

SIR PETER, sly rogue! sly rogue!
[Goes into the closet]



The
School
for Scandal

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RD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

With an Introduction by William L. Sharp

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The School for Scandal

Chandler Editions in Drama
ROBERT W. CORRIGAN, *Editor*

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by
Richard Brinsley Sheridan

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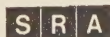
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INTRODUCTION

The School for Scandal is without doubt the most popular comedy of manners in the English language. Only the plays of Shakespeare have had more professional productions on the British stage. Nor has interest in Sheridan's play abated recently. Between 1930 and 1950 there were five major English productions which included such names as Roger Livesey, Peggy Ashcroft, Leo Genn, Leon Quartermaine, Michael Redgrave, John Gielgud, Alec Clunes, and (in 1949) Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. And yet even the kindest of intelligent present-day critics find themselves either damning or apologizing for the content of the play itself. Says Louis Kronenberger in his edition to Sheridan's plays:

. . . *The School for Scandal* is almost obstreperously fictional. It belongs wholly to the stage, with no overtones of real life.

For all its narrative vivacity, its verbal sheen, its drawing room grace; and indeed for its genuine air of worldiness and dazzling suggestion of scandal, the play, in the final sense, is simply a very brilliant stage piece, a superlative box-office comedy.

Even William Darlington, who insists that the play is "the finest example of the comedy of manners in the English language," says at the same time that in Sheridan's wit and in his ability to write, he is far inferior to Congreve. It is clear in Darlington's excellent essay *Sheridan* (published for the British Council and National Book League), that despite his enjoyment of the play and his sure sense of its theatrical worth, Sheridan's sentimentality and superficiality bother him.

Both Kronenberger and Darlington are, I think, right. One cannot quite believe, for example, young Lady Teazle's vow of fidelity to old Sir Peter. And one becomes a little tired, a little suspicious of the perfectly conventional and absolutely unreal morality of Maria. What a bore she is! Nor is our own sense of the way of the world altogether satisfied by supposedly shrewd, certainly successful Sir Oliver's complete acceptance of Charles because of his refusal to sell the old gentleman's picture. The play's brilliance and success is not found in Sheridan's mature or intelligent perception of the world with which the play deals. His talent is not his insight into the way people *really* act.

His background might suggest as much. He was born in 1751 in Dublin. His father was a first-rate actor, and, though no David Garrick, had had enough of a reputation to found a school of acting and elocution upon his retirement that brought him a living. His wife, Richard's mother, was a minor novelist and playwright. She wrote at least three plays, one of which, *The Discovery*, was pro-

duced by Garrick, who played in it himself at Drury Lane. One suspects that the young Sheridan's views of the way people really act might have been tempered by the way people on a stage act. Even his own actions strike one as more theatrical than real. His romantic marriage to Elizabeth Linley in 1773 sounds very much like the kind that Miss Lydia Languish of *The Rivals* wanted. It seems that Miss Linley, an accomplished singer of great beauty, was overpursued by suitors. One was particularly insistent, and to avoid him she fled the country with Sheridan, seeking escape in a convent in France. The protection of the convent was short-lived, however, for Sheridan convinced her that the only real escape was marriage to him. They were wed in France secretly with serious, if temporary, opposition from the fathers of both parties. Perhaps the greatest opposition, however, came from the once persistent suitor. He insisted that he had been insulted and that only a duel would restore his honor. Sheridan obliged, but according to reports managed to disarm the gentleman, quite unspontaneously, before the duel started, an unimaginative but real-life retreat from a theatrically effective but dangerous situation. A second duel was finally conclusive only when the two gentlemen had abandoned swords and let fly with fists. The accounts of both duels are muddy to be sure, but the confusion around both events does not becloud the fact that neither duel was taken seriously nor honorably, at least by Sheridan. One senses somehow a man who enacts his life instead of simply living it.

Again, his dramatic work, though polished, was casually done. His reputation was such that his first play, *The Rivals*, was originally thought by many to be the work of someone else, not the accomplishment of the altogether too unindustrious Richard Sheridan. So too his output: five original plays, one adaptation and one translation suggests interests other than saying something. There is nothing to suggest that he was interested in saying anything at all. He was successful with *The Rivals*, which opened in the January of 1775, at least he was successful after the second opening some two weeks after the first, and he capitalized quickly on his reputation to write a bad but successful play called *St. Patrick's Day or The Scheming Lieutenant*. He wrote this for the comedian Clinch, who had scored a big success playing Lucius O'Trigger in *The Rivals*. His next effort was a very successful opera libretto called *The Duenna* with the music created by his father-in-law and the leading role created by his wife. It opened in November of 1775 and set a new record for an opera's length of run exceeding even that of Gay's *Beggar's Opera*.

All three of these successes were at Covent Garden and were consequently a great worry to Garrick in Drury Lane. Whether the

worry hurried his retirement is debatable, but it is nonetheless true that in June 1776 Sheridan signed the agreement which gave to himself and two partners Garrick's half-interest in Drury Lane. It was agreed by all parties that Sheridan should be manager of the theater. He and his father-in-law had the controlling interest and in a few years sole interest. Sheridan's managership of Drury Lane was to be his sole sure income for the rest of his life. Its financial success in his early managership may well have contributed to his decision to give up writing altogether.

In his first few months Sheridan introduced no new plays, but in February of 1777 he presented his rewriting of Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* under the title *A Trip to Scarborough*. A brief comparison of the two scripts is enlightening. It is true that some of the tough-mindedness of Vanbrugh is sentimentalized. Berenthia, for example, no longer goes to bed with Amanda's husband Loveless as she had in the famous and highly amusing "rape" scene of the original. In the Sheridan play she only uses Loveless to make an old lover jealous and skirts any overtly immoral behavior. On the other hand the very clumsy, highly rhetorical reconversion of Worthy to virtue in the Vanbrugh play is much more believably and effectively handled by Sheridan. In the earlier play, although we do not see or hear *what* persuades Amanda that Loveless is false, we are supposed to believe that there is no doubt about his guilt. We are then given a scene, altogether unmotivated, which is to demonstrate Amanda's virtue and at the same time to convert Worthy to at least temporary repentance of his suit. Amanda repulses Worthy for no reason, apparently, except an absolutely undemonstrated conviction that such conduct is wrong. She admits to liking Worthy. She certainly would seem at the moment she rejects him to need his support desperately. And yet without a hint of human weakness she dismisses him.

Nor is she content with simply dismissing him. She must, with a priggish rhetoric which can only make one wince, lecture the poor devil as well. Listen to her.

The soul, I do confess,
Is usually so careless of its charge,
So soft, and so indulgent to desire,
It leaves the reins in the wild hand of Nature,
Who, like Phaeton drives the fiery chariot,
And sets the world on flame.
Yet still the sovereignty is in the mind,
Whene'er it pleases to exert its force.
Perhaps you may not think it worth your while
To take such pains for my esteem;
But that I leave to you.

And Worthy, instead of agreeing with her that it is not worth his while and thereby escaping whole, waits until she exits and then spends twenty-nine lines being ashamed of himself. The speech begins as follows:

For what but now was the wild flame of love,
Or (to dissect that specious term)
The vile, the gross desires of flesh and blood,
Is in a moment turned to adoration.

The comparable scene in Sheridan's adaptation is a good deal more acceptable, even persuasive in its demonstration of Amanda's action and Worthy's (Townley in the later play) repentance. In the first place Amanda is never convinced of Loveless's faithlessness and hence her refusal of Townley is in part due to her anger at what she feels are his false accusations of Loveless. We may feel she is naive, but at least she gives the illusion of being human. Her rejection is conceivable and Townley's shame is understandable. He repents briefly with the simple line "Sure there's divinity about her; and she has dispensed some portion of honor's light to me." The scene may be sentimental, but it is at least playable. We are given an Amanda with something more than a theatrically clichéd morality with which to withstand Townley, and a Townley who can respond with something resembling a human attitude rather than a moral sermon in bad blank verse. It is true that if we look at Townley or the new Amanda too closely they fall to pieces, but while they are speaking to us we find ourselves listening to them.

