

1777

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley (1751-1816) - Irish-born English dramatist, he was a master of the satirical comedy of manners. Sheridan was manager of the Drury Lane Theater where he had a great influence on the theater of his time, and he later became a distinguished parliamentary orator. *The School for Scandal* (1777) - One of the most popular comedies in the English language, the permanence of its hold on the public is surpassed only by the plays of Shakespeare.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY LANE THEATRE IN 1777 -

SIR PETER TEAZLE	Mr. King.
SIR OLIVER SURFACE	Mr. Yates.
SIR HARRY BUMPER	Mr. Gawdry.
SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE	Mr. Dodd.
JOSEPH SURFACE	Mr. Palmer.
CHARLES SURFACE	Mr. Smith.
CARELESS.	Mr. Farren.
SNAKE	Mr. Packer.
CRABTREE	Mr. Parsons.
ROWLEY	Mr. Aickin.
MOSES	Mr. Baddelev.

TRIP

LADY TEAZLE

LADY SNEERWELL

MRS. CANDOUR .

MARIA

Mr. Lamash.

Mrs. Abington.

Miss Sherry.

Miss Pope.

Miss P. Hopkins.

Gentlemen, Maid, and Servants. -

SCENE- LONDON.

**A PORTRAIT; ADDRESSED TO MRS. CREWE, WITH
THE COMEDY OF THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL**

By R. B. Sheridan, Esq.

TELL me, ye prime 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 fix'd antipathy to young and fair;

By cunning, cautious; or by nature, cold,-
In maiden madness, virulently bold;-
Attend, ye skill'd 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 seek 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 the 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 Heaven to be admired so much,

The hand divine, with a less partial care,
Might well have fixed 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:
Clothed 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 heavenly 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 altered 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 timorous 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. GARRIC

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 risen at noon, all night at cards when threshing
Strong tea and scandal- "Bless me, how refreshing!
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 spring-tide 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 his 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.

ACT I

SCENE I.-

LADY SNEERWELL'S Dressing-room -

LADY SNEERWELL discovered at her toilet; 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 being 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 tete-a-tete 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 distinguish 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 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 SNEER

I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbor, 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, 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

Heavens! 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 am 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- I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes. -

Enter SERVANT. -

SER

Mr. Surface.

LADY SNEER

Show him up.-

[Exit SERVANT.]

He generally calls about this time. I don't wonder at people giving him to me for a lover. -

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE. -

JOS Surface

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

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.

JOS SURF

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.

JOS SURF

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?

JOS SURF

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!

JOS SURF

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.

JOS SURF

Egad, that's true! I'll keep that sentiment till I see

Sir Peter. However, it is certainly 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.

JOS SURF

Sir, your very devoted.-

[Exit SNAKE.]

Lady Sneerwell, I am very sorry you have put any farther confidence in that fellow.

LADY SNEER

Why so?

JOS SURF

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?

JOS SURF

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?

MAR

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

LADY SNEER

Is that all?

JOS SURF

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 should avoid him so?

MAR

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

JOS SURF

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.

MAR

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

JOS SURF

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

Psha! 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?

JOS SURF

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

MAR

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. -

Re-enter SERVANT. -

SER

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 knows her to be the best-natured and best
sort of woman.

MAR

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

JOS SURF

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.

JOS SURF

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.

MAR

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.

MAR

'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 Filagree Flirt. But, Lord! there's no minding what one hears; though, to be sure, I had this from very good authority.

MAR

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 stopped her last week, just as she was stepping into the York mail with her dancing-master.

MAR

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 the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino- though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly cleared up.

JOS SURF

The license of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

MAR

'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 Harry Bouquet 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.

JOS SURF

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?

JOS SURF

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 acquaintance ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation.

JOS SURF

Doubtless, ma'am- a very great one. -

Re-enter SERVANT. -

SER

Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

[Exit.

LADY SNEER

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

Enter CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE. -

CRAB

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 BEN

Oh, fie, uncle!

CRAB

Nay, egad it's true: I back him at a rebus or a charade
against the best rhymmer 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 BEN

Uncle, now- pr'ythee-

CRAB

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

LADY SNEER

I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

SIR BEN

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 elegies, which, when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to give the public

[Pointing to MARIA.]

CRAB

[To MARIA.]

'Fore heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalize you- you will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa.

SIR BEN

[To MARIA.]

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!

CRAB

But, ladies, that's true- have you heard the news?

MRS. CAN

What, sir, do you mean the report of-

CRAB

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

MRS. CAN

Impossible!

CRAB

Ask Sir Benjamin.

SIR BEN

'Tis very true, ma'am: everything is fixed, and the wedding liveries bespoke.

CRAB

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 BEN

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 robuster characters of a hundred prudes.

SIR BEN

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.

CRAB

That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am. Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her lover and her character last summer at Tunbridge?- Sir Benjamin, you remember it?

SIR BEN

Oh, to be sure!- the most whimsical circumstance.

LADY SNEER

How was it, pray?

CRAB

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 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!

CRAB

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

JOS SURF

Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

CRAB

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!

JOS SURF

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 BEN

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.

CRAB

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 BEN

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 in the ante-chamber, and an officer behind every guest's chair.

JOS SURF

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

MAR

[Aside.]

Their malice is intolerable!-

[Aloud.]

Lady Sneerwell,
I must wish you a good morning: I'm not very well.

[Exit.]

MRS. CAN

O dear! she changes colour very much.

LADY SNEER

Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her; she may want your assistance.

MRS. CAN

That I will, with all my soul, ma'am.- Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be!

[Exit.

LADY SNEER

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

SIR BEN

The young lady's penchant is obvious.

CRAB

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 BEN

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

CRAB

O Lud, ay! undone as ever man was- can't raise a guinea.

SIR BEN

And everything sold, I'm told, that was movable.

CRAB

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 BEN

And I'm very sorry also to hear some bad stories against him.

[Going.

CRAB

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

SIR BEN

But, however, as he's your brother-

[Going.

CRAB

Well tell you all another opportunity.

[Exeunt CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN.]

LADY SNEER

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

JOS SURF

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

A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -

SIR PET

When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect? 'Tis now six months since Ladv Teazle made me the

happiest of men- and I have been the most miserable dog ever since! We tift 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 she now plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she never had seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and paragraphed 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. -

ROW

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

SIR PET

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

ROW

What can have happened since yesterday?

SIR PET

A good question to a married man!

ROW

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

SIR PET

Why, has anybody told you she was dead?

ROW

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

SIR PET

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.

ROW

Indeed!

SIR PET

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 of a father 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.

ROW

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 PET

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.

ROW

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 PET

What! let me hear.

ROW

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

SIR PET

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

ROW

I did not: but his passage has been remarkably quick.

SIR PET

Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend. 'Tis sixteen 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?

ROW

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

SIR PET

Ah! There needs no art to discover their merits- however, he shall have his way; but, pray, does he know I am married?

