, for mistress, you know, is a lady, and it falls uncommon hard upon her.

Cap. I understand. Now, do you go to your master and say Captain Charles has called, and then leave us together. [*To Smart.*] But mind, no listening, or I may chance to take that note out of the savings' bank.

Smart. Do you hear, old Potter, no listening, or I'm to keep the money.

Cap. Stay!—you must promise me to keep my secret better than you have kept your master's.

Both. You may depend on us, sir.

Cap. Give me your hand upon it, old Potter. [*Potter does so.*] And your's.

Smart. La, sir! [*Gives her hand.*] What a nice unproud gentleman.

Re-enter MILITANT, door L.—Smart screams, and runs off, L.

Mil. Potter, what does this mean?

Cap. [*To Potter.*] Hold your tongue, and leave the room. [*Exit Potter, R.*]

Mil. Pray, sir, may I ask who it is I have the honor of addressing?

Cap. Honor it is not—pleasure I hope it will be. My name is Captain Charles. I am an old friend of your wife.

Mil. And of my servants seemingly.

Cap. Well, that's partly true. But you are astonished at seeing me shake hands with them. Bless your heart, after gas, steam, railroads, and electric lights, it is time to leave off being astonished at trifles such as that. I have been abroad fifteen years, and have learned to become a citizen of the world. I was only fraternizing.

Mil. Have you seen Mrs. Militant, sir?

Cap. Not yet. As I know she'll be delighted to see me, I could not deny you the pleasure of presenting me

Mil. Me, sir! me?

Cap. Aye, to be sure. [*Aside.*] I knew he dared not, or I would not have asked him. [*Aloud.*] Who so fit? You can't have done with delicate attentions yet; you've only been married four months.

Mil. Quite time enough to leave off all such nonsense. People come to their senses when they marry.

Cap. Do you think so? I don't think Mrs. Militant agrees with you—

Mil. [*Interrupting.*] What, sir?

Cap. Upon that point. Ladies like delicate attentions after marriage as well as before.

Mil. Then they should study to deserve them.

Cap. Quite right—so they should. Doesn't she?

Mil. Did I assert anything of the kind, sir?

Cap. Certainly not. But *I* say doesn't she?

Mil. Pray, sir, by what right do you ask these questions?

Cap. By the rights of humanity. Come, come, you mustn't be angry with me. I'm an odd fellow—but I take great interest in you on account of your wife.

Mil. You're very kind, I'm sure.

Cap. I wish to prove so. To the point, then. You are not on the terms you ought to be.

Mil. You know this?

Cap. I do.

Mil. From my servants, I presume.

Cap. From yourself. Come, there's no use in denying. You would like to be on more comfortable terms with her, would not you?

Mil. [*Aside.*] Hang the fellow, he worms it out of one in spite of one's self. [*Aloud.*] Why, of course.

Cap. That's right. I knew you would. The fact is, she had parents who, though excellent people, indulged her too much in her youth, and when people have had their own way for twenty years they don't relish giving it up. Had you married her at seventeen, you might have moulded her to anything.

Mil. I have only known her a twelve-month.

Cap. An excellent reason for not marrying her before. Will you be guided by me?

Mil. I don't know what it is that makes me say so, but I will.

Cap. Come, then, you shall go with me to her—you shall say—

Mil. No, I can't say *that*.

Cap. You don't know what it is.

Mil. No—but I can't say anything.

Cap. Very well, then, you shan't. She shall make the first advance. Now, go along into your room, and I'll have a talk with your wife.

Mil. [*Going—returns.*] You'll be good enough to remember that she *is* my wife.

Cap. Never fear me.

Mil. What have I to trust to?

Cap. The word and honor of an officer and a gentleman.

Mil. Something whispers me that I may trust you. [*Going—returns.*] But remember, no concessions.

Cap. Trust me, and vanish. [*Exit Militant, L.—Smart peeps in door L.—Charles sees her.*] Ah! ah! Didn't I tell you that I would have no listening.

Smart. But I wasn't listening.

Cap. No—what were you doing, then?

Smart. I was looking at you, and saying to myself what a fine looking gentleman you was.