It is this ability of Sheridan's to write playable drama that finally demands our attention and confirms his lasting reputation, and it is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in his most dazzling play *The School for Scandal*. The play first appeared on May 8, 1777, and was an immediate success. Sheridan had apparently worked on it with more than usual diligence, since there are a number of drafts. In its earliest stages, for example, it was two plays, one dealing with the Teazles and the other with Lady Sneerwell and her crew of scandal mongers. The jointure was a wise one and like *A Trip to Scarborough* typical of his instinct for putting a play together tellingly. But it is not simply his knowledge of effective dramatic structure that makes him worth our attention. Sheridan, like Molière, knew that a play was a visual as well as a verbal art form, and he makes use of this knowledge. Consider the famous screen scene.

Joseph has been forced to hide Lady Teazle behind a screen lest her husband discover her in Joseph's rooms. He then hides the husband in a closet so that he may overhear a conversation about the virtue of his wife. Here is Joseph, screen and Lady Teazle on one side of him, closet and Sir Peter on the other.

SIR PETER Sly rogue! sly rogue!

[Goes into the closet.]

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

LADY TEAZLE [peeping from the screen] Couldn't I steal off?

JOSEPH SURFACE Keep close, my angel.

SIR PETER [peeping] Joseph, tax me home!

JOSEPH SURFACE Back, my dear friend!

LADY TEAZLE [peeping] Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?

JOSEPH SURFACE Be still, my life!

SIR PETER [peeping] You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

JOSEPH SURFACE In, in, my dear Sir Peter!—Fore Gad, I wish I had a key to the door!

This scene is not brilliant verbal wit, but if one can imagine the takes of relief and then fear on poor Joseph's face or the tensions in his body as from either side Lady Teazle and Sir Peter question him, almost discovering each other in every instance, one can begin to see Joseph's hypocrisy close in on him. It is not only the false sound of his sentiments that delineate his double face. Here we see it in operation—one mask for Lady Teazle and one for Sir Peter. And neither mask is as clear a delineator of the real Joseph as the harried look of fear and confusion that must appear between peeps.

This ability to use the visual as well as the verbal force of the theater is not shared by all comedists. Congreve, for example, has little of it. Excellent as his comedies are, they are almost as forceful read as they are seen. They are not limited to the printed page, they should certainly be heard, but they do not demand playing as do the plays of Sheridan or Molière. These men demand actors on a stage. They create for the eye as well as the ear. They seem to see the action. Molière's belief that it was useless to publish his plays unless the reader could visualize everything that was happening on the stage all the time applies to Sheridan as well. I am not so sure that it is necessary for Congreve. Bodies and gestures are of much less importance to him than voices are.

As a consequence Sheridan and Congreve use language quite differently. Congreve allows his characters a kind of sophistication or attempt at sophistication that defines their limitations. Listen to Witwoud in *The Way of the World*.

MIRABEL [TO MRS. MILLAMANT] You seem to be unattended, madam—you used to have a flock of gay fine perukes hovering around you.

WITWOUND Like moths about a candle.—I had like to have lost my comparison for want of breath.

MILLAMANT O I have denied myself airs to-day, I have walked as fast through the crowd—

WITWOUND As a favorite just disgraced; and with as few followers.

MILLAMANT Dear Mr. Witwoud, truce with your similitudes; for I'm as sick of 'em—

WITWOUND As a physician of a good air.—I cannot help it madam, though 'tis against myself.

Witwoud's similes have a certain verbal delight in their own right, but they are at the same time a means of delineating Witwoud's character as well. A turn of phrase he may manage, but the wit to know when to turn it is not his. Our laughter results as much from this deficiency in Witwoud as from the phrases themselves.

The same is not true of Sheridan. The verbal sheen is there, but it works differently. Here is an example from the gossip scene.

CRABTREE 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 BENJAMIN So she has, indeed—an Irish front—

CRABTREE Caledonian locks—

SIR BENJAMIN Dutch nose—

CRABTREE Austrian lips—

SIR BENJAMIN Complexion of a Spaniard—

CRABTREE And teeth *à la Chinoise*—

SIR BENJAMIN In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa—where no two guests are of a nation—

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

This is wonderful badinage, more fun to listen to than Witwoud's witticisms, but there is no attempt to create any character out of the comments. Sir Benjamin and Crabtree are similar voices. Their jests are of a piece. The same cannot be said of Witwoud and Petulant who are both would-be wits, but entirely different people. Sheridan's witty dialogue is frankly to amuse; it attempts nothing more. Character slips in where it may. Put Charles against Mirabel or Lady Teazle against Millamant as their language defines them as people and Sheridan's characters are thin indeed. But see Lady Teazle behind a screen or hear her argue early in the play with

Sir Peter, listen to the gossips destroy their friends, watch Charles sell off his relatives to Sir Oliver, and I fear you tend to forget the whole character.

Sheridan is essentially a man of the theater. He can make effects, make a scene without concerning himself with the validity or importance of what his effects or scenes add up to. Congreve's view of the world is a carefully wrought defensible view. His plays will be played when the temper of the times agrees with him; they will be ignored when the temper does not. I don't think this is the case with Sheridan. His plays do not finally define a way of the world, and hence his views, which are easy to destroy, do not finally count for very much. We may finally dismiss Maria as a bit of a prig and Charles as too warm-hearted to survive very long, but if we have seen rather than read the play in order to reach these conclusions we may very well have been entertained enough so that we forget to wonder whether they should be dismissed or not. One enjoys Sheridan not because of what he says but because of the way he says it.

It is not surprising that he retired from the theater to take up politics. His commitment to the theater was never more than casual. After *The Critic* in 1779 he retired from playwriting to become a member of Parliament. His income was still from the theater, but as its manager not as a playwright. Even in Parliament it was apparently his theatrical talent that his party made use of. He delivered beautifully phrased and excellently acted speeches which sound more like his plays than like real life, and like his plays they were only theatrically effective. His famous speech in favor of the impeachment of Hastings seems very exciting, especially when one remembers how he fell fainting into the arms of Burke at its conclusion. But one also remembers that Hastings was not impeached.

When one realizes that Sheridan's playwriting is limited to six years (1773-1779) of a life of sixty-five years (he died in 1816), and that everything after his playwriting is anticlimactic, one wishes he had stayed in the theater. His talent was almost wholly a theatrical talent. To paraphrase Gilbert and Sullivan, he said little in particular and said it very well.

WILLIAM L. SHARP

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The School for Scandal

CHARACTERS

SIR PETER TEAZLE

SIR OLIVER SURFACE

JOSEPH SURFACE

CHARLES SURFACE

CARELESS

SNAKE

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE

CRABTREE

ROWLEY

MOSES

TRIP

SIR HARRY BUMPER

LADY TEAZLE

MARIA

LADY SNEERWELL

MRS. CANDOUR

GENTLEMEN, MAID, *and* SERVANTS

The scene is London in the 1770's

PROLOGUE

Written by MR. GARRICK

Spoken by SIR PETER TEAZLE

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 vapors
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 villian!
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 bestowed,
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 ONE

Scene One

[LADY SNEERWELL's *dressing-room*. LADY SNEERWELL *at her dressing-table*; SNAKE *drinking chocolate*.]

LADY SNEERWELL 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 SNEERWELL 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 SNEERWELL 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 *tête-à-tête* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties, perhaps, had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lives.

LADY SNEERWELL 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 coloring 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 SNEERWELL 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 labored detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.

LADY SNEERWELL Yes, my dear Snake; and I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life, by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal

to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.

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

LADY SNEERWELL 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 favorite; 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 SNEERWELL 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 SNEERWELL His real attachment is to Maria or her fortune; but, finding in his brother a favorite 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 SNEERWELL 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 SNEERWELL 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 SNEERWELL True; and with the assistance of his sentiment and hypocrisy he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria; while poor Charles has no friend in the house—though, I fear, he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes.

[Enter SERVANT]

SERVANT Mr. Surface.

LADY SNEERWELL 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.]

JOSEPH SURFACE My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do today? Mr. Snake, your most obedient.

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

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SNEERWELL Ah, my dear Snake! the merit of this belongs to you. But do your brother's distresses increase?

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SNEERWELL Poor Charles!

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SNEERWELL O Lud! you are going to be moral and forget that you are among friends.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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.

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, your very devoted.

[Exit SNAKE.]

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

LADY SNEERWELL Why so?