ROW

Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

SIR PET

What, as we drink health to a friend in consumption! Ah, Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, but 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.

ROW

By no means.

SIR PET

For I should never be able to stand Noll's jokes; so I'll have him think, Lord forgive me! that we are a very happy couple.

ROW

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

SIR PET

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.

A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House

Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE. -

SIR PET

Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

Very well, ma'am, very well; so a husband is to have no influence, no authority?

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

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 TEAZ

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

SIR PET

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 fete champetre at Christmas.

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

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 TEAZ

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

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

Oh, 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 PET

Yes, yes, ma'am, 'twas so indeed.

LADY TEAZ

And then, you know, my evening amusements! To draw
patterns for ruffles, which I had not the 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 PET

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-a-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 docked coach-horse?

LADY TEAZ

No- I swear I never did that; I deny the butler and the coach-horse.

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

Well, then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, that is-

SIR PET

My widow, I suppose?

LADY TEAZ

Hem! hem!

SIR PET

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

LADY TEAZ

Then why will you endeavour to make yourself so disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense?

SIR PET

'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these little elegant expenses when you married me?

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

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

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

Ay- there again- taste! Zounds! madam, you had no taste when you married me!

LADY TEAZ

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, since we have finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's?

SIR PET

Ay, there's another precious circumstance- a charming set of acquaintance you have made there!

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

What, would you restrain the freedom of speech?

SIR PET

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

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

Well, well, I'll call in just to look after my own character.

LADY TEAZ

Then, indeed, you must make haste after me or you'll be too late. So good-bye to ye.

[Exit.

SIR PET

So- I have gained much by my intended expostulation! Yet with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasantly 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.

SCENE II.

A Room in LADY SNEERWELL'S House -

LADY SNEERWELL, MRS. CANDOUR, CRABTREE, SIR BENJAMIN

BACKBITE, and JOSEPH SURFACE, discovered. -

LADY SNEER

Nay, positively, we will hear it.

JOS SURF

Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

SIR BEN

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

CRAB

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

SIR BEN

But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance
You must know, that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricie
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 am sure can't be wrong.
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long. -

CRAB

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

JOS SURF

A very Phoebus, mounted- indeed, Sir Benjamin!

SIR BEN

Oh 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 TEAZ

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.

MAR

I take very little pleasure in cards- however, I'll do as your ladyship pleases.

LADY TEAZ

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 TEAZ

What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

MRS. CAN

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

LADY SNEER

Oh, surely she is a pretty woman.

CRAB

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

MRS. CAN

She has a charming fresh colour.

LADY TEAZ

Yes, when it is fresh put on.

MRS. CAN

Oh, fie! I'll swear her colour is natural: I have seen it
come and go!

LADY TEAZ

I dare swear you have, ma'am: it goes off at night, and
comes again in the morning.

SIR BEN

True, ma'am, it not only comes and goes; but, what's more,
egad, her maid can fetch and carry it!

MRS. CAN

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

CRAB

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 BEN

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 caulks her wrinkles.

SIR BEN

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 on so badly to her neck, that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur may see at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique!

CRAB

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 BEN

Why, she has very pretty teeth.

LADY TEAZ

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 ajar, as it were- thus.
[Shows her teeth.

MRS. CAN

How can you be so ill-natured?

LADY TEAZ

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 edge-wise, 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 TEAZ

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

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -

SIR PET

Ladies, your most obedient-

[Aside.]

Mercy on me, here is
the whole set! a character dead at every word, I suppose.

MRS. CAN

I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so
ensorious- and Lady Teazle as bad as any one.

SIR PET

That 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 TEAZ

What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Quadrille's last night?

MRS. CAN

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

LADY SNEER

That's very true, indeed.

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

Yes, a good defence, truly.

MRS. CAN

Truly, Lady Teazle is as consorious as Miss Sallow.

CRAB

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 of six-and-thirty.

LADY SNEER

Though, surely, she is handsome still- and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle-light, 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 BEN

Ah! you are both of you too good-natured!

SIR PET

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 PET

No, to be sure.

SIR BEN

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

LADY TEAZ

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 will never 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.

CRAB

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 BEN

So she has, indeed- an Irish front-

CRAB

Caledonian locks-

SIR BEN

Dutch nose-

CRAB

Austrian lips-

SIR BEN

Complexion of a Spaniard-

CRAB

And teeth a la Chinoise-

SIR BEN

In short, her face resembles a table d'hote at Spa- where no two guests are of a nation-

CRAB

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 her chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

MRS. CAN

Ha! ha! ha!

SIR PET

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 PET

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 PET

Ah, madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR BEN

Or rather, madam, I suppose them man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

'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 many would thank them for the bill.

LADY SNEER

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

SIR PET

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 PET

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.

CRAB

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

LADY SNEER

Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room? -

Enter SERVANT, who whispers SIR PETER. -

SIR PET

I'll be with them directly.-

[Exit SERVANT.]

I'll get away
unperceived.

[Aside.]

LADY SNEER

Sir Peter, you are not going to leave us?

SIR PET

Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me.

[Exit.

SIR BEN

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.

LADY TEAZ

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

[Exeunt all but JOSEPH SURFACE and MARIA.

JOS SURF

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

MAR

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!

JOS SURF

Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are; they have no malice at heart.

MAR

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

JOS SURF

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?

MAR

Why will you distress me by renewing this subject?

JOS SURF

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.

MAR

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.

JOS SURF

Nay, but, Maria, do not leave me with a frown: by all
that's honest, I swear-

[Kneels. -

Re-enter LADY TEAZLE behind. -

[Aside.]

Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle.

[Aloud to MARIA.]

You must not- no, you shall not- for, though I have the greatest
regard for Lady Teazle-

MAR

Lady Teazle!

JOS SURF

Yet were Sir Peter to suspect-

LADY TEAZ

[Coming forward.]

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?

JOS SURF

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 TEAZ

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

JOS SURF

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 TEAZ

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

JOS SURF

True- a mere Platonic cicisbeo, what every wife is entitled to.

LADY TEAZ

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

JOS SURF

The only revenge in your power. Well, I applaud your moderation.

LADY TEAZ

Go- you are an insinuating wretch! But we shall be missed- let us join the company.

JOS SURF

But we had best not return together.

LADY TEAZ

Well, don't stay; for Maria shan't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you.

[Exit.

JOS SURF

A curious dilemma, truly, 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.

A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House -

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY. -

SIR OLIV

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!

ROW

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 OLIV

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?

ROW

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 OLIV

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.

ROW

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 OLIV

What! shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself? Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent youths; and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was?

ROW

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

SIR OLIV

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 PET

Ha! Sir Oliver- my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

Oh! 'tis a long time since we met- fifteen years, I doubt, Sir Oliver, and many a cross accident in the time.

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

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

SIR OLIV

True, true, Sir Peter; old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting. No, no, no.

ROW

[Aside to SIR OLIVER.]

Take care, pray, sir.