Cap. Oh! stuff and nonsense.

Smart. It's truth I'm telling you, Besides, I was watching Potter—there's no dependance on that 'old man, and it's absolutely necessary to watch him.

Cap. Go along, you jade, and tell your mistress that a very old friend wishes for the pleasure of seeing her.

Smart. I didn't quite catch your name, sir?

Cap. Then you can't tell it. Say a very old friend—that's enough.

Smart. [*Aside.*] It may be enough for you, but it's not for me; so I must try a little more listening.

[*Exit Smart to Mrs. Militant's room, R.*]

Cap. If the lady prove as intractable as the gentleman, I shall have a difficult job. But my cause is a good one—she comes.

Enter MRS. MILITANT, R.—Captain bows—she curtseys.

Mrs. M. Some mistake, sir, I presume. My maid informed me that an old friend of mine wished to see me.

Cap. A mistake, madam, and yet no mistake. A friend of your husband may, I trust, without presumption, claim to be reckoned among the number of yours.

Mrs. M. My husband is, I believe, in his own rooms, sir; with your leave I will send my maid to inform him that you are here.

[*Going, L.*]

Cap. Nay; pray do not leave the room. I have already seen my friend Militant, and it is by his request, or rather with his leave, that I pay my respects to you.

Mrs. M. Your name, sir, is?—

Cap. Charles, madam. Captain Charles, of the Infantry. I have been many years abroad—have but just returned—and hearing that one in whom I take a great interest was recently married, I came to pass a few days here, and offer my congratulations.

Mrs. M. Marriage, sir, is not always a subject of congratulation.

Cap. No—and, to be frank with you, I fear that yours is not.

Mrs. M. Really, sir, these remarks from a stranger—

Cap. Would be very impertinent—but from an old friend—

Mrs. M. Of my husband, remember!

Cap. Man and wife are one—a friend to one is a friend to the other—and I am most anxious to be so acknowledged by both.

Mrs. M. Your manners, sir, I must admit, are very kind—your intentions, doubtless, good—but I entreat you will spare me the pain of this discussion.

Cap. In anything else I should be delighted to oblige

you, but there you really must excuse me. Permit me to offer you a chair. [*Brings two, and places one for her.*]

Mrs. M. [*Impatiently.*] I had rather not sit down, sir.

Cap. May I entreat you? Five minutes only, to oblige an old friend—of your husband's.

Mrs. M. [*Aside.*] I never met with such a provoking man as this; there's no getting away from him.

[*Sits down.*]

Cap. Thank you! thank you! How very amiable you are.

[*Sits down, looks earnestly at her, and falls into a reverie.*]

Mrs. M. [*After a pause.*] Well, sir!

Cap. Charlotte!

Mrs. M. [*Jumping up.*] Charlotte, sir!

Cap. I beg your pardon.

Mrs. M. And well you may.

Cap. What's the matter?

Mrs. M. Charlotte, sir, is my Christian name.

Cap. Pray sit down again, madam. I've no doubt it is—in fact, it must be—for, when I was talking these matters over with your husband, "Charlotte and I," said he—

Mrs. M. [*Sitting down.*] I have no wish to hear what my husband said.

Cap. Then you shan't.—But listen to what I say. Your father and mother were excellent people, but, unfortunately, you lost them both.

Mrs. M. If you could find anything but painful subjects to talk about I should be better pleased.

Cap. You were an only daughter, and by over indulgence they spoiled you.

Mrs. M. Not a word against my parents, if you please.

Cap. By no means. It was an *amiable* weakness—but still it was a weakness.

Mrs. M. I don't agree with you.

Cap. Then it was not. You were headstrong—

Mrs. M. [*Rising.*] Sir!

Cap. But kind-hearted.

Mrs. M. Oh!

[*Sits again.*]

Cap. Of a hasty temper.

Mrs. M. [*Rising.*] Sir!

Cap. But generous and forgiving.

Mrs. M. Oh! [Sits again.

Cap. In short, a kind word could lead you, though a harsh one failed to drive you.

Mrs. M. You're very kind.