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SNEERWELL And do you think he would betray us?

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

[Enter MARIA.]

LADY SNEERWELL Maria, my dear, how do you do? What's the matter?

MARIA 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 SNEERWELL Is that all?

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

LADY SNEERWELL 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?

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SNEERWELL Nay, but we should make allowance; Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

MARIA 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?

JOSEPH SURFACE Certainly, madam. To smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

LADY SNEERWELL 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?

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

MARIA Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable; but in a man, I am sure, it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy, rivalry, and a thousand motives to depreciate each other; but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce one.

[Enter SERVANT.]

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

LADY SNEERWELL 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.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SNEERWELL Hush!—here she is!

[Enter MRS. CANDOUR.]

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Just so, indeed, ma'am.

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

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

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

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

MRS. CANDOUR 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.

MARIA Such reports are highly scandalous.

MRS. CANDOUR 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 diligence with her dancing-master.

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE The license of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

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

MRS. CANDOUR 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? Today, 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.

JOSEPH SURFACE Ah! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good nature!

MRS. CANDOUR 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-bye, I hope 'tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined?

JOSEPH SURFACE I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma'am.

MRS. CANDOUR 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.

JOSEPH SURFACE Doubtless, ma'am—a very great one.

[Enter SERVANT.]

SERVANT Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

[Exit SERVANT.]

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

[Enter CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE.]

CRABTREE 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 BENJAMIN Oh, fie, uncle!

CRABTREE Nay, egad it's true: I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymer in the kingdom. Has your ladyship heard

the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire?—Do, Benjamin, repeat it, or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's *conversazione*. Come now; your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and—

SIR BENJAMIN Uncle, now—prithce—

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

LADY SNEERWELL I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

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

CRABTREE [*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 BENJAMIN [*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!

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

MRS. CANDOUR What, sir, do you mean the report of—

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

MRS. CANDOUR Impossible!

CRABTREE Ask Sir Benjamin.

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

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

LADY SNEERWELL Why, I have heard something of this before.

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

SIR BENJAMIN 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. CANDOUR 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 constitution. But there is a sort of puny, sickly reputation, that is always ailing, yet will outlive the robust characters of a hundred prudes.

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

CRABTREE 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 BENJAMIN Oh, to be sure!—the most whimsical circumstance.

LADY SNEERWELL How was it, pray?

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

LADY SNEERWELL Strange, indeed!

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 BENJAMIN 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.

CRABTREE 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 BENJAMIN Yet no man lives in greater splendor. 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.

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

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

[*Exit MARIA.*]

MRS. CANDOUR O dear! she changes color very much.

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

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

[*Exit.*]

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

SIR BENJAMIN The young lady's *penchant* is obvious.

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

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

CRABTREE O lud, ay! undone as ever man was—can't raise a guinea!

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

CRABTREE 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 BENJAMIN [*going*] And I'm very sorry also to hear some bad stories against him.

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

SIR BENJAMIN [*going*] But, however, as he's your brother—

CRABTREE We'll tell you all another opportunity.

[*Exeunt CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN.*]

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

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

LADY SNEERWELL 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.

Scene Two

[*SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House. SIR PETER*]

SIR PETER When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect? 'Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men—and I have been the most miserable dog ever since! We tiffed 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 humors; yet the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

[*Enter ROWLEY.*]

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

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

ROWLEY What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday?

SIR PETER A good question to a married man!

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

SIR PETER Why, has anybody told you she was dead?

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

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

ROWLEY Indeed!

SIR PETER 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.

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

SIR PETER 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 opportunity of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a man of sentiment and acts up to the sentiments he professes; but, for the other, take my word for't, if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has dissipated it with the rest of his inheritance. Ah! my old friend Sir Oliver will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied.

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

SIR PETER What! let me hear.

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

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

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

SIR PETER 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?

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

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

ROWLEY Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

SIR PETER 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.

ROWLEY By no means.

SIR PETER 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.

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

SIR PETER 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.

ACT TWO

Scene One

[SIR PETER TEAZLE'S *House*. SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE.]

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

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

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

LADY TEAZLE Authority! No, to be sure. If you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me and not married me: I am sure you were old enough.

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

SIR PETER No, no, madam, you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife! to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, and give a *fête champêtre* at Christmas.

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

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

SIR PETER 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 TEAZLE 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 PETER Yes, yes, ma'am, 'twas so indeed.

LADY TEAZLE 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 PETER I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from; but now you must have your coach—*vis-à-vis*—and three powdered footmen before your chair; and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double, behind the butler, on a docked coach-horse?

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

SIR PETER 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 TEAZLE Well, then, and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, that is—

SIR PETER My widow, I suppose?

LADY TEAZLE Hem! hem!

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

LADY TEAZLE Then why will you endeavor to make yourself so disagreeable to me and thwart me in every little elegant expense?

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

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

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

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

SIR PETER Ay—there again—taste! Zounds! madam, you had no taste when you married me!

LADY TEAZLE 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 PETER Ay, there's another precious circumstance—a charming set of acquaintance you have made there!

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

SIR PETER 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 TEAZLE What, would you restrain the freedom of speech?

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

LADY TEAZLE 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 humor; and I take it for granted they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell's too.

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

LADY TEAZLE Then, indeed, you must make haste after me or you'll be too late. So goodbye to ye.

[Exit LADY TEAZLE.]

SIR PETER 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.

Scene Two

[LADY SNEERWELL'S *House*. LADY SNEERWELL, MRS. CANDOUR, CRABTREE, SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE and JOSEPH SURFACE.]

LADY SNEERWELL Nay, positively, we will hear it.

JOSEPH SURFACE Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

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

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

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

Sure never we 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.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE A very Phœbus mounted—indeed, Sir Benjamin!

SIR BENJAMIN Oh dear, sir!—trifles—trifles.

[Enter LADY TEAZLE and MARIA.]

MRS. CANDOUR I must have a copy.

LADY SNEERWELL Lady Teazle, I hope we shall see Sir Peter?

LADY TEAZLE I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

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

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

LADY TEAZLE [*aside*] 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.

MRS. CANDOUR Now, I'll die; but you are so scandalous, I'll forswear your society.

LADY TEAZLE What's the matter, Mrs. Candour?

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

LADY SNEERWELL Oh, surely she is a pretty woman.

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

MRS. CANDOUR She has a charming fresh color.

LADY TEAZLE Yes, when it is fresh put on.

MRS. CANDOUR Oh, fie! I'll swear her color is natural: I have seen it come and go!

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

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

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

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

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

SIR BENJAMIN Ah! there's no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face.

LADY SNEERWELL 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 BENJAMIN 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!

CRABTREE Ha! ha! ha! Well said, nephew!

MRS. CANDOUR Ha! ha! ha! Well, you make me laugh; but I vow I hate you for it. What do you think of Miss Simper?

SIR BENJAMIN Why, she has very pretty teeth.

LADY TEAZLE 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. CANDOUR How can you be so ill natured?

LADY TEAZLE Nay, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs. Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it positively resembles the aperture of a poor's-box, and all

her words appear to slide out edgewise, as it were—thus: *How do you do, madam? Yes, madam.*

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

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

[Enter SIR PETER.]

SIR PETER Ladies, your most obedient—[*aside*] Mercy on me, here is the whole set! a character dead at every word, I suppose.

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

SIR PETER That must be very distressing to you, Mrs. Candour, I dare swear.

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

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

MRS. CANDOUR 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 SNEERWELL That's very true, indeed.

LADY TEAZLE 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. CANDOUR I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

SIR PETER Yes, a good defence, truly.

MRS. CANDOUR Truly, Lady Teazle is as censorious as Miss Sallow.

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

MRS. CANDOUR 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 labors under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl of six-and-thirty.

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

MRS. CANDOUR 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 BENJAMIN Ah! you are both of you too good natured!

SIR PETER [*aside*] Yes, damned good natured! This their own relation! mercy on me!

MRS. CANDOUR For my part, I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill spoken of.

SIR PETER No, to be sure.

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

LADY TEAZLE Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the desert after dinner; for she's just like the French fruit one cracks for mottoes—made up of paint and proverb.

MRS. CANDOUR 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.