SIR OLIV

Well, so one of my nephews is a wild rogue, hey?

SIR PET

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 OLIV

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

SIR PET

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

SIR OLIV

Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

SIR PET

Well, well- you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

SIR OLIV

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.

ROW

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

SIR PET

Oh, my life on Joseph's honour!

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

Allons, then!

SIR OLIV

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 suckers of youth; 'tis like ivy round a sapling, and spoils the growth of the tree.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III

SCENE I

A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House -

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, and ROWLEY. -

SIR PET

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.

ROW

Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley, whom I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their mother. He was once a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved

misfortunes. He has applied, by letter, since his confinement, both 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 OLIV

Ah, he is my brother's son.

SIR PET

Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to-

ROW

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 PET

Psha! 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?

ROW

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 PET

Pray let us have him in.

ROW

Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs.

[Calls to SERVANT.]

SIR PET

But, pray, why should you suppose he will speak the truth?

ROW

Oh, I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced 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 shortly produce to remove some of your prejudices, Sir Peter, relative to Charles and Lady Teazle.

SIR PET

I have heard too much on that subject.

ROW

Here comes the honest Israelite. -

Enter MOSES. -

-This is Sir Oliver.

SIR OLIV

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

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

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

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

Unfortunate, indeed! But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses?

MOS

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 PET

What, one Charles has never had money from before?

MOS

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

SIR PET

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

MOS

Not at all.

SIR PET

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 OLIV

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

SIR PET

True- so you may.

ROW

Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure. However, Moses, you understand Sir Peter, and will be faithful.

MOS

You may depend upon me.-

[Looks at his watch.]

This is near the
time I was to have gone.

SIR OLIV

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?

MOS

There's no need- the principal is Christian.

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

Not at all; 'twould not be out of character, if you went in
your carriage- would it, Moses?

MOS

Not in the least.

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

Oh, there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands. Hey, Moses?

MOS

Yes, that's a very great point.

SIR OLIV

I'll answer for't I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent. on the loan, at least.

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

Hey! what, the plague! how much then?

MOS

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

SIR PET

A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver!

SIR OLIV

Truly I think so- and not unprofitable.

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

Oh! I borrow it of a friend, do I?

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

My friend an unconscionable dog, is he?

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

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.

MOS

Very much.

ROW

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

MOS

Ay, great pity!

SIR PET

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

SIR OLIV

So, so- Moses shall give me further instructions as we go together.

SIR PET

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

SIR OLIV

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.

[Exit with MOSES.]

SIR PET

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

ROW

No, upon my word, Sir Peter.
Sir Peter. 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?

MAR

No, sir; he was engaged.

SIR PET

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

MAR

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 PET

So- here's perverseness! No, no, Maria, 'tis Charles only whom you would prefer. 'Tis evident his vices and follies have won your heart.

MAR

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 pity for his distresses.

SIR PET

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

MAR

Never to his brother!

SIR PET

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.

MAR

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.

SIR PET

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.-

[LADY TEAZLE sings without.]

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 TEAZ

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 PET

Ah, Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good humoured at all times.

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

Two hundred pounds; what, an'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 TEAZ

Oh, no- there- my note of hand will do as well.

[Offering her hand.]

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

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 PET

Well- then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive-

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

Indeed!

LADY TEAZ

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 that you'd make a very good sort of a husband.

SIR PET

And you prophesied right; and we shall now be the happiest couple-

LADY TEAZ

And never differ again?

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

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

SIR PET

Now, see, my angel! take care- contradicting isn't the way to keep friends.

LADY TEAZ

Then, don't you begin it, my love!

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason, my dear-

SIR PET

There! now you want to quarrel again.

LADY TEAZ

No, I'm sure I don't: but, if you will be so peevish-

SIR PET

There now! who begins first?

LADY TEAZ

Why, you, to be sure. I said nothing- but there's no bearing your temper.

SIR PET

No, no, madam: the fault's in your own temper.

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gipsy.

LADY TEAS

You are a great bear, I am sure, to abuse my relations.

SIR PET

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

LADY TEAZ

So much the metter.

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

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 PET

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

LADY TEAZ

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 PET

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

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

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 TEAZ

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 PET

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.

A Room in 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 OLIV

Mr. Moses, what is my name?

[Aside to MOSES.

MOS

Mr. Premium.

TRIP

Premium- very well.

[Exit, taking snuff.

SIR OLIV

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

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

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

Re-enter TRIP. -

TRIP

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

SIR OLIV

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 OLIV

Very well and I pray, sir, what may be your name?

TRIP

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

SIR OLIV

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 OLIV

Bags and bouquets! halters and bastinadoes!

[Aside.

TRIP

And a propos, Moses, have you beed able to get me that little bill discounted?

SIR OLIV

Wants to raise money, too!- mercy on me! Has his distresses too, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and duns.

[Aside.

MOS

‘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.

MOS

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 OLIV

An annuity! ha! ha! a footman raise money by way of annuity! Well done, luxury, egad!

[Aside.

MOS

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 OLIV

It's more than I would your neck.

[Aside.

MOS

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?

MOS

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 OLIV

[Aside.]

If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed!

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.

Another Room in the same

*CHARLES SURFACE, SIR HARRY BUMPER, CARELESS, and
GENTLEMEN, discovered drinking. -*

CHAS. SURF

'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.

CARE

It is so, indeed, Charles! they give in to 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 flatulency of champagne, without its spirit or flavour.

1ST GENT

But what are they to do who love play better than wine?

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

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'm never so successful as when I am 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.

CHAS. SURF

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 at the top is the maid that has bewitched you.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

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.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

Here then, bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria-

SIR HAR

Maria who?

CHAS. SURF

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

CARE

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 HAR

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

[Sings. -

Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;

Here's to the widow of fifty;

Here's to the flaunting extravagant quean,

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 a 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,-

Drink to the lass,

I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for a glass. -

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 damsel that's merry. -
Chorus. Let the toast pass,-
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for a glass. -
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,
So fill up your glasses, nay, fill to the brim,
And let us e'en toast them together. -
Chorus. Let the toast pass,-
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for a glass. -
ALL. Bravo! Bravo! -

Enter TRIP, and whispers CHARLES SURFACE. -

CHAS. SURF

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

CARE

Nay, pr'ythee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless
beauties, I suppose, dropped in by chance?

CHAS. SURF

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

CARE

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.

CHAS. SURF

Egad, with all my heart!- Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in.

[Exit TRIP.]

Though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

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. -

Re-enter TRIP, with SIR OLIVER SURFACE and MOSES. -

CHAS. SURF

So, honest Moses; walk in, pray, Mr. Premium- that's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Moses?

MOS

Yes, sir.

CHAS. SURF

Set chairs, Trip.- Sit down, Mr. Premium.- Glasses, Trip.-

[TRIP gives chairs and glasses, and exit.]

Sit down,

Moses.- Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a sentiment; here's Success to usury!- Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper.