Cap. Being a lady of great personal accomplishments—[Mrs. Militant bows.]—you found it hard to give up your own way, to which you had been so long accustomed, and hence these little difficulties with your husband—

Mrs. M. Little difficulties!—little difficulties! You little know what you're talking about.

Cap. I'm sure I don't wish to undervalue them. My merit will be the more if I help you to surmount them. We'll say great difficulties.

Mrs. M. Great! They're monstrous!

Cap. Your husband isn't *one*.

Mrs. M. I don't know that.

Cap. Well, but I do. Your husband is a very good fellow, though I say it.

Mrs. M. [Pettishly.] I dare say you think so.

Cap. He laments, day and night, the coolness that exists between you.

Mrs. M. [Softening.] I wish I was sure of that.

Cap. And he loves you deeply and sincerely.

Mrs. M. [Anxiously.] Did he tell you so?

Cap. If he did, I'm not going to tell you. My object is to *gain* confidence—not to betray it. Now how stands the account on your side? You hate him.

Mrs. M. It's false!

Cap. I'm glad to hear it. You're angry with him.

Mrs. M. Often—[Checking herself.]—that is, sometimes.

Cap. You're vexed by him.

Mrs. M. Frequently—constantly.

Cap. Now, what for?

Mrs. M. Oh! a thousand things.

Cap. We meet in this world with a thousand things that don't signify, to one that does—tell me that one.

Mrs. M. I could tell you twenty.

Cap. Go on.

Mrs. M. Stop! Are you married?

Cap. No.

Mrs. M. Then you're not a fit judge.

Cap. I ask your pardon—I am the more impartial

Mrs. M. [*Aside.*] Tiresome man! [*Aloud.*] Well, then, to begin with the morning. I have a horror of being down stairs before nine, and he insists on breakfasting at eight.

Cap. Showing, thereby, his affectionate solicitude for your health.

Mrs. M. No doubt. After breakfast, when I wish to be at work in my own room, nothing must satisfy him but I must go into the drawing-room to play and to sing to him.

Cap. Proving distinctly that his greatest delight is to have no other society than the wife of his choice.

Mrs. M. Indeed! Then I should be glad to know why I am never allowed to say “not at home,” when people call?

Cap. Because he is so fond of you that he can't bear to lose an opportunity of parading you before his friends.

Mrs. M. [*Aside.*] This man is like a dressmaker who sends you home a gown full of faults, and when she comes to try it on, so pulls and fidgets it about that they all seem, for the moment, to have disappeared.

Cap. Go on, madam; I am all attention.

Mrs. M. [*Rising.*] Sir, I have not another word to say, except to admire the cleverness with which you make the worse the better cause, and to lament that your country, in gaining, perhaps, an indifferent soldier—

Cap. Madam!

Mrs. M. Should have lost a first-rate lawyer.

[*Curtseys.*]

Cap. I'm glad you think so—you will have the less hesitation in placing your cause into my hands. You shall go with me to your husband, and you shall say to him—

Mrs. M. That I certainly will not.

Cap. I haven't told you what it is.

Mrs. M. I shall not say it, whatever it is.

Cap. Why not?

Mrs. M. No matter—I have a reason.

Cap. [*Aside.*] I know you have. [*Aloud.*] Well, I must manage as well as I can. You ought to be happy to—

gether, and, somehow or another, I'll contrive to make you so.

Mrs. M. It is impossible, sir, not to be grateful for your kind intentions, but I fear you will not succeed.

Cap. If you fear failure you wish success, and that will help me to ensure it.

Mrs. M. Very likely—but I won't speak.

Cap. I won't ask you. I'll speak for you, but I will say those things to which your heart responds; for, spite of a little hastiness of temper, it is a good and kind heart. Come, come, you know it is, Charlotte.

Mrs. M. Charlotte again, sir!

Cap. Did I say Charlotte? Quite an accident, my dear madam, I assure you. I beg a thousand pardons.

Mrs. M. I must request that you don't allow such an "accident" to occur again?

[She turns from him indignantly—he follows her and endeavors to soothe her.]

Mil. *[Looking out of door R.]* What the deuce has he been saying to her? She seems affronted with him.

Mrs. M. Very likely, sir, it may be so; but if you repeat it, I shall feel it my duty to consult my husband.

