THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

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

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY LANE THEATRE IN 1777 -

SIR PETER TEAZLE Mr. King.
SIR OLIVER SURFACE Mr. Yates.
SIR HARRY BUMPER Mr. Gawdry.
SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Mr. Dodd.
JOSEPH SURFACE Mr. Palmer.
CHARLES SURFACE Mr. Smith.
CARELESS. Mr. Farren.
SNAKE Mr. Packer.
CRABTREE Mr. Parsons.
ROWLEY Mr. Aickin.
MOSES Mr. Baddeley.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRIP</td>
<td>Mr. Lamash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LADY TEAZLE</td>
<td>Mrs. Abington.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LADY SNEERWELL</td>
<td>Miss Sherry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRS. CANDOUR</td>
<td>Miss Pope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARIA</td>
<td>Miss P. Hopkins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tell me, ye prime adepts in Scandal’s school,
Who rail by precept, and detract by rule,
Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
So deck’d with grace, and so unlike your own,
That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise!
Attend!- a model shall attract your view-
Daughters of calumny, I summon you!
You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
Or fond creation of the Muse and Love.
Attend, ye virgin critics, shrewd and sage,
Ye matron censors of this childish age,
Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare
A fix’d antipathy to young and fair;
By cunning, cautious; or by nature, cold,-
In maiden madness, virulently bold;-
Attend, ye skill’d to coin the precious tale,
Creating proof, where inuendos fail!
Whose practised memories, cruelly exact,
Omit no circumstance, except the fact!-
Attend, all ye who boast,- or old or young,-
The living libel of a slanderous tongue!
So shall my theme, as far contrasted be,
As saints by fiends or hymns by calumny.

Come, gentle Amoret (for ‘neath that name
In worthier verse is sung thy beauty’s fame),
Come- for but thee who seek the Muse? and while
Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,
With timid grace and hesitating eye,
The perfect model which I boast supply:-
Vain Muse! couldst thou the humblest sketch create
Of her, or slightest charm couldst imitate-
Could thy blest strain in kindred colours trace
The faintest wonder of her form and face-
Poets would study the immortal line,
And Reynolds own his art subdued by thine;
That art, which well might added lustre give
To nature’s best and heaven’s superlative:
On Granby’s cheek might bid new glories rise,
Or point a purer beam from Devon’s eyes!
Hard is the task to shape that beauty’s praise,
Whose judgment scorns the homage flattery pays?
But praising Amoret we cannot err,
No tongue o’ervalues Heaven, or flatters her!
Yet she by fate’s perverseness- she alone
Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise her own!
Adorning fashion, unadorn’d by dress,
Simple from taste, and not from carelessness;
Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,
Not stiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild:
No state has Amoret; no studied mien;
She frowns no goddess, and she moves no queen,
The softer charm that in her manner lies
Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise;
It justly suits the expression of her face,-
‘Tis less than dignity, and more than grace!
On her pure cheek the native hue is such,
That, form’d by Heaven to be admired so much,
The hand divine, with a less partial care,  
Might well have fixed a fainter crimson there,  
And bade the gentle inmate of her breast—  
Inshrined Modesty—supply the rest.  
But who the peril of her lips shall paint?  
Strip them of smiles—still, still all words are faint!  
But moving Love himself appears to teach  
Their action, though denied to rule her speech;  
And thou who seest her speak, and dost not hear,  
Mourn not her distant accents ‘scape thine ear;  
Viewing those lips, thou still may’st make pretence  
To judge of what she says, and swear ‘tis sense:  
Clothed with such grace, with such expression fraught,  
They move in meaning, and they pause in thought!  
But dost thou farther watch, with charm’d surprise,  
The mild irresolution of her eyes.  
Curious to mark how frequent they repose,  
In brief eclipse and momentary close—  
Ah! seest thou not an ambush’d Cupid there,  
Too tim’rous of his charge, with jealous care  
Veils and unveils those beams of heavenly light,  
Too full, too fatal else, for mortal sight?
Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
In pard'ning dimples hope a safe retreat.
What though her peaceful breast should ne’er allow
Subduing frowns to arm her altered brow,
By Love, I swear, and by his gentle wiles,
More fatal still the mercy of her smiles!
Thus lovely, thus adorn’d, possessing all
Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,
The height of vanity, might well be thought
Prerogative in her, and Nature’s fault.
Yet gentle Amoret, in mind supreme
As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme;
And, half mistrustful of her beauty’s store,
She barbs with wit those darts too keen before:-
Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though Greville, or the Muse, should deign to teach,
Fond to improve, nor timorous to discern
How far it is a woman’s grace to learn;
In Millar’s dialect she would not prove
Apollo’s priestess, but Apollo’s love,
Graced by those signs which truth delights to own,
The timid blush, and mild submitted tone:
Whate’er she says, though sense appear throughout,
Displays the tender hue of female doubt;
Deck’d with that charm, how lovely wit appears,
How graceful science, when that robe she wears!
Such too her talents, and her bent of mind,
As speak a sprightly heart by thought refined:
A taste for mirth, by contemplation school’d,
A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled,
A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide;
An awe of talent, which she owns with pride!
Peace, idle Muse! no more thy strain prolong,
But yield a theme, thy warmest praises wrong;
Just to her merit, though thou canst not raise
Thy feeble verse, behold th’ acknowledged praise
Has spread conviction through the envious train,
And cast a fatal gloom o’er Scandal’s reign!
And lo! each pallid hag, with blister’d tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung-
Owns all the colours just- the outline true:
Thee my inspirer, and my model- CREWE!
PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY MR. GARRIC