MOS

Success to usury!

[Drinks.

CARE

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

SIR OLIV

Then here's- All the success it deserves!

[Drinks.

CARE

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.

MOS

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

CARE

And therefore loves good wine.

2ND GENT

Give Moses a quart glass- this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.

CARE

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

SIR OLIV

Nay, pray, gentlemen- I did not expect this usage.

CHAS. SURF

No, hang it, you shan't; Mr. Premium's a stranger.

SIR OLIV

Odd! I wish I was well out of their company.

[Aside.]

CARE

Plague on 'em then! if they won'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?

CHAS. SURF

I will! I will!

[Exeunt SIR HARRY BUMPER and GENTLEMEN; CARELESS following.]

Careless.

CARE

[Returning.]

Well!

CHAS. SURF

Perhaps I may want you.

CARE

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

[Exit.]

MOS

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

CHAS. SURF

Psha! 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 has got money to lend. I am blockhead enough to give fifty 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 OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

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? And must sell stock to accommodate you. Mustn't he, Moses?

MOS

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

CHAS. SURF

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 OLIV

Well, but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

Nor any stock, I presume?

CHAS. SURF

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 OLIV

Why, to say the truth, I am.

CHAS. SURF

Then you must know that I have a devilish rich uncle in

the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations?

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

Yes, yes, 'tis just so. Moses knows 'tis true; don't you, Moses?

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal.

[Aside.

CHAS. SURF

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 OLIV

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.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

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 would not know him.

SIR OLIV

No! Ha! ha! ha! so much altered lately that his nearest relations would not know him! Ha! ha! ha! egad- ha! ha! ha!

CHAS. SURF

Ha! ha!- you're glad to hear that, little Premium?

SIR OLIV

No, no, I'm not.

CHAS. SURF

Yes, yes, you are- ha! ha! ha!- you know that mends your chance.

SIR OLIV

But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over; nay, some say he has actually arrived.

CHAS. SURF

Psha! 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?

MOS

Oh, yes, certainly.

SIR OLIV

Very true, as you say, you must know better than I, though I have it from pretty good authority. Haven't I, Moses?

MOS

Yes, most undoubted!

SIR OLIV

But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately, is there nothing you could dispose of?

CHAS. SURF

How do you mean?

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

O Lud, that's gone long ago. Moses can tell you how better than I can.

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

Good lack! all the family race-cups and corporation-bowls!

[Aloud.]

Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and compact.

CHAS. SURF

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 OLIV

[Aside.]

Mercy upon me! learning that had run in the family like an heir-loom!-

[Aloud.]

Pray, what has become of the books?

CHAS. SURF

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

MOS

I know nothing of books.

SIR OLIV

So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose?

CHAS. SURF

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 old paintings, egad, you shall have 'em a bargain!

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

Every man of them, to the best bidder.

SIR OLIV

What! your great-uncles and aunts?

CHAS. SURF

Ay, and my great-grandfathers and grandmothers too.

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

Now I give him up!

[Aloud.]

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?

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

Well, I'll be the purchaser: I think I can dispose of the family canvas.-

[Aside.]

Oh, I'll never forgive him this! never! -

Re-enter CARELESS. -

CARE

Come, Charles, what keeps you?

CHAS. SURF

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!

CARE

Oh, burn your ancestors!

CHAS. SURF

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

CARE

Oh, have with you, if that's the case. I can handle a hammer
as well as a dice box; Going! going!

SIR OLIV

Oh, the profligates!

[Aside.]

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

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!-

[Aside.]

Oh,
the prodigal!

CHAS. SURF

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.

SIR OLIV

I'll never forgive him; never! never!

ACT IV

SCENE I.

A Picture Room in CHARLES SURFACE'S House

Enter CHARLES SURFACE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, MOSES, and CARELESS. -

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

CHAS. SURF

Ay, ay, these are done in the true spirit of

portrait-painting; no volontere grace or 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 OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

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 grandfather's will answer the purpose.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

Egad, that's true. What parchment have we here? Oh, our genealogy in full.

[Taking pedigree down.]

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 OLIV

What an unnatural rogue!- an ex post facto parricide!

[Aside.]

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

Bravo, Careless! Well, here's my great uncle, Sir Richard Ravelin, 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- a hero! not cut out of his feathers,

as your modern clipped captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals, as a general should be. What do you bid?

SIR OLIV

[Aside to MOSES.]

Bid him speak.

MOS

Mr. Premium would have you speak.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

Heaven deliver me! his famous uncle Richard for ten pounds!-

[Aloud.]

Very well, sir, I take him at that.

CHAS. SURF

Careless, knock down my uncle Richard.- Here, now, is a maiden sister of his, my great-aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, in his best manner, and esteemed 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 OLIV

[Aside.]

Ah! poor Deborah! a woman who set such a value on herself!-

[Aloud.]

Five pounds ten- she's mine.

CHAS. SURF

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 OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

Well, take that couple for the same.

MOS

'Tis a good bargain.

CHAS. SURF

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?

MOS

Four guineas.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

By all means.

CARE

Gone.

CHAS. SURF

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 OLIV

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

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

No, no; six will do for the mayor.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

They're mine.

CHAS. SURF

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 me three hundred pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.

CARE

Ay ay, that will be the best way.

SIR OLIV

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

CARE

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

SIR OLIV

Yes, sir, I mean that; though I don't think him so ill-looking a little fellow, by any means.

CHAS. SURF

What, that? Oh; that's my uncle Oliver! 'Twas done before he went to India.

CARE

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 OLIV

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?

CHAS. SURF

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 OLIV

[Aside.]

The rogue's my nephew after all!-

[Aloud.]

But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

I forgive him everything!

[Aloud.]

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.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

How like his father the dog is.

[Aloud.]

Well,
well, I have done.-

[Aside.]

I did not perceive it before, but I
think I never saw such a striking resemblance.

[Aloud.]

Here is
a draught for your sum.

CHAS. SURF

Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds!

SIR OLIV

You will not let Sir Oliver go?

CHAS. SURF

Zounds! no! I tell you, once more.

SIR OLIV

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.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

But bold; 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 OLIV

I will, I will- for all but Oliver.

CHAS. SURF

Ay, all but the little nabob.

SIR OLIV

You're fixed on that?

CHAS. SURF

Peremptorily.

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

A dear extravagant rogue!

[Aloud.]

Good day!-
Come, Moses.

[Aside.]

Let me hear now who dares call him
profligate!

[Exit with MOSES.]

CARE

Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever met with!

CHAS. SURF

Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how
the devil Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow.- Ha!
here's Rowley.- Do, Careless, say I'll join the company in a few
moments.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

CARE

Nothing else.

CHAS. SURF

Ay, ay, never fear.-

[Exit CARELESS.]

So! this was an odd old fellow, indeed. Let me see, two-thirds of these five hundred and thirty odd pounds are mine by right. '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.