Mil. *[Advancing hastily.]* Confound it, this will never do. I must—Mrs. Militant—oh, I forgot, I can't—

[Checks himself.]

Cap. There is your husband, madam; state your case.

[Mrs. Militant moves towards Militant, and is about to speak, but remembers the agreement, checks herself with difficulty, and resumes her place.]

Cap. Well, if you won't, I must. *[To Militant.]* I was talking with "your good lady," as the tradespeople say, about some alterations which I venture to suggest in the flower beds there on the lawn.

Mrs. M. *[Aside.]* Monstrous effrontery!

Cap. When she said, in a tone which it would have done your heart good to hear—*[Mrs. Militant testifies impatience aside to him—he proceeds without regarding it.]*—for, upon my life and soul, I think she must be the most affectionate of wives; "My first duty is to consult my husband."—*[Mrs. Militant, as before, advances to Militant, is about to speak, but checks herself and returns.]* This delicate and becoming deference was so completely

in harmony with the anxious wish which you expressed just now, to find out, without her knowing it, what present she would like best on her next birthday.

[Militant advances to Mrs. M., and is about to speak, but checks himself, and returns.]

Mil. [Aside.] Hang the fellow!

Cap. That it gives me the sincerest pleasure, even at the risk of betraying confidence, to make your mutual wishes known to one another. *[Militant and Mrs. Militant advance as if to speak to each other, but check themselves and return.]* How interesting it is to witness this mixture of merit and modesty—you can't deny it, you won't acknowledge it. But my business is to make you better acquainted. I pass over the thousand and one glowing colors in which each painted to me the other's worth, and come at once to the conclusion, in which you severally exclaimed, just as we see the words printed in the ensemble part of an operatic duett—

“Sure never was { man } so blest in a { wife.”
 { woman } { husband.” }

[Militant and Mrs. Militant, both much excited, approach the Captain, and are about to speak—he checks them.] Stay, stay! I haven't done;—and at the end, each said, as if one soul animated the two, “I have been hasty, but I will go at once, own my folly, and ask forgiveness.”

Mr. and Mrs. M. [Together.] I never said anything of the sort.

Mil. Oh! you have spoken.

Mrs. M. So have you.

Mil. You spoke first.

Mrs. M. I did not.

Cap. Both right and both wrong—you spoke together.

Mrs. M. Then it goes for nothing.

Mil. Agreed.

Cap. I don't exactly know what “agreed” means when people quarrel, but—

Mil. It is not all necessary that you should, sir. I dare say you mean well, but I will take it as a favor if you will interfere no farther in my family affairs.

Mrs. M. I perfectly coincide in that sentiment. I beg you'll drop the subject.

Cap. Certainly, if you wish it, for the future I'm

dumb; but as I meant well, you'll give me your hand, won't you, in token of forgiveness.

Mrs. M. Oh, well—there's my hand.

[Turning away her head and holding out her hand.

Cap. [To Militant.] I say, as I meant well, you'll give me your hand.

Mil. Oh, as far as that goes.

[Turns away his head and holds out his hand. Charles manages that their hands shall meet.

Cap. Come, come—one kind shake. [They shake hands.] Bravo, bravo! it's all right!

[They turn, and finding they have hold of each other's hand, they let go, and flounce away indignantly.

Mil. I'm excessively annoyed with you, sir!

[Exit into room, L.

Mrs. M. I shall not easily forgive this.

Cap. Yes you will.

Mrs. M. I tell you I shall not, and I suppose I know myself.

Cap. All the world supposes that, and nine-tenths of it are mistaken. I tell you you *will* forgive me.

Mrs. M. You'll find it difficult to prove your words.

Cap. Not the least. You remember your father?

Mrs. M. My father! Bless his kind heart.

Cap. And your mother?

Mrs. M. Shall I ever forget her—dear, kind soul!

Cap. I remember them both.

Mrs. M. You *do*?

Cap. I esteemed, honored, I may say, loved them. One word would change their anger, however just, to kindness. For their sakes you will forgive me.

Mrs. M. [Holding both her hands to him.] That I will! Why did you not tell me this before?