CRABTREE 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 BENJAMIN So she has, indeed—an Irish front—

CRABTREE Caledonian locks—

SIR BENJAMIN Dutch nose—

CRABTREE Austrian lips—

SIR BENJAMIN Complexion of a Spaniard—

CRABTREE And teeth *à la Chinoise*—

SIR BENJAMIN In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa—where no two guests are of a nation—

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

MRS. CANDOUR Ha! ha! ha!

SIR PETER [*aside*] Mercy on my life!—a person they dine with twice a week!

LADY SNEERWELL Go—go—you are a couple of provoking toads.

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

SIR PETER 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 SNEERWELL Ha! ha! ha! well said, Sir Peter! but you are a cruel creature—too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

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

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

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

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

SIR PETER '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 SNEERWELL O Lud! Sir Peter; would you deprive us of our privileges?

SIR PETER Ay, madam; and then no person should be permitted to kill characters and run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.

LADY SNEERWELL Go, you monster!

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

SIR PETER 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.

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

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

[Enter SERVANT, who whispers SIR PETER.]

SIR PETER I'll be with them directly.

[*Exit* SERVANT.]

[*aside*] I'll get away unperceived.

LADY SNEERWELL Sir Peter, you are not going to leave us?

SIR PETER Your ladyships must excuse me: I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me.

[*Exit* SIR PETER.]

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

[*Exeunt all but* JOSEPH SURFACE *and* MARIA.]

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

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

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

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

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

MARIA Why will you distress me by renewing this subject?

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 favored rival.

MARIA Ungenerously urged! But whatever my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up, because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

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

[*He kneels. Enter LADY TEAZLE.*]

[*aside*] Gad's life, here's Lady Teasle.—[*aloud to MARIA*] You must not—no, you shall not—for, though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teasle—

MARIA Lady Teasle!

JOSEPH SURFACE Yet were Sir Peter to suspect—

LADY TEAZLE [*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?

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 endeavoring to reason with her when you came in.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Oh, she's a child and I thought a little bombast—but, Lady Teasle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised?

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

JOSEPH SURFACE—True—a mere Platonic cicisbeo, what every wife is entitled to.

LADY TEAZLE 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 humor may vex me ever so, it never shall provoke me to—

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE But we had best not return together.

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

[*Exit.*]

JOSEPH SURFACE 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.

Scene Three

[SIR PETER TEAZLE'S *House*. SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY.]

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

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

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

ROWLEY His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has industriously been led into by a scandalous society in the neighborhood, 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 favorite.

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

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

SIR OLIVER 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?

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

SIR OLIVER 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.]

SIR PETER Ha! Sir Oliver—my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

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

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

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

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

ROWLEY [*aside to SIR OLIVER.*] Take care, pray, sir.

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

SIR PETER 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—everyone in the world speaks well of him.

SIR OLIVER I am sorry to hear it; he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everyone 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 PETER What, Sir Oliver! do you blame him for not making enemies?

SIR OLIVER Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

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

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

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

SIR PETER Oh, my life on Joseph's honor!

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

SIR PETER *Allons, then!*

SIR OLIVER 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.

ACT THREE

Scene One

[SIR PETER TEAZLE'S *House*. SIR PETER TEAZLE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, and ROWLEY.]

SIR PETER Well, then, we will see this fellow first and have our wine afterwards. But how is this, Master Rowley? I don't see the jet of your scheme.

ROWLEY Why, sir, this Mr. Stanley, whom I was speaking of, is nearly related to them by their mother. He was 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, endeavoring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

SIR OLIVER Ah, he is my brother's son.

SIR PETER Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to—

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

a tear for pity, and a hand
Open as day, for melting charity.

SIR PETER 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?

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

SIR PETER Pray let us have him in.

ROWLEY [*calls to SERVANT.*] Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs.

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

ROWLEY Oh, I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums 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 PETER I have heard too much on that subject.

ROWLEY Here comes the honest Israelite.

[Enter MOSES.]

—This is Sir Oliver.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIR PETER What, one Charles has never had money from before?

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

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

MOSES Not at all.

SIR PETER Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation. Go with my friend Moses and represent Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.

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

SIR PETER True—so you may.

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

MOSES You may depend upon me.—This is near the time I was to have gone.

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

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

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

MOSES Not in the least.

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

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

MOSES Yes, that's a very great point.

SIR OLIVER 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.

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

SIR OLIVER Hey! what, the plague! how much then?

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

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

SIR OLIVER Truly I think so—and not unprofitable.

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER My friend an unconscionable dog, is he?

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

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

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

MOSES Very much.

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

MOSES Ay, great pity!

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

SIR OLIVER So, so—Moses shall give me further instructions as we go together.

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

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

ROWLEY No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

SIR PETER 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 determin'd I will do it—he will give me his opinion sincerely.

[Enter MARIA.]

So, child, has Mr. Surface returned with you?

MARIA No, sir; he was engaged.

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

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

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

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

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

MARIA Never to his brother!

SIR PETER Go, perverse and obstinate! But take care, madam; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is. Don't compel me to inform you of it.

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

[Exit MARIA.]

SIR PETER 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 humor. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little!

[Enter LADY TEAZLE.]

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

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

LADY TEAZLE I am sure I wish I had; for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good humored now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

SIR PETER Two hundred pounds; what, an't I to be in a good humor 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 TEAZLE Oh, no—there—my note of hand will do as well.

[*Offering her hand.*]

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

SIR PETER Well—then let our future contest be, who shall be most obliging.

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

SIR PETER Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive—

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

SIR PETER Indeed!

LADY TEAZLE 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 I dared say you'd make a very good sort of a husband.

SIR PETER And you prophesied right; and we shall now be the happiest couple—

LADY TEAZLE And never differ again?

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

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

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

SIR PETER 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 TEAZLE Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason, my dear—

SIR PETER There! now you want to quarrel again.

LADY TEAZLE No, I'm sure I don't; but, if you will be so peevish—

SIR PETER There now! who begins first?

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

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

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

SIR PETER Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gypsy.

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

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

LADY TEAZLE So much the better.

SIR PETER 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 neighborhood!

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

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

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

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

SIR PETER 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 TEAZLE 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 LADY TEAZLE.]

SIR PETER 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.

Scene Two

[CHARLES SURFACE'S *House*. TRIP, MOSES, and SIR OLIVER SURFACE.]

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside to MOSES*] Mr. Moses, what is my name?

MOSES Mr. Premium.

TRIP Premium—very well.

[Exit, taking snuff.]

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

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

SIR OLIVER 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 OLIVER If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he would not send such a message?

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER Well, then, Mr. Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess?

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Bags and bouquets! halters and bastinadoes!

TRIP And *à propos*, Moses, have you been able to get me that little bill discounted?

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Wants to raise money, too!—mercy on me! Has his distresses too, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and duns.

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

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

MOSES No, 'twouldn't do.

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] An annuity! ha! ha! a footman raise money by way of annuity. Well done, luxury, egad!

MOSES Well, but you must insure your place.

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] It's more than I would your neck.

MOSES But is there nothing you could deposit?

TRIP Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has dropped lately; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with equity of redemption before November—or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver. These, I should think, Moses, with a few pair of point ruffles, as a collateral security—hey, my little fellow?

MOSES Well, well.

[*Bell rings.*]

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed!

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene Three

[*Another room. CHARLES SURFACE, CARELESS, SIR HARRY BUMPER, and Others, at a table with wine, etc.*]

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

CARELESS It is so, indeed, Charles! they give 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 flavor.

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE 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 a little merry. Let me throw on a bottle of champagne and I never lose—at least I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing.

SECOND GENTLEMAN Ay, that I believe.

CHARLES SURFACE 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.

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

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE Here then, bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria—

SIR HARRY Maria who?

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

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

SIR HARRY 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,
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 to CHARLES SURFACE.*]

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

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

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

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

FIRST GENTLEMAN Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

SECOND GENTLEMAN Yes, yes, the Jew, and the broker!

CHARLES SURFACE 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.

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

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

[Enter TRIP, with SIR OLIVER SURFACE and MOSES.]

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

MOSES Yes, sir.

CHARLES SURFACE Set chairs, Trip.—Sit down, Mr. Premium. Glasses, Trip.—Sit down, Moses.—Come, Mr. Premium, I'll give you a sentiment; here's *Success to usury!*—Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper.