[Bows ceremoniously to the pictures. -

Enter ROWLEY. -

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

ROW

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

CHAS. SURF

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?

ROW

There's no making you serious a moment.

CHAS. SURF

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.

ROW

A hundred pounds! Consider only-

CHAS. SURF

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.

ROW

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

CHAS. SURF

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

ROW

Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection-

CHAS. SURF

Ay, ay, it's 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.

Another room in the same

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and MOSES. -

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

True, but he would not sell my picture.

MOS

And loves wine and women so much.

SIR OLIV

But he would not sell my picture.

MOS

And games so deep.

SIR OLIV

But he would not sell my picture. Oh, here's Rowley. -

Enter ROWLEY. -

ROW

So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase-

SIR OLIV

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

ROW

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.

MOS

Ah! there is the- pity of all: he is so damned charitable.

ROW

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 OLIV

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.

ROW

Not yet awhile; 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.

[Exit with MOSES.]

SIR OLIV

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!

ROW

Indeed.

SIR OLIV

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 in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House -
Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT. -*

JOS SURF

No letter from Lady Teazle?

SER

No, sir.

JOS SURF

[Aside.]

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 without.]

SER

Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

JOS SURF

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.

SER

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

JOS SURF

Stay, stay: draw that screen before the window- that will do;- my opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so curious 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 TEAZ

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.

JOS SURF

O madam, punctuality is a species of constancy very unfashionable in a lady of quality.

[Places chairs, and sits after LADY TEAZLE is seated.]

LADY TEAZ

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?

JOS SURF

I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.

[Aside.]

LADY TEAZ

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

JOS SURF

[Aside.]

Indeed I do not.

[Aloud.]

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 TEAZ

Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But isn't it provoking, to have the most ill-natured things said at 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.

JOS SURF

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 TEAZ

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!

JOS SURF

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 endeavour to outwit him.

LADY TEAZ

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?

JOS SURF

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 TEAZ

To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my innocence-

JOS SURF

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 TEAZ

'Tis very true!

JOS SURF

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 TEAZ

Do you think so?

JOS SURF

Oh, I'm 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 TEAZ

So, so then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation?

JOS SURF

Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

LADY TEAZ

Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny?

JOS SURF

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

LADY TEAZ

Why, if my understanding were once convinced-

JOS SURF

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 TEAZ

Don't you think we may as well leave honour out of the argument?

[Rises.]

JOS SURF

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

LADY TEAZ

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.

JOS SURF

Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of-

[Taking her hand. -

Re-enter SERVANT. -

'Sdeath, you blockhead- what do you want?

SER

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

JOS SURF

Sir Peter!- Oons- the devil!

LADY TEAZ

Sir Peter! O Lud! I'm ruined! I'm ruined!

SER

Sir, 'twasn't I let him in.

LADY TEAZ

Oh! I'm quite undone! What will become of me? Now, Mr. Logic- Oh! mercy, sir, he's on the stairs- I'll get behind here- and if ever I'm so imprudent again-

[Goes behind the screen.]

JOS SURF

Give me that book.

[Sits down. SERVANT pretends to adjust his chair. -

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -

SIR PET

Ay, ever improving himself. Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface-

[Pats JOSEPH on the shoulder.]

JOS SURF

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 I am a coxcomb in.

SIR PET

'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.

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

I dare say you must, certainly, when you want to find anything in a hurry.

JOS SURF

Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry either.

[Aside.

SIR PET

Well, I have a little private business-

JOS SURF

You need not stay.

[To SERVANT.]

SER

No, sir.

[Exit.]

JOS SURF

Here's a chair, Sir Peter- I beg-

SIR PET

Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend,
on which I wish to unburden my mind to you- a point of the
greatest moment to my peace; in short, my good friend, Lady
Teazle's conduct of late has made me very unhappy.

JOS SURF

Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

SIR PET

Yes, 'tis but 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.

JOS SURF

Indeed! you astonish me!

SIR PET

Yes! and, between ourselves, I think I've discovered the person.

JOS SURF

How! you alarm me exceedingly.

SIR PET

Ay, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathize with me!

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

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?

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

Oh, no! what say you to Charles?

JOS SURF

My brother! impossible!

SIR PET

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

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

True; but your brother has no sentiment- you never hear him talk so.

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

Ay; but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

JOS SURF

That's very true.

SIR PET

And then, you know, the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have any 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.

JOS SURF

That's true, to be sure- they would laugh.

SIR PET

Laugh! ay, and make ballads, and paragraphs, and the devil knows what of me.

JOS SURF

No, you must never make it public.

SIR PET

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.

JOS SURF

Ay, there's the point. When ingratitude barbs the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

SIR PET

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!

JOS SURF

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 PET

What a difference there is between you! What noble sentiments!

JOS SURF

Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

SIR PET

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 squarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break 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.

JOS SURF

This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous.-

[Aside.]

I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.

SIR PET

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.

JOS SURF

Nor I, if I could help it.

[Aside.]

SIR PET

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

JOS SURF

[Softly.]

Oh, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

SIR PET

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

JOS SURF

[Softly.]

I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate!-

[Aside.]

'Sdeath, I shall be ruined every way!

SIR PET

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

JOS SURF

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- -

Re-enter SERVANT. -

Well, sir?

SER

Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street, and says he knows you are within.

JOS SURF

'Sdeath, blockhead, I'm not within- I'm out for the day.

SIR PET

Stay- hold- a thought has struck me:- you shall be at home.

JOS SURF

Well, well, let him up.-

[Exit SERVANT.]

He'll interrupt

Sir Peter, however.

[Aside.]

SIR PET

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.

JOS SURF

Oh, fie, Sir Peter! would you have me join in so mean a trick?- to trepan my brother too?

SIR PET

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:

[Going up]

here, behind the screen will be- Hey! what the devil! there seems to be one listener here already- I'll swear I saw a petticoat!

JOS SURF

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 PET

Ah, a rogue- But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

JOS SURF

Oh, 'twill never go any farther, you may depend upon it!

SIR PET

No! then, faith, let her hear it out.- Here's a closet will do as well.

JOS SURF

Well, go in there.

SIR PET

Sly rogue! sly rogue!
[Goes into the closet.

JOS SURF

A narrow escape, indeed! and a curious situation I'm in,
to part man and wife in this manner.

LADY TEAZ

[Peeping.]

Couldn't I steal off?

JOS SURF

Keep close, my angel!

SIR PET

[Peeping.]

Joseph, tax him home.

JOS SURF

Back, my dear friend!

LADY TEAZ

[Peeping.]

Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?

JOS SURF

Be still, my life!

SIR PET

[Peeping.]

You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

JOS SURF

In, in, my dear Sir Peter!- 'Fore Gad, I wish I had a key
to the door. -

Enter CHARLES SURFACE. -

CHAS. SURF

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?

JOS SURF

Neither, brother, I assure you.

CHAS. SURF

But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

JOS SURF

He was, brother; but, hearing you were coming, he did not choose to stay.