Cap. I told you you'd forgive me.

Mrs. M. Freely, freely.

Cap. [Drawing her towards him.] Bless you!

[Kisses her—she screams; at the same moment Militant appears door L., Smart L. C. door, Potter R. C. door.—Smart screams after her mistress and louder.

Mrs. M. Monster!

[Rushes off door R.

Mil. [Advancing.] Scoundrel!

Cap. Holloa! holloa! Strong expressions!

Mil. I'll break every bone in your skin!

Cap. Don't be rash, my good friend; we army men have an insuperable objection to being struck.

Potter. [*Getting before Militant.*] Master, dear master, pray calm yourself.

Mil. Stand out of the way, sir.

Smart. [*To Captain Charles.*] La, sir, how could you go to do such a thing? I'd rather you'd kissed me twenty times.

Mil. Death and furies, sir! didn't I see you kiss my wife?

Cap. I can't say—I wasn't looking your way.

Mil. Do you dare to assert that she gave you any encouragement?

Cap. Certainly not. The little event was as unexpected by her as it was unpremeditated by me.

Mil. Then I demand instant satisfaction.

Pot. [*Aside.*] Anything to calm him. [*Aloud.*] Perhaps, sir, the mistress *did* give the gentleman some encouragement. I saw her take hold of both his hands.

Mil. You did? Then she shall answer for herself.

[*Going towards her room—Smart gets in his way.*]

Smart. Don't believe him, sir—he's as blind as a bat! Mistress didn't give him any encouragement: mistress would have seen him hanged first.

Cap. You're a good little girl.

Mil. And well paid for her services, no doubt.

Smart. Come, sir, don't you go to take away an honest girl's character.

Mil. Get out with you; I have matters of more consequence to attend to.

Cap. Militant, you are the most ungrateful man living. After the way in which I have tried to serve you, too.

Mil. Was there ever such insufferable coolness!

Cap. It's quite necessary that one of us should be cool. Look at the passion you are in.

Mil. Are you ready to fight me, sir?

Cap. No.

Mil. You are an officer in the army, I believe.

Cap. For that very reason. If my life is worth anything, it belongs to my country, and I have no right to throw it away in a silly duel.

Mil. Then I'll post you.

Cap. If I were a captain in the navy instead of the army I should be very much obliged to you for posting me—but never mind, post away—postage is cheap now.

Mil. You're a coward, sir.

Cap. No, I'm not; for I have sufficient courage to bear your abuse, which I don't deserve, without resenting it.

Mil. Very fine, I dare say. Potter.

Pot. Yes, sir.

Mil. Fetch my pistols. [*Smart screams.*] Hold your tongue, you baggage! [*Smart looks him hard in the face and screams harder; Captain Charles throws himself into a chair.*] Stand aside, you old twaddler, I'll fetch them myself. [*Exit door L.*

Smart. I suppose, sir, if you are really a gentleman, after the manner in which you have behaved to mistress, you won't think of shooting master.

Cap. Don't be alarmed, child; there's no danger.

Pot. Isn't there, indeed, sir? La! what pleasant hearing! Then you won't shoot my poor, dear young master, but, like a good, kind gentleman, you let him shoot you.

Cap. I don't exactly know that.

Pot. Oh! do, sir, let him shoot you, and make us all happy.

Enter MILITANT with pistols, door L.

Mil. Now, sir, follow me.

Cap. Well, sir, since you insist upon it. [*Aside to Smart.*] Scream! [*Smart screams.*] Louder!

[*Smart screams louder.*

Mil. We have no time to lose, sir.

Cap. I'm quite ready. [*Aside to Smart.*] Hold me back. [*Smart pulls at him—he affects to struggle with her.*] What is the girl about—how strong she is! [*Aside to her.*] Give a jolly good scream, can't you? [*Smart screams again—Mrs. Militant appears at her door.*] That will do.

[*He breaks from Smart, goes to Militant, and takes one of the pistols from him.*

Mil. [*Who does not perceive Mrs. Militant.*] Come on, sir, and you shall soon feel the weight of a husband's indignation at an insult offered to a wife he loves.