MOSES *Success to usury!*

[Drinks.]

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

SIR OLIVER Then here's—all the success it deserves!

[Drinks.]

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

FIRST GENTLEMAN A pint bumper, at least!

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

CARELESS And therefore loves good wine.

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

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

SIR OLIVER Nay, pray, gentlemen—I did not expect this usage.

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Odd! I wish I was well out of their company.

CARELESS 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?

CHARLES SURFACE I will! I will!

[*Exeunt* GENTLEMEN.]

Careless!

CARELESS [*returning*] Well?

CHARLES SURFACE Perhaps I may want you.

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

[*Exit.*]

MOSES Sir, this is Mr. Premium, a gentleman of the strictist honor and secrecy; and always performs what he undertakes. Mr. Premium, this is—

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

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

SIR OLIVER 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?

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER Nor any stock, I presume?

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

SIR OLIVER Why, to say the truth, I am.

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

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal.

CHARLES SURFACE 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 with me, that I give you my word, I should be very sorry to hear that anything had happened to him.

SIR OLIVER 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 be a hundred and never see the principal.

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

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

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE 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 OLIVER No! Ha! ha! ha! so much altered lately that his nearest relation would not know him! Ha! ha! ha! egad—ha! ha! ha!

CHARLES SURFACE Ha! ha!—you're glad to hear that, little Premium.

SIR OLIVER No, no, I'm not.

CHARLES SURFACE Yes, yes, you are—ha! ha! ha!—you know that mends your chance.

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

CHARLES SURFACE 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?

MOSES Oh, yes, certainly.

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

MOSES Yes, most undoubted!

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

CHARLES SURFACE How do you mean?

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

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

SIR OLIVER [*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.

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Mercy upon me! learning that had run in the family like an heirloom!—[*aloud*] Pray, what has become of the books?

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

MOSES I know nothing of books.

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE Every man of them, to the best bidder.

SIR OLIVER What! your great-uncles and aunts?

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, and my great-grandfathers and grandmothers too.

SIR OLIVER [*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?

CHARLES SURFACE Nay, my little broker, don't be angry. What need you care, if you have your money's worth?

SIR OLIVER Well, I'll be the purchaser. I think I can dispose of the family canvas.—[*aside*] Oh, I'll never forgive him this! never!

[*Enter CARELESS.*]

CARELESS Come, Charles, what keeps you?

CHARLES SURFACE I can't come yet. I'faith, we are going to have a sale above stairs; here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors!

CARELESS Oh, burn your ancestors!

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

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Oh, the profligates!

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

SIR OLIVER 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!

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

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT FOUR

Scene One

[*Picture Room at CHARLES'S. Enter CHARLES SURFACE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, MOSES, and CARELESS.*]

CHARLES SURFACE Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in—here they are, the family of the Surfaces up to the Conquest.

SIR OLIVER And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, ay, these are done in the true spirit of portrait-painting; no *volontière 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 OLIVER Ah! we shall never see such figures of men again.

CHARLES SURFACE 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.

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

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] What an unnatural rogue!—an *ex post facto* parricide!

CARELESS 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!

CHARLES SURFACE Bravo, Careless! Well, here's my great uncle, Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and got that cut over his eye at the battle of Malplaquet. What say you, Mr. Premium? look at him—there's a hero! not cut out of

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

MOSES Mr. Premium would have you speak.

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Heaven deliver me! his famous uncle Richard for ten pounds!—[*aloud*] Very well, sir. I take him at that.

CHARLES SURFACE 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 a very formidable likeness. There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock. You shall have her for five pounds ten—the sheep are worth the money.

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Ah! poor Deborah! a woman who set such a value on herself!—[*aloud*] Five pounds ten—she's mine.

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE Well, take that couple for the same.

MOSES 'Tis a good bargain.

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

MOSES Four guineas.

CHARLES SURFACE 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 OLIVER By all means.

CARELESS Gone!

CHARLES SURFACE 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 brought or sold.

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER No, no, six will do for the mayor.

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

SIR OLIVER They're mine.

CHARLES SURFACE 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.

CARELESS Ay ay, that will be the best way.

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

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER Upon my soul, sir, I do not; I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive. But I suppose uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber?

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

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] The rogue's my nephew after all!—[*aloud*] But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.

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

SIR OLIVER [*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.

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

SIR OLIVER [*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.

CHARLES SURFACE Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds!

SIR OLIVER You will not let Sir Oliver go?

CHARLES SURFACE Zounds! no! I tell you, once more.

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER I will, I will—for all but Oliver.

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, all but the little nabob.

SIR OLIVER You're fixed on that?

CHARLES SURFACE Peremptorily.

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] A dear extravagant rogue!—[*aloud*] Good day!—Come, Moses.—[*aside*] Let me hear now who dares call him profligate!

[*Exeunt SIR OLIVER and MOSES.*]

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

CHARLES SURFACE 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.

CARELESS 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.

CHARLES SURFACE Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

CARELESS Nothing else.

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, ay, never fear.—

[*Exit CARELESS.*]

So! this was an odd old fellow, indeed. Let me see, two-thirds of this is mine by right: five hundred and thirty odd pounds. 'Fore heaven! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them for!—Ladies and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful servant.

[*Bows to the pictures. Enter ROWLEY.*]

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

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

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

ROWLEY There's no making you serious a moment.

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

ROWLEY A hundred pounds! Consider only—

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

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

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

HOWLEY Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection—

CHARLES SURFACE 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 Two

[*The parlor. Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and MOSES.*]

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

SIR OLIVER True, but he would not sell my picture.

MOSES And loves wine and women so much.

SIR OLIVER But he would not sell my picture.

MOSES And games so deep.

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

[*Enter ROWLEY.*]

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROWLEY Not yet 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 OLIVER There's a fellow for you! Would you believe it, that puppy intercepted the Jew on our coming, and wanted to raise money before he got to his master!

ROWLEY Indeed.

SIR OLIVER 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 Three

[*A Library in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House. JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT.*]

JOSEPH SURFACE No letter from Lady Teazle?

SERVANT No, sir.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*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 favor.

[*Knocking.*]

SERVANT Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Stay, stay! Draw that screen before the window—that will do. My opposite neighbor is a maiden lady of so curious a temper.

[*SERVANT draws the screen, and exits.*]

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

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

LADY TEAZLE Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you

know Sir Peter is grown so ill-natured to me of late, and so jealous of Charles too—that's the best of the story, isn't it?

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE [*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 TEAZLE 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.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 TEAZLE No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice; but to attack me, who am really so innocent, and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody—that is, of any friend; and then Sir Peter, too, to have him so peevish, and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart—indeed 'tis monstrous!

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 honor of her sex to endeavor to outwit him.

LADY TEAZLE Indeed! So that, if he suspects me without cause, it follows, that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for't?

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 TEAZLE To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my innocence—

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 inno-

cence. 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 TEAZLE 'Tis very true!

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 humor and agree with your husband.

LADY TEAZLE Do you think so?

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 TEAZLE 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?

JOSEPH SURFACE Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

LADY TEAZLE Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny.

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

LADY TEAZLE Why, if my understanding were once convinced—

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 honor to desire it.

LADY TEAZLE Don't you think we may as well leave honor out of the argument? [*rises*]

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

LADY TEAZLE 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 honorable logic, after all.

JOSEPH SURFACE Then, by this hand, which he is unworthy of—
[*taking her hand*]

[*Enter SERVANT.*]

'Sdeath, you blockhead—what do you want?

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir Peter!—Oons—the devil!

LADY TEAZLE Sir Peter! O lud! I'm ruined! I'm ruined!

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

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

[*Goes behind the screen.*]

JOSEPH SURFACE Give me that book.

[*Sits down. SERVANT pretends to adjust his chair. Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE.*]

SIR PETER Ay, ever improving himself. Mr. Surface, Mr. Surface—

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 PETER 'Tis very neat indeed. Well, well, that's proper; and you can make even your screen a source of knowledge—hung, I perceive, with maps.

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry either.

SIR PETER Well, I have a little private business—

JOSEPH SURFACE [*To SERVANT*] You need not stay.

SERVANT No, sir.