CHAS. SURF

What! was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him!

JOS SURF

No, sir: but I am sorry to find, Charles, you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

CHAS. SURF

Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men. But how so, pray?

JOS SURF

To be plain with you, brother, he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

CHAS. SURF

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?

JOS SURF

This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh-

CHAS. SURF

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.

JOS SURF

Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this.

[Raising his voice.]

CHAS. SURF

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.

JOS SURF

But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you-

CHAS. SURF

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-

JOS SURF

Well!

CHAS. SURF

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 i'faith, I always understood you were her favourite.

JOS SURF

Oh, for shame, Charles! This retort is foolish.

CHAS. SURF

Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances-

JOS SURF

Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

CHAS. SURF

Egad, I'm serious! Don't you remember one day, when I called here-

JOS SURF

Nay, pr'ythee, Charles-

CHAS. SURF

And found you together-

JOS SURF

Zounds, sir, I insist-

CHAS. SURF

And another time, when your servant-

JOS SURF

Brother, brother, a word with you!-

[Aside.]

Gad, I must
stop him.

CHAS. SURF

Informed, I say, that-

JOS SURF

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.

CHAS. SURF

How, Sir Peter! Where is he?

JOS SURF

Softly, there!

[Points to the closet.]

CHAS. SURF

Oh, 'fore Heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth!

JOS SURF

No, no-

CHAS. SURF

I say, Sir Peter, come into court.-

[Pulls in SIR PETER.]

What! my old guardian!- What!- turn inquisitor, and take evidence, incog.? Oh, fie! Oh, fie!

SIR PET

Give me your hand, Charles- I believe I have suspected you wrongfully; but you mustn't be angry with Joseph- 'twas my plan!

CHAS. SURF

Indeed!

SIR PET

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.

CHAS. SURF

Egad, then, 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more. Wasn't it, Joseph?

SIR PET

Ah! you would have retorted on him.

CHAS. SURF

Ah, ay, that was a joke.

SIR PET

Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

CHAS. SURF

But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter, for all that. Mightn't he, Joseph?

SIR PET

Well, well, I believe you.

JOS SURF

Would they were both out of the room!

[Aside.

SIR PET

And in future, perhaps, we may not be such strangers. -

Re-enter SERVANT and whispers JOSEPH SURFACE. -

SER

Lady Sneerwell is below, and says she will come up.

JOS SURF

Gentlemen, I beg pardon- I must wait on you downstairs; here's a person come on particular business.

CHAS. SURF

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.

JOS SURF

[Aside.]

They must not be left together.

[Aloud.]

I'll send Lady Sneerwell away, and return directly.-

[Aside to SIR PETER.]

Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

SIR PET

[Aside to JOSEPH SURFACE.]

I! not for the world!-

[Exit

JOSEPH SURFACE.]

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.

CHAS. SURF

Psha! 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 wench.

SIR PET

No, no,- come, come,- you wrong him. No, no, Joseph is no rake, but he is no such saint either, in that respect.-

[Aside.]

I have a great mind to tell him- we should have such a laugh at Joseph.

CHAS. SURF

Oh, hang him! he's a very anchorite, a young hermit!

SIR PET

Hark'ee- you must not abuse him: he may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

CHAS. SURF

Why, you won't tell him?

SIR PET

No- but- this way.-

[Aside.]

Egad, I'll tell him.

[Aloud.]

Hark'ee, have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

CHAS. SURF

I should like it of all things.

SIR PET

Then, i' faith, we will! I'll be quit with him for discovering me. He had a girl with him when I called.

[Whispers.]

CHAS. SURF

What! Joseph? you jest.

SIR PET

Hush!- a little French milliner- and the best of the jest is- she's in the room now.

CHAS. SURF

The devil she is!

SIR PET

Hush! I tell you.

[Points to the screen.

CHAS. SURF

Behind the screen! Odds life, let's unveil her!

SIR PET

No, no, he's coming:- you shan't indeed!

CHAS. SURF

Oh, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner!

SIR PET

Not for the world!- Joseph will never forgive me.

CHAS. SURF

I'll stand by you-

SIR PET

Odds, here he is!

[CHARLES SURFACE throws down the screen. -

Re-enter JOSEPH SURFACE. -

CHAS. SURF

Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful!

SIR PET

Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!

CHAS. SURF

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 grounds for so much uneasiness.- Sir Peter! there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!

Exit.

JOS SURF

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 PET

If you please, sir.

JOS SURF

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 PET

A very clear account, upon my word; and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.

LADY TEAZ

For not one word of it, Sir Peter!

SIR PET

How! don't you think it worth while to agree in the lie?

LADY TEAZ

There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.

SIR PET

I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am!

JOS SURF

[Aside to LADY TEAZLE.]

'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

LADY TEAZ

Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I'll speak for myself.

SIR PET

Ay, let her alone, sir; you'll find she'll make out a better story than you, without prompting.

LADY TEAZ

Hear me, Sir Peter!- I came here 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 PET

Now, I believe, the truth is coming, indeed!

JOS

SURF. The woman's mad!

LADY TEAZ

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.

JOS SURF

Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows-

SIR PET

That you are a villain! and so I leave you to your
conscience.

JOS SURF

You are too rash, Sir Peter; you shall hear me. The man
who shuts out conviction by refusing to-

[Exeunt SIR PETER and JOSEPH SURFACE, talking.]

ACT V

SCENE I.-

The Library in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House -

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT. -

JOS SURF

Mr. Stanley! and why should you think I would see him?
you must know he comes to ask something.

SER

Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to the door with him.

JOS SURF

Psha! 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?

SER

I will, sir.- Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady-

JOS SURF

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 OLIV

What! does he avoid us? That was he, was it not?

ROW

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 OLIV

Oh, plague of his nerves! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking!

ROW

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 OLIV

Yet he has a string of charitable sentiments at his fingers' ends.

ROW

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 OLIV

And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all.

ROW

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 OLIV

True; and afterwards you'll meet me at Sir Peter's.

ROW

Without losing a moment.

[Exit.

SIR OLIV

I don't like the complaisance of his features. -

Re-enter JOSEPH SURFACE. -

JOS SURF

Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting.- Mr. Stanley, I presume.

SIR OLIV

At your service.

JOS SURF

Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down- I entreat you, sir.

SIR OLIV

Dear sir- there's no occasion.

[Aside.]

Too civil by half!

JOS SURF

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 OLIV

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.

JOS SURF

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 one of that class, and had it in my power to offer you even a small relief.

SIR OLIV

If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

JOS SURF

I wish he was, sir, with all my heart: you should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir.

SIR OLIV

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.

JOS SURF

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 OLIV

What! has he never transmitted you bullion- rupees- pagodas?

JOS SURF

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 OLIV

Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds!- Avadavats and Indian crackers!

[Aside.

JOS SURF

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 OLIV

Not I, for one!

[Aside.]

JOS SURF

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 OLIV

[Aside.]