A SCHOOL for Scandal! tell me, I beseech you,
Needs there a school this modish art to teach you?
No need of lessons now, the knowing think;
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.
Caused by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours
Distress our fair ones- let them read the papers;
Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit;
Crave what you will- there’s quantum sufficit.
“Lord!” cries my Lady Wormwood (who loves tattle,
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just risen at noon, all night at cards when threshing
Strong tea and scandal- “Bless me, how refreshing!
Give me the papers, Lisp- how bold and free! [Sips.
Last night Lord L. [Sips.] was caught with Lady D.
For aching heads what charming sal volatile! [Sips.
If Mrs. B. will still continue flirting,
We hope she’ll DRAW, or we’ll UNDRAW the curtain.
Fine satire, poz- in public all abuse it,
But, by ourselves [Sips.], our praise we can’t refuse it.
Now, Lisp, read you—there, at that dash and star."
"Yes, ma'am—A certain Lord had best beware,
Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor Square;
For should he Lady W. find willing,
Wormwood is bitter"—"Oh! that’s me! the villain!
Throw it behind the fire, and never more
Let that vile paper come within my door."
Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must smart.
Is our young bard so young, to think that he
Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny?
Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
Alas! the devil’s sooner raised than laid.
So strong, so swift, the monster there’s no gagging:
Cut Scandal’s head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles once lavishly bestow’d,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks his hydra, Scandal, in his den.
For your applause all perils he would through—
He’ll fight—that’s write—a cavalliero true,
Till every drop of blood—that’s ink—is spilt for you.
ACT I

SCENE I.-
LADY SNEERWELL’S Dressing-room -
LADY SNEERWELL discovered at her toilet; SNAKE drinking chocolate. -

LADY SNEER
The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?

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

LADY SNEER
Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle’s intrigue with Captain Boastall?

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

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

SNAKE

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

LADY SNEER

She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.

SNAKE

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

LADY SNEER

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

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

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

LADY SNEER  
I conceive you mean with respect to my neighbor, Sir Peter Teazle, and his family?

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

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

SNAKE
No!

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

**SNAKE**

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

**LADY SNEER**

Heavens! how dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto, through shame, have concealed even from you? Must I confess that Charles- that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation- that he it is for whom I am thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?

**SNAKE**

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

**LADY SNEER**

For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious- in short, a sentimental knave; while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his acquaintance, he passes for a youthful miracle of prudence, good sense, and benevolence.
SNAKE
   Yes; yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England; and, above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment.

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

Enter SERVANT. -

SER
   Mr. Surface.

LADY SNEER
   Show him up.-

[Exit SERVANT. ]
   He generally calls about this time. I don’t wonder at people giving him to me for a lover. -

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE. -
JOS SURF
My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do to-day? Mr.
Snake, your most obedient.

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

JOS SURF
Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr.
Snake’s sensibility and discernment.

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

JOS SURF
I have not seen either since I left you; but I can inform
you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good
effect on Maria.
LADY SNEER  
Ah, my dear Snake! the merit of this belongs to you. But do your brother’s distresses increase?

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

LADY SNEER  
Poor Charles!

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

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

JOS SURF  
Egad, that’s true! I’ll keep that sentiment till I see
Sir Peter. However, it is certainly a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine, who, if he is to be reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship’s superior accomplishments and understanding.