[*Exit SERVANT.*]

JOSEPH SURFACE Here's a chair, Sir Peter—I beg—

SIR PETER 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.

JOSEPH SURFACE Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

SIR PETER 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.

JOSEPH SURFACE Indeed! you astonish me!

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

JOSEPH SURFACE How! you alarm me exceedingly.

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

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

SIR PETER I am convinced of it. Ah! it is a happiness to have a friend whom we can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean?

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

SIR PETER Oh, no! what say you to Charles?

JOSEPH SURFACE My brother! impossible!

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

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

SIR PETER True; but your brother has no sentiment—you never hear him talk so.

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE That's very true.

SIR PETER 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.

JOSEPH SURFACE That's true, to be sure—they would laugh.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE No, you must never make it public.

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

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

SIR PETER Ay—I that was, in a manner, left his guardian, in whose house he had been so often entertained, who never in my life denied him—my advice!

JOSEPH SURFACE Oh, 'tis not to be credited! There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure; but, for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if it should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine—I disclaim kindred with him: for the man who can break the laws of hospitality and tempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honor.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous. [*aside*] I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] Nor I, if I could help it.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE [*softly*] Oh, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 distress can never—

[*Enter* SERVANT.]

Well, sir?

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 'Sdeath, blockhead, I'm not within—I'm out for the day.

SIR PETER Stay—hold—a thought has struck me: you shall be at home.

JOSEPH SURFACE Well, well, let him up.

[*Exit* SERVANT.]

[*aside*] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however.

SIR PETER Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you. Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere, then do you tax him on the point we have been talking, and his answer may satisfy me at once.

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

SIR PETER Nay, you tell me you are sure he is innocent; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me: here, behind the screen will be—Hey! what the devil! there seems to be one listener here already—I'll swear I saw a petticoat!

JOSEPH SURFACE Ha! ha! ha! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet you know, it does not follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either! Hark'ee, 'tis a little French milliner, a silly rogue that plagues me; and having some character to lose, on your coming, sir, she ran behind the screen.

SIR PETER Ah, you rogue—But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Well, go in there.

SIR PETER Sly rogue! sly rogue!

[*Goes into the closet.*]

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

LADY TEAZLE [*peeping*] Couldn't I steal off?

JOSEPH SURFACE Keep close, my angel.

SIR PETER [*peeping*] Joseph, tax me home!

JOSEPH SURFACE Back, my dear friend!

LADY TEAZLE [*peeping*] Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?

JOSEPH SURFACE Be still, my life!

SIR PETER [*peeping*] You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

JOSEPH SURFACE In, in, my dear Sir Peter!—'Fore gad, I wish I had a key to the door!

[*Enter CHARLES SURFACE.*]

CHARLES SURFACE Holla! brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow would not let me up at first. What! have you had a Jew or a wench with you?

JOSEPH SURFACE Neither, brother, I assure you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE 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's worse, Lady Teazle has found out she has an old husband?

JOSEPH SURFACE This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh—

CHARLES SURFACE True, true, as you were going to say—then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honor.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*in a loud voice*] Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this.

CHARLES SURFACE To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement. Besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

JOSEPH SURFACE But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you—

CHARLES SURFACE Why, look'ee, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonorable action; but if a pretty woman were purposely to throw herself in my way—and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father—

JOSEPH SURFACE Well!

CHARLES SURFACE 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 favorite.

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

CHARLES SURFACE Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances—

JOSEPH SURFACE Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Nay, prithee, Charles—

CHARLES SURFACE And found you together—

JOSEPH SURFACE Zounds, sir, I insist—

CHARLES SURFACE And another time, when your servant—

JOSEPH SURFACE Brother, brother, a word with you! [*aside*] Gad, I must stop him.

CHARLES SURFACE Informed, I say, that—

JOSEPH SURFACE Hush! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I should not have consented.

CHARLES SURFACE How, Sir Peter! Where is he?

JOSEPH SURFACE Softly, there!

[Points to the closet.]

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

JOSEPH SURFACE No, no—

CHARLES SURFACE I say, Sir Peter, come into court.

[Pulls in SIR PETER.]

What! my old guardian!—What! turn inquisitor and take evidence incog.?

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

CHARLES SURFACE Indeed!

SIR PETER But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did. What I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

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

SIR PETER Ah! you would have retorted on him.

CHARLES SURFACE Ah, ay, that was a joke.

SIR PETER Yes, yes, I know his honor too well.

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

SIR PETER Well, well, I believe you.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] Would they were both out of the room!

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

[Enter SERVANT and whispers JOSEPH SURFACE.]

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

CHARLES SURFACE Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I have not met a long time, and I have something to say to him.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*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 PETER [*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.

CHARLES SURFACE 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 PETER 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.

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE Why, you won't tell him?

SIR PETER No—but—this way. [*aside*] Egad, I'll tell him. [*aloud*] Hark'ee, have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

CHARLES SURFACE I should like it of all things.

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

CHARLES SURFACE What! Joseph? you jest.

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

CHARLES SURFACE The devil she is!

SIR PETER Hush! I tell you. [*Points to the screen.*]

CHARLES SURFACE Behind the screen! S'life, let's unveil her!

SIR PETER No, no, he's coming. You shan't, indeed!

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

SIR PETER Not for the world!—Joseph will never forgive me.

CHARLES SURFACE I'll stand by you—

SIR PETER Odds, here he is!

[JOSEPH SURFACE *enters just as CHARLES throws down the screen.*]

CHARLES SURFACE Lady Teazle, by all that's wonderful!

SIR PETER Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!

CHARLES SURFACE 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 CHARLES SURFACE. They stand for some time looking at each other.*]

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir Peter—notwithstanding—I confess—that appearances are against me—if you will afford me your patience—I make no doubt—but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.

SIR PETER If you please, sir.

JOSEPH SURFACE The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward Maria—I say, sir, Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of your temper—and knowing my friendship to the family—she, sir, I say—called here—in order that—I might explain these pretensions—but on your coming—being apprehensive—as I said—of your jealousy—she withdrew—and this, you may depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.

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

LADY TEAZLE For not one word of it, Sir Peter!

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

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside to* LADY TEAZLE] 'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

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

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

LADY TEAZLE 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 honor to his baseness.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE The woman's mad!

LADY TEAZLE 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 express 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 honorable addresses to his ward—I behold him now in a light so truly despicable that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him.

[*Exit* LADY TEAZLE.]

JOSEPH SURFACE Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows—

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

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

[*Exeunt*, JOSEPH SURFACE *talking*.]

ACT FIVE

Scene One

[*The Library in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House. JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT*]

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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?

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 humor 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 in my face, however.

[*Exit. Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY.*]

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

ROWLEY It was, sir. But I doubt you are coming a little too abruptly. His nerves are so weak that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first to break it to him.

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

ROWLEY As to his way of thinking, I cannot pretend to decide; for, to do him justice, he appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

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

ROWLEY Or, rather, at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has such faith in as that "Charity begins at home."

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

ROWLEY I doubt you'll find it so;—but he's coming. I mustn't seem to interrupt you; and you know, immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

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

ROWLEY Without losing a moment.

[Exit ROWLEY.]

SIR OLIVER I don't like the complaisance of his features.

[Enter JOSEPH SURFACE.]

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

SIR OLIVER At your service.

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, I beg you will do me the honor to sit down—I entreat you, sir.

SIR OLIVER Dear sir—there's no occasion. [*aside*] Too civil by half!

JOSEPH SURFACE I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think, Mr. Stanley?

SIR OLIVER I was, sir; so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children, else I should not have presumed to trouble you.

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

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

SIR OLIVER I should not need one—my distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty would enable you to become the agent of his charity.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 choose to contradict the report.

SIR OLIVER What! has he never transmitted you bullion—rupees—pagodas?

JOSEPH SURFACE Oh, dear sir, nothing of the kind; No, no; a few presents now and then—china, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and Indian crackers—little more, believe me.

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds!—Avadavats and Indian crackers!

JOSEPH SURFACE Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother; there are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man.

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Not I, for one!

JOSEPH SURFACE The sums I have lent him! Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame; it was an amiable weakness; however, I don't pretend to defend it—and now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived me of the pleasure of serving you, Mr. Stanley, as my heart dictates.