[*They are going off.*

Mrs. M. Hold, Ernest. [*Goes to him, takes his hand, and brings him down the stage.*] For mercy's sake, what are you going to do?

Mil. Leave me, Charlotte, this instant. My honor, your honor, requires it. But for that girl's screaming all would have been well.

Smart. [*Aside.*] I believe I did scream, too.

Mrs. M. "Well!" Ernest? Is it well that I should lose you just when I have learned to value you? Is it well that you should risk your life in contest with a worthless libertine?

Cap. Thank you, Charlotte.

Mrs. M. Silence, sir! for shame! [*To Militant.*] I own myself hasty and wrong, but I never will give you cause for anger again. If it were for no other reason—and believe me, my chief care is anxiety for you—I could not bear the scandal this encounter would give rise to. I entreat you to forget the past and leave the future to me?

Mil. It shall be so, since you wish it; but why did you bring that man into the house?

Mrs. M. I, my dear Ernest! I? Why did *you*?

Mil. He's *your* friend.

Mrs. M. Excuse me, *yours*.

Mil. Pray, sir, whose friend *are* you?

Cap. Settle it among yourselves—I am not particular.

Mrs. M. He introduced himself to me as a friend of my husband's.

Mil. And to me as a friend of my wife's. [*To Captain Charles.*] Your reason, sir, for thus imposing on us?

Cap. Nay, you imposed on yourselves. If you hadn't been engaged in silly squabbles, and hadn't made a childish agreement not to speak to one another, you would have found me out long ago.

Mrs. M. [*To Militant.*] There's too much truth in that.

Mil. No matter, sir; it appears that you are an impostor: you will, therefore, be pleased to leave the house this instant.

Cap. Well, that's civil, at any rate! Don't you mean to ask me to dinner?

Mil. Begone, sir!

Cap. Upon my soul! you are two of the most ungrateful people I ever met with in my life. I came here to pass a few days with you—I found you at loggerheads—you hadn't spoken for a week, you mightn't for a month. I set you all right, and now you propose to kick me out.

Mrs. M. I trust, sir, there will be no occasion for violence, but the comfort of a family, into which you have somewhat strangely intruded yourself, requires your immediate departure. Go, therefore, but peaceably; for, rude as a part of your conduct has been, I must confess that we are, in some sort, indebted to you.

Cap. Well, you are more polite than your pugnacious husband there, I must say, and since *you* wish it, I'll go; but you admit that you're indebted to me?

Mrs. M. I do.

Cap. Then, perhaps, before I go, you would like to settle the little account.

Mrs. M. I should prefer anything, sir, to remaining under obligation to a stranger.

Cap. Then give us another kiss.

Mrs. M. Wretch!

[*Militant is about to rush on him—Mrs. Militant interposes.*]

Mil. Nothing on earth but my promise to my wife saves you from personal chastisement.

Cap. Don't apologize, I beg; so that I *do* escape, I'm not curious about the reason.

Mil. But you're whole conduct proves you to be a disgrace to the honorable profession to which you belong, and my opinion is that your coat ought to be stripped off your back.

Cap. Is that your deliberate opinion? [*Going to him.*]

Mil. It is.

Cap. Then here it goes. [*Takes off his coat and throws it down—Militant and Mrs. Militant express surprise and disgust.*] Perhaps you think I deserve to lose my waistcoat also. [*Takes that off and throws it down.*]

Mrs. M. What in the world is the man about?

Cap. Anything more?

Mrs. M. Militant, Militant, stop him!

[*Militant advances.*]

Cap. Oh! come, Mrs. Charlotte, I can stand anything

but affectation. [*Militant pauses.*] Do you mean to say that you never saw me without my coat and waistcoat before.

Mil. Charlotte, what *does* this mean?

Mrs. M. How should I know? [*To Captain Charles.*] Never, you very wicked man!

Cap. I'll be hanged, if women don't beat men for effrontery! The next thing you'll say is that I never saw you in your night-cap.

[*Mrs. Militant gives an exclamation of horror.*]

Mil. This is too monstrous! Potter, give me one of those pistols, and if he don't instantly fly, I'll commit manslaughter.