Dissembler!-

[Aloud.]

Then, sir, you can't assist me?

JOS SURF

At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

SIR OLIV

I am extremely sorry-

JOS SURF

Not more than I, believe me; to pity, without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

SIR OLIV

Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

JOS SURF

You leave me deeply affected, Mr. Stanley.- William, be ready to open the door.

[Calls to SERVANT.]

SIR OLIV

O, dear sir, no ceremony.

JOS SURF

Your very obedient.

SIR OLIV

Your most obsequious.

JOS SURF

You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

SIR OLIV

Sweet sir, you are too good.

JOS SURF

In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

SIR OLIV

Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

JOS SURF

Sir, yours as sincerely.

SIR OLIV

Charles!- you are my heir.

[Exit.

JOS SURF

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. -

Re-enter ROWLEY. -

ROW

Mr. Surface, your servant: I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will inform you.

JOS SURF

Always happy to see Mr. Rowley.-

[Aside. Reads the letter.]

Sir Oliver Surface!- My uncle arrived!

ROW

He is, indeed: we have just parted- quite well, after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

JOS SURF

I am astonished!- William! stop Mr. Stanley, if he's not gone.

[Calls to SERVANT.

ROW

Oh! he's out of reach, I believe.

JOS SURF

Why did you not let me know this when you came in together?

ROW

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.

JOS SURF

So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming.-

[Aside.]

Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky!

ROW

You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

JOS SURF

Oh! I'm overjoyed to hear it.-

[Aside.]-

Just at this time!

ROW

I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

JOS SURF

Do, do; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I cannot express the sensations 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.-

A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House -

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, dear Sir Benjamin! you have heard, I suppose-

SIR BEN

Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface-

MRS. CAN

And Sir Peter's discovery-

SIR BEN

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 BEN

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 BEN

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 BEN

I tell you I had it from one-

MRS. CAN

And I have it from one-

SIR BEN

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 to 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 BEN

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 BEN

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 BEN

No! what, no mention of the duel?

MRS. CAN

Not a word.

SIR BEN

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 BEN

"Sir," says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery,
"you are a most ungrateful fellow."

MRS. CAN

Ay, to Charles-

SIR BEN

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 BEN

'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. -

CRAB

With pistols, nephew- pistols! I have it from undoubted authority.

MRS. CAN

Oh, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true!

CRAB

Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded-

SIR BEN

By a thrust in second quite through his left side-

CRAB

By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

MRS. CAN

Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

CRAB

Yes, madam; though Charles would have avoided the matter, if he could.

MRS. CAN

I knew Charles was the person.

SIR BEN

My uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

CRAB

But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude-

SIR BEN

That I told you, you know-

CRAB

Do, nephew, let me speak!- and insisted on immediate-

SIR BEN

Just as I said-

CRAB

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 BEN

I heard nothing of this.

CRAB

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 postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

SIR BEN

My uncle's account is more circumstantial, I confess; but I believe mine is the true one for all that.

LADY SNEER

[Aside.]

I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information.

[Exit.]

SIR BEN

Ah! Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily accounted for.

CRAB

Yes, yes, they certainly do say- but that's neither here nor there.

MRS. CAN

But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

CRAB

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.

CRAB

Yes, yes; and I saw one of the faculty enter just before me.

SIR BEN

Hey! who comes here?

CRAB

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. -

CRAB

Well, doctor, what hopes?

MRS. CAN

Ay, doctor, how's your patient?

SIR BEN

Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a small-sword?

CRAB

A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred!

SIR OLIV

Doctor! a wound with a small-sword! and a bullet in the thorax?- Oons! are you mad, good people?

SIR BEN

Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor?

SIR OLIV

Truly, I am to thank you for my degree, if I am.

CRAB

Only a friend of Sir Peter's, then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of his accident?

SIR OLIV

Not a word!

CRAB

Not of his being dangerously wounded?

SIR OLIV

The devil he is!

SIR BEN

Run through the body-

CRAB

Shot in the breast-

SIR BEN

By one Mr. Surface-

CRAB

Ay, the younger.

SIR OLIV

Hey! what the plague! you seem to differ strangely in your accounts: however, you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded.

SIR BEN

Oh, yes, we agree in that.

CRAB

Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt in that.

SIR OLIV

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 BEN

[Aside to CRABTREE.]

Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden
recovery!

SIR OLIV

Why, man! what do you do out of bed with a small-sword
through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

SIR PET

A small-sword and a bullet?

SIR OLIV

Ay; these gentlemen would have killed you without law or
physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.

SIR PET

Why, what is all this?

SIR BEN

We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortune.

SIR PET

So, so; all over the town already.

[Aside.

CRAB

Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at your years.

SIR PET

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 PET

Plague on your pity, ma'am! I desire none of it.

SIR BEN

However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on the occasion.

SIR PET

Sir, sir! I desire to be master in my own house.

CRAB

'Tis no uncommon case, that's one comfort.

SIR PET

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 PET

Leave my house!

CRAB

And tell how hardly you've been treated.

[Exit.]

SIR PET

Leave my house!

SIR BEN

And how patiently you bear it.

[Exit.

SIR PET

Fiends! vipers! furies! Oh! that their own venom would choke them!

SIR OLIV

They are very provoking indeed, Sir Peter. -

Enter ROWLEY. -

ROW

I heard high words: what has ruffled you, sir?

SIR PET

Psha! what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?

ROW

Well, I'm not inquisitive.

SIR OLIV

Well, Sir Peter, I have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.

SIR PET

A precious couple they are!

ROW

Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgment was right, Sir Peter.

SIR OLIV

Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.

ROW

Ay, as Sir Peter says, he is a man of sentiment.

SIR OLIV

And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

ROW

It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

SIR OLIV

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 PET

Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

ROW

What! do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

SIR PET

Psha! plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you!

ROW

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 PET

And does Sir Oliver know all this?

SIR OLIV

Every circumstance.

SIR PET

What, of the closet and the screen, hey?

SIR OLIV

Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. Oh, I have been vastly diverted with the story! ha! ha! ha!

SIR PET

'Twas very pleasant.

SIR OLIV

I never laughed more in my life, I assure you: ha!
ha! ha!

SIR PET

Oh, vastly diverting! ha! ha! ha!

ROW

To be sure, Joseph with his sentiments! ha! ha! ha!

SIR PET

Yes, his sentiments! ha! ha! ha! Hypocritical villain!

SIR OLIV

Ay, and that rogue Charles to pull Sir Peter out of the
closet: ha! ha! ha!

SIR PET

Ha! ha! 'twas devilish entertaining, to be sure!

SIR OLIV

Ha! ha! ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen
your face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha!

SIR PET

Yes, my face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha! ha!
Oh, I must never show my head again!

SIR OLIV

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 PET

Oh, pray don't restrain your mirth on my account: it does
not hurt me at all! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yet,
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__, and Sir P__, will be
entertaining!