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Dissembler! [*aloud*] Then, sir, you can't assist me?

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

SIR OLIVER I am extremely sorry—

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

SIR OLIVER Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

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

SIR OLIVER Oh, dear sir, no ceremony.

JOSEPH SURFACE Your very obedient.

SIR OLIVER Sir, your most obsequious.

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

Avadavats: Small songbirds from India. *Indian crackers*: firecrackers.

SIR OLIVER Sweet sir, you are too good.

JOSEPH SURFACE In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

SIR OLIVER Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, yours as sincerely.

SIR OLIVER [*aside*] Charles!—you are my heir.

[*Exit* SIR OLIVER.]

JOSEPH SURFACE This is one bad effect of a good character; it invites application from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities; whereas the sentimental French plate I use instead of it makes just as good a show, and pays no tax.

[*Enter* ROWLEY.]

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Always happy to see Mr. Rowley.—[*reads*] Sir Oliver Surface! My uncle arrived!

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

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

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

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

ROWLEY I thought you had particular business. But I must be gone to inform your brother and appoint him here to meet your uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour.

JOSEPH SURFACE So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming.—[*aside*] Never, to be sure, was anything so damned unlucky!

ROWLEY You will be delighted to see how well he looks.

JOSEPH SURFACE Oh! I'm overjoyed to hear it. [*aside*]—Just at this time!

ROWLEY I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 Two

[*SIR PETER TEAZLE'S House. Enter MRS. CANDOUR and MAID.*]

MAID Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody at present.

MRS. CANDOUR Did you tell her it was her friend Mrs. Candour?

MAID Yes, ma'am; but she begs you will excuse her.

MRS. CANDOUR 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 BENJAMIN Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface—

MRS. CANDOUR And Sir Peter's discovery—

SIR BENJAMIN Oh, the strangest piece of business, to be sure!

MRS. CANDOUR Well, I never was so surprised in my life. I am so sorry for all parties, indeed.

SIR BENJAMIN Now, I don't pity Sir Peter at all: he was so extravagantly partial to Mr. Surface.

MRS. CANDOUR Mr. Surface! Why, 'twas with Charles Lady Teazle was detected.

SIR BENJAMIN No, no, I tell you: Mr. Surface is the gallant.

MRS. CANDOUR No such thing! Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr. Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

SIR BENJAMIN I tell you I had it from one—

MRS. CANDOUR And I have it from one—

SIR BENJAMIN Who had it from one, who had it—

MRS. CANDOUR From one immediately—But here comes Lady Sneerwell; perhaps she knows the whole affair.

[Enter LADY SNEERWELL.]

LADY SNEERWELL So, my dear Mrs. Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle!

MRS. CANDOUR Ay, my dear friend, who would have thought—

LADY SNEERWELL Well, there is no trusting to appearances; though indeed, she was always too lively for me.

MRS. CANDOUR To be sure, her manners were a little too free; but then she was so young!

LADY SNEERWELL And had, indeed, some good qualities.

MRS. CANDOUR So she had, indeed. But have you heard the particulars?

LADY SNEERWELL No; but everybody says that Mr. Surface—

SIR BENJAMIN Ay, there; I told you Mr. Surface was the man.

MRS. CANDOUR No, no: indeed the assignation was with Charles.

LADY SNEERWELL With Charles! You alarm me, Mrs. Candour.

MRS. CANDOUR Yes, yes: he was the lover. Mr. Surface, to do him justice, was only the informer.

SIR BENJAMIN 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. CANDOUR Sir Peter's wound! Oh, mercy! I didn't hear a word of their fighting.

LADY SNEERWELL Nor I, a syllable.

SIR BENJAMIN No! what, no mention of the duel?

MRS. CANDOUR Not a word.

SIR BENJAMIN Oh, yes: they fought before they left the room.

LADY SNEERWELL Pray let us hear.

MRS. CANDOUR Ay, do oblige us with the duel.

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

MRS. CANDOUR Ay, to Charles—

SIR BENJAMIN No, no—to Mr. Surface—"a most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir," says he, "I insist on immediate satisfaction."

MRS. CANDOUR Ay, that must have been to Charles: for 'tis very unlikely Mr. Surface should fight in his own house.

SIR BENJAMIN '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.]

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

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

CRABTREE Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded—

SIR BENJAMIN By a thrust in *seconde* quite through his left side—

CRABTREE By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

MRS. CANDOUR Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

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

MRS. CANDOUR I knew Charles was the person.

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

CRABTREE But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude—

SIR BENJAMIN That I told you, you know—

CRABTREE Do, nephew, let me speak!—and insisted on immediate—

SIR BENJAMIN Just as I said—

CRABTREE 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 BENJAMIN I heard nothing of this.

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

LADY SNEERWELL [*aside*] I am more interested in this affair than they imagine, and must have better information.

[*Exit* LADY SNEERWELL.]

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

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

MRS. CANDOUR But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

CRABTREE Oh! they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny him.

MRS. CANDOUR I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

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

SIR BENJAMIN Hey! who comes here?

CRABTREE Oh, this is he: the physician, depend on't.

MRS. CANDOUR Oh, certainly; it must be the physician; and now we shall know.

[*Enter* SIR OLIVER SURFACE.]

CRABTREE Well, doctor, what hopes?

MRS. CANDOUR Ay, doctor, how's your patient?

SIR BENJAMIN Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a smallsword?

CRABTREE A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred!

SIR OLIVER Doctor! a wound with a smallsword; and a bullet in the thorax?—Oons! are you mad, good people?

SIR BENJAMIN Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor?

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

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

SIR OLIVER Not a word!

CRABTREE Not of his being dangerously wounded?

SIR OLIVER The devil he is!

SIR BENJAMIN Run through the body—

CRABTREE Shot in the breast—

SIR BENJAMIN By one Mr. Surface—

CRABTREE Ay, the younger.

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

SIR BENJAMIN Oh, yes, we agree there.

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

SIR OLIVER 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 BENJAMIN [*aside to CRABTREE*] Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

SIR OLIVER Why, man! what do you do out of bed with a smallsword through your body and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

SIR PETER A smallsword and a bullet?

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

SIR PETER Why, what is all this?

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

SIR PETER [*aside*] So, so; all over the town already.

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

SIR PETER Sir, what business is that of yours?

MRS. CANDOUR Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied.

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

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

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

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

SIR PETER I insist on being left to myself. Without ceremony, I insist on your leaving my house directly!

MRS. CANDOUR Well, well, we are going; and depend on't, we'll make the best report of it we can.

[Exit MRS. CANDOUR.]

SIR PETER Leave my house!

CRABTREE And tell how hardly you've been treated!

[Exit CRABTREE.]

SIR PETER Leave my house!

SIR BENJAMIN And how patiently you bear it.

[Exit SIR BENJAMIN.]

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

SIR OLIVER They are very provoking indeed, Sir Peter.

[Enter ROWLEY.]

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

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

ROWLEY Well, I'm not inquisitive.

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

SIR PETER A precious couple they are!

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

ROWLEY It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

SIR OLIVER Oh, he's a model for the young men of the age! But how's this, Sir Peter? you don't join us in your friend Joseph's praise, as I expected.

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

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

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

ROWLEY Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr. Surface's so humbled, that she deigned to request me to be her advocate with you.

SIR PETER And does Sir Oliver know all this?

SIR OLIVER Every circumstance.

SIR PETER What, of the closet and the screen, hey?

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

SIR PETER 'Twas very pleasant.

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

SIR PETER Oh, vastly diverting! ha! ha! ha!

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

SIR PETER Yes, yes, his sentiments! ha! ha! ha! Hypocritical villain!

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER But come, come, it isn't fair to laugh at you neither, my old friend; though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

SIR PETER Oh, pray, don't restrain your mirth on my account: it does not hurt me at all! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintance a very happy situation. Oh, yes, and then of a morning to read the paragraphs about Mr. S—, Lady T—, and Sir P—, will be so entertaining!

ROWLEY Without affection, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools. But I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room,

I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

SIR OLIVER Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you; but he must bring you all presently to Mr. Surface's where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

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

ROWLEY We'll follow.

[Exit SIR OLIVER.]

SIR PETER She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

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

SIR PETER Certainly a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little?

ROWLEY Oh, this is ungenerous in you!