Cap. My dear fellow, you're so dreadfully hasty! Suppose, now, your wife were to confess to you that all I have asserted is true—what then?

Mil. Then, sir, I would cast her off forever.

Cap. Spoken like a man. [*To Mrs. Militant.*] One word with you, if you please, in private?

Mrs. M. Not for worlds.

Mil. Charlotte, I insist upon it.

Mrs. M. Then I obey.

[*Retires up the stage with Captain Charles—he whispers to her, she whispers to him, he whispers to her again; she starts, gives an exclamation of delight, and is about to rush into his arms—he checks her, and points to Militant.*]

Mil. [*Observing them—Aside.*] Ha! what can this mean?

[*They return—Captain Charles leading her by the hand.*]

Cap. Now, sir, ask her.

[*He resumes his coat and waistcoat.*]

Mil. I am ashamed to do so, but, to make all clear—Charlotte, is this true?

Mrs. M. Perfectly! [*Militant starts.*] These allowable and natural familiarities—

Mil. Natural!—I shall go mad!

Mrs. M. Have passed between me and my long-absent brother—

Cap. [*Taking off his wig.*] Captain George Montgomery, at your service.

Mil. My brother-in-law!

Cap. Exactly! Whom your violence was near changing to a brother-at-law. [*They shake hands.*] Now, Charlotte, I'll trouble you for the kiss I talked about. [*They embrace.*]

Pot. My young master come home to England! Oh! Smart, dear Smart!

[*Tries to embrace her—she avoids him; they come down R. and L.*]

Smart. Go along with you, do.

Mil. You will not wonder that I, who never saw you, should not know you, but it seems to be a wise sister that doesn't know her own brother.

Cap. Fifteen years abroad had so altered me that I didn't expect she would—but, to make all sure, I disguised myself. I landed two days ago at Portsmouth, heard that my dear sister Charlotte was married—learned from a friend that she and her husband—

Mrs. M. [*Interrupting him.*] Lived here.

Cap. Well, yes;—and resolved to see and judge for myself. You know the rest.

Pot. [*Advancing.*] And do I see Master George once more?

Cap. [*Shaking hands with him.*] Ancient Potter, you do; and now, what can I do to make you amends for all the tricks I used to play you? Is there anything you want?

Pot. Yes, Master George.

Cap. What is it?

Pot. A wife, Master George. [*All laugh.*]

Cap. That's the last want I should have suspected you of. Have you fixed upon anybody?

Pot. Yes; oh, yes, Master George.

Cap. Who may it be?

Pot. Smart, Master George.

Cap. And who is Smart?

Smart. [*Coming forward.*] I am, if you please, sir.

Cap. You! [*To Potter.*] Why, she's not more than twenty, and you are seventy.

Pot. Yes, sir; but once married, all things in common—united ages ninety—average forty-five.

Cap. Bravo, old Potter. I declare, love has sharpened your wits.

Pot. Yes, Master George.

Cap. [*To Smart.*] Do you know any just cause or impediment?

Smart. Yes, Master George; I forbid the banns.

Pot. On what ground?

Smart. A woman may not marry her grandfather.

[*All laugh.*]

Mil. [*To Captain Charles.*] And now, I *do* ask you to dinner.

Cap. And you won't quarrel about whose friend I am?

Mrs. M. You have proved yourself a true friend of both. But, I say, George—

Cap. What?

Mrs. M. You won't quiz us?

Cap. Not I. I am too happy that you have come to a right understanding. The course of marriage seems to be this:—In courtships, deception on both sides—during the honeymoon, an over-anxiety to give way on both sides—that over, there comes a struggle for the mastery on both sides—an insane game, at which, if either win, both lose. Mutual concession is the golden medium, and that, I trust, you have now found out. Am I not right? If you doubt, ask your friends. [*Leading her towards the audience.*] If they don't approve, I haven't another word to say; if they do, I'll repeat my advice as often as it may be asked for. "WHO SPEAKS FIRST?"

DISPOSITION OF THE CHARACTERS AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

POTTER.	MRS. MILITANT.	CHARLES.	MILITANT.	SMART.
R.	R. C.	C.	L. C.	L.

THE END.