ROW

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 OLIV

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 PET

Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart; though 'tis a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

ROW

We'll follow.

[Exit SIR OLIVER SURFACE.]

SIR PET

She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

ROW

No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears.

SIR PET

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?

ROW

Oh, this is ungenerous in you!

SIR PET

Well, I know not what to think. You remember the letter I found of hers evidently intended for Charles!

ROW

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 PET

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.

ROW

Certainly.

SIR PET

Though, when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more.

ROW

Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

SIR PET

I' faith, so I will! and, if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

ROW

Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion-

SIR PET

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 in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House

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.

JOS SURF

Can passion furnish a remedy?

LADY SNEER

No, nor cunning either. Oh, I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer!

JOS SURF

Surely, 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.

JOS SURF

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.

JOS SURF

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 either.

LADY SNEER

No!

JOS SURF

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.

JOS SURF

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.

JOS SURF

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's gone.

LADY SNEER

Well, but if he should find you out too.

JOS SURF

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 SNEER

I have no diffidence of your abilities! only be constant to one roguery at a time.

JOS SURF

I will, I will!-

[Exit LADY SNEERWELL.]

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 OLIV

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.

JOS SURF

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 OLIV

No: Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

JOS SURF

Zounds, sir! then I insist on your quitting the room directly.

SIR OLIV

Nay, sir-

JOS SURF

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. -

CHAS. SURF

Heyday! 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?

JOS SURF

So! he has been with you, too, has he?

CHAS. SURF

To be sure he has. Why, he's as honest a little- But sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you?

JOS SURF

Borrowing! no! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every-

CHAS. SURF

O Gad, that's true! Noll mustn't find the little broker here, to be sure.

JOS SURF

Yet, Mr. Stanley insists-

CHAS. SURF

Stanley! why his name's Premium.

JOS SURF

No, sir, Stanley.

CHAS. SURF

No, no, Premium.

JOS SURF

Well, no matter which- but-

CHAS. SURF

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.]

JOS SURF

'Sdeath! here's Sir Oliver at the door. Now I beg, Mr. Stanley-

CHAS. SURF

Ay, ay, and I beg, Mr. Premium-

SIR OLIV

Gentlemen-

JOS SURF

Sir, by heaven you shall go!

CHAS. SURF

Ay, out with him, certainly.

SIR OLIV

This violence-

JOS SURF

Sir, 'tis your own fault.

CHAS. SURF

Out with him, to be sure.

[Both forcing SIR OLIVER out.]

Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE, MARIA, and ROWLEY. -

SIR PET

My old friend, Sir Oliver- hey! What in the name of wonder!- here are dutiful nephews- assault their uncle at his first visit!

LADY TEAZ

Indeed, Sir Oliver, 'twas well we came in to rescue you.

ROW

Truly it was; for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old Stanley was no protection to you.

SIR OLIV

Nor of Premium either: the necessities of the former could not extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman; and with the other I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors, and being knocked down without being bid for.

JOS SURF

Charles!

CHAS. SURF

Joseph!

JOS SURF

'Tis now complete!

CHAS. SURF

Very.

SIR OLIV

Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley too- look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my 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 truth, charity, and gratitude!

SIR PET

Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration, if I had not myself found him to be mean, treacherous, and hypocritical.

LADY TEAZ

And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call me to his character.

SIR PET

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.

CHAS. SURF

If they talk this way to Honesty, what will they say to me, by-and-by?

[Aside.

[SIR PETER, LADY TEAZLE, and MARIA retire.

SIR OLIV

As for that prodigal, his brother, there-

CHAS. SURF

Ay, now comes my turn: the damned family pictures will ruin me!

[Aside.

JOS SURF

Sir Oliver- uncle, will you honour me with a hearing?

CHAS. SURF

Now, if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little.

[Aside.

SIR OLIV

I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself?

[To JOSEPH SURFACE.

JOS SURF

I trust I could.

SIR OLIV

[To CHARLES SURFACE.]

Well, sir!- and you could justify
yourself too, I suppose?

CHAS. SURF

Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

SIR OLIV

What!- Little Premium has been let too much into the
secret, I suppose?

CHAS. SURF

True, sir; but they were family secrets, and should not
be mentioned again, you know.

ROW

Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies
with anger.

SIR OLIV

Odd's 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.

CHAS. SURF

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 at seeing you, my liberal benefactor.

SIR OLIV

Charles, I believe you. Give me your hand again: the ill-looking little fellow over the settee has made your peace.

CHAS. SURF

Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased.

LADY TEAZ

[Advancing.]

Yet, I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom
Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

[Pointing to MARIA.]

SIR OLIV

Oh, I have heard of his attachment there; and, with the
young lady's pardon, if I construe right- that blush-

SIR PET

Well, child, speak your sentiments.

MAR

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 attention.
I willingly resign to one who has better title.

CHAS. SURF

How, Maria!

SIR PET

Heyday! 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.

MAR

His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

CHAS. SURF

Lady Sneerwell!

JOS SURF

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 PET

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.

CHAS. SURF

Pray, uncle, is this another plot of yours? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

JOS SURF

I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear.

SIR PET

And that person, I imagine, is Mr. Snake.- Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

ROW

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.

LADY SNEER

The torments of shame and disappointment on you all!

[Going.

LADY TEAZ

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 granted 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 PET

Oons! what a fury!

LADY TEAZ

A malicious creature, indeed!

SIR PET

What! not for her last wish?

LADY TEAZ

Oh, no!

SIR OLIV

Well, sir, and what have you to say now?

JOS SURF

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 PET

Moral to the last drop!

SIR OLIV

Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and vinegar!-
egad, you'll do very well together.

ROW

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 PET

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 PET

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;
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 OLIV

Well, well- we'll not traduce you by saying anything in
your praise, never fear.

[Exit SNAKE.]

SIR PET

There's a precious rogue!

LADY TEAZ

See, Sir Oliver, there needs no persuasion now to
reconcile your nephew and Maria.

SIR OLIV

Ay, ay, that's as it should be, and, egad, we'll have the
wedding to-morrow morning.

CHAS. SURF

Thank you, dear uncle.

SIR PET

What, you rogue! don't you ask the girl's consent first?

CHAS. SURF

Oh, I have done that a long time- a minute ago- and she has looked yes.

MAR

For shame, Charles!- I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word-

SIR OLIV

Well, then, the fewer the better: may your love for each other never know abatement.

SIR PET

And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I intend to do!

CHAS. SURF

Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me; and I suspect that I owe you much.

SIR OLIV

You do, indeed, Charles.

ROW

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 over-repay me.

SIR PET

Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

CHAS. SURF

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 monitor- my gentle guide.- Ah! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine? -

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst wave thy beauty's sway,

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.

[Exeunt omnes.

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 surrounded?
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 tete,
That takes the cushion from its proper seat!
That 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:-
"Bless'd were the fair like you; her faults who stopp'd.
And closed her follies when the curtain dropp'd!
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool at large on life's great stage."

THE END