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

ROWLEY A mere forgery, Sir Peter! laid in your way on purpose. This is one of the points which I intend Snake shall give you conviction of.

SIR PETER I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has! Rowley, I'll go to her.

ROWLEY Certainly.

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

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

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

ROWLEY Nay, Sir Peter, he is who once lays aside suspicion—

SIR PETER 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.

Scene Three

[*The Library in JOSEPH SURFACE'S House. JOSEPH SURFACE and LADY SNEERWELL.*]

LADY SNEERWELL Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and of course no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me.

JOSEPH SURFACE Can passion furnish a remedy?

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

LADY SNEERWELL Because the disappointment doesn't reach your heart; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

JOSEPH SURFACE But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment?

LADY SNEERWELL 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 endeavor to seduce his wife? I hate such an avarice of crimes; 'tis an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.

JOSEPH SURFACE Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, but I don't think we're so totally defeated neither.

LADY SNEERWELL No?

JOSEPH SURFACE You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us?

LADY SNEERWELL I do believe so.

JOSEPH SURFACE And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honor to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will serve to support?

LADY SNEERWELL This, indeed, might have assisted.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SNEERWELL Well, but if he should find you out too.

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

[Exit LADY SNEERWELL.]

JOSEPH SURFACE I will, I will! So! 'tis confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one's confederate in evil. Well, at all events, my character is so much better than Charles's that I certainly—hey!—what—this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on't that he should return to tease me just now! I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here—and—

[Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE.]

Gad's life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time? You must not stay now, upon my word.

SIR OLIVER Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so penurious to you, I'll try what he'll do for me.

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, 'tis impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg—Come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be assisted.

SIR OLIVER No: Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

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

SIR OLIVER Nay, sir—

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, I insist on't!—Here, William! show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir not one moment—this is such insolence!

[Going to push him out. Enter CHARLES SURFACE.]

CHARLES SURFACE 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?

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Borrowing! no! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every—

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Yet, Mr. Stanley insists—

CHARLES SURFACE Stanley! why his name's Premium.

JOSEPH SURFACE No, sir, Stanley.

CHARLES SURFACE No, no, Premium.

JOSEPH SURFACE Well, no matter which—but—

CHARLES SURFACE—Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, 'tis the same thing, as you say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides A. B. at the coffee-house.

[*Knocking.*]

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

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, ay, and I beg, Mr. Premium—

SIR OLIVER Gentlemen—

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, by heaven you shall go!

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, out with him, certainly!

SIR OLIVER This violence—

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, 'tis your own fault.

CHARLES SURFACE Out with him, to be sure!

[*Both forcing SIR OLIVER out. Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE, MARIA, and ROWLEY.*]

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

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

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

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Charles!

CHARLES SURFACE Joseph!

JOSEPH SURFACE 'Tis now complete!

CHARLES SURFACE Very!

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

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

SIR PETER Then, I believe, we need add no more: if he knows himself, he will consider it as the most perfect punishment that he is known to the world.

CHARLES SURFACE [*aside*] If they talk this way to Honesty, what will they say to me, by-and-by?

SIR OLIVER As for that prodigal, his brother, there—

CHARLES SURFACE [*aside*] Ay, now comes my turn: the damned family pictures will ruin me!

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir Oliver—uncle, will you honor me with a hearing?

CHARLES SURFACE [*aside*] Now, if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little.

SIR OLIVER [to JOSEPH] I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself entirely?

JOSEPH SURFACE I trust I could.

SIR OLIVER [to CHARLES] Well, sir!—and you could justify yourself too, I suppose?

CHARLES SURFACE Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER 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.

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

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

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

[*Pointing to MARIA.*]

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

SIR PETER Well, child, speak your sentiments.

MARIA Sir, I have little to say, but 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 a better title.

CHARLES SURFACE How, Maria!

SIR PETER 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.

MARIA His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

CHARLES SURFACE Lady Sneerwell!

JOSEPH SURFACE Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and Lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed.

[*Opens the door. Enter LADY SNEERWELL.*]

SIR PETER So! another French milliner! Egad, he has one in every room in the house, I suppose!

LADY SNEERWELL Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised, and feel for the indelicate situation your perfidy has forced me into.

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

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

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

ROWLEY Walk in, Mr. Snake.

[Enter SNAKE.]

I thought his testimony might be wanted; however, it happens unluckily, that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, not to support her.

LADY SNEERWELL A villain! Treacherous to me at last! Speak, fellow, have you too conspired against me?

SNAKE I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons: you paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I unfortunately have been offered double to speak the truth.

SIR PETER Plot and counterplot, egad!

LADY SNEERWELL The torments of shame and disappointment on you all!

LADY TEAZLE 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 SNEERWELL You too, madam!—provoking—insolent! May your husband live these fifty years!

[Exit LADY SNEERWELL.]

SIR PETER Oons! what a fury!

LADY TEAZLE A malicious creature, indeed!

SIR PETER Hey! not for her last wish?

LADY TEAZLE Oh, no!

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 JOSEPH SURFACE.]

SIR PETER Moral to the last drop!

SIR OLIVER Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and vinegar—egad, you'll do very well together.

ROWLEY I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present?

SNAKE Before I go, I beg pardon once for all, for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

SIR PETER Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

SNAKE But I must request of the company, that it shall never be known.

SIR PETER Hey! what the plague! are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life?

SNAKE Ah, sir, consider—I live by the badness of my character; I have nothing but my infamy to depend on; and, if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

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

[Exit SNAKE.]

SIR PETER There's a precious rogue!

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

SIR OLIVER Ay, ay, that's as it should be; and, egad, we'll have the wedding tomorrow morning.

CHARLES SURFACE Thank you, dear uncle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIVER You do, indeed, Charles.

ROWLEY If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt—but deserve to be happy—and you overpay me.

SIR PETER Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

CHARLES SURFACE 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,

Thou still must rule, because I will obey:

An humble fugitive from Folly view,

No sanctuary near but Love—and you: [*To the audience.*]

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove,

For even Scandal dies, if you approve.

EPILOGUE

Written 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 honor.
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 condemned 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 pluméd head, the cushioned tête,
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 stalked away:—
"Blessed were the fair like you; her faults who stopped.
And closed her follies when the curtain dropped!
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool at large on life's great stage."

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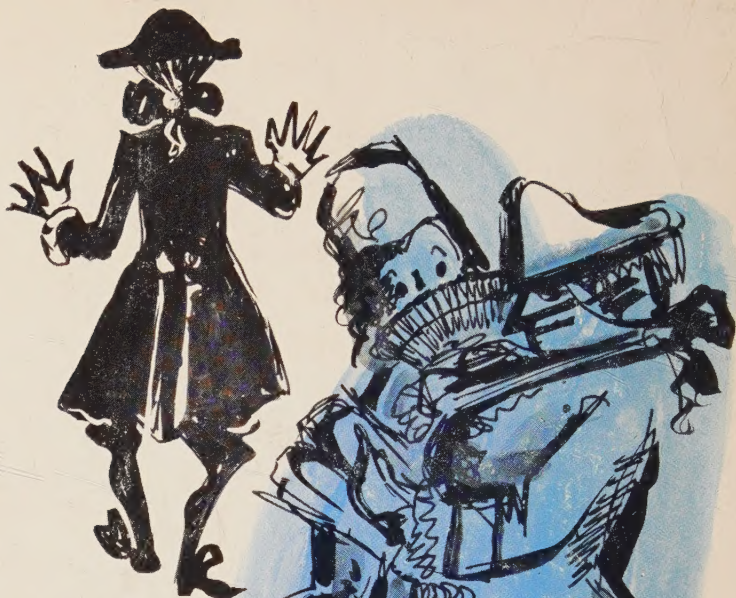
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Maria-How is it possible I should?
 To raise malicious
 at the infirmities
 or misfortunes of
 those who have more
 of wit and humor, than
 a double portion of dullness
 JOSEPH SURFACE, yet they
 they have no malice at
 MARIA. There is their conduct
 contemptible; for in my
 excuse intemperance
 uncontrollable bitterness of mind
 JOSEPH SURFACE, Undoubtedly, Madama and it has
 always been a sentiment of mine that to propagate
 malicious truth by authority is more despicable than
 falsify from revenge.



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