**SNAKE**

I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here’s company coming; I’ll go and copy the letter I mentioned to you. Mr. Surface, your most obedient.

**JOS SURF**

Sir, your very devoted.

*Exit SNAKE.*

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

**LADY SNEER**

Why so?

**JOS SURF**

I have lately detected him in frequent conference with old Rowley, who was formerly my father’s steward, and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.
LADY SNEER
And do you think he would betray us?

Jos Surf
Nothing more likely: take my word for’t, Lady Smeerwell,
that fellow hasn’t virtue enough to be faithful even to his own
villany. Ah, Maria! -

Enter Maria. -

LADY SNEER
Maria, my dear, how do you do? What’s the matter?

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

LADY SNEER
Is that all?

Jos Surf
If my brother Charles had been of the party, madam,
perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.
LADY SNEER
   Nay, now you are severe; for I dare swear the truth of
   the matter is, Maria heard you were here. But, my dear, what has
   Sir Benjamin done, that you should avoid him so?

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

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

LADY SNEER
   Nay, but we should make allowance; Sir Benjamin is a wit
   and a poet.

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

JOS SURF
   Certainly, madam; to smile at the jest which plants a
   thorn in another’s breast is to become a principal in the mischief.
LADY SNEER
   Psha! there’s no possibility of being witty without a
   little ill-nature: the malice of a good thing is the barb that
   makes it stick. What’s your opinion, Mr. Surface?

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

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

Re-enter SERVANT. -

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

LADY SNEER
   Beg her to walk in.

[Exit SERVANT.]
Now, Maria, here is
a character to your taste; for, though Mrs. Candour is a little
talkative, everybody knows her to be the best-natured and best
sort of woman.

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

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

LADY SNEER
Hush!- here she is! -

Enter MRS. CANDOUR. -

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

Just so, indeed, ma’am.

Mrs. Can

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

Mar

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

Mrs. Can

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

Mar

‘Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

Mrs. Can

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

**MAR**

Such reports are highly scandalous.

**MRS. CAN**

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

**MAR**

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

**MRS. CAN**

Ah, no foundation in the world, I dare swear: no more, probably, than the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino’s affair with Colonel Cassino—though, to be sure, that matter was never rightly cleared up.
The license of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

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

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

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

MRS. CAN

I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against our acquaintance I own I always love to think the best. By-the-by, I hope ‘tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined?

JOS SURF

I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma’am.

MRS. CAN

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

JOS SURF

Doubtless, ma’am- a very great one. -

Re-enter SERVANT. -
Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

[Exit.

LADY SNEER
   So, Maria, you see your lover pursues you;
   positively you shan’t escape. -

Enter CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE. -

CRAB
   Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand. Mrs. Candour, I don’t
   believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin
   Backbite? Egad, ma’am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet
   too. Isn’t he, Lady Sneerwell?

SIR BEN
   Oh, fie, uncle!

CRAB
   Nay, egad it’s true: I back him at a rebus or a charade
   against the best 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 BEN
Uncle, now- pr’ythee-

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

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

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

[Pointing to MARIA.
CRAB
[To MARIA.]

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

SIR BEN
[To MARIA.]

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

CRAB

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

MRS. CAN

What, sir, do you mean the report of—

CRAB

No, ma’am, that’s not it.— Miss Nicely is going to be married
to her own footman.
MRS. CAN
  Impossible!

CRAB
  Ask Sir Benjamin.

SIR BEN
  ‘Tis very true, ma’am: everything is fixed, and the wedding liveries bespoke.

CRAB
  Yes- and they do say there were pressing reasons for it.

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

MRS. CAN
  It can’t be- and I wonder any one should believe such a story of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.

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

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

SIR BEN

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

MRS. CAN

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

CRAB

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

SIR BEN

Oh, to be sure!—the most whimsical circumstance.
LADY SNEER
   How was it, pray?

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

LADY SNEER
   Strange, indeed!

CRAB
   Matter of fact, I assure you. O Lud! Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle, Sir Oliver, is coming home?
JOS SURF
Not that I know of, indeed, sir.

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

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

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

CRAB
That’s true, egad, nephew. If the old Jewry was a ward, I
believe Charles would be an alderman: no man more popular there,
‘fore Gad! I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish
tontine; and that, whenever he is sick, they have prayers for
the recovery of his health in all the synagogues.
SIR BEN
Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me,
when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner with
a dozen of his own securities; have a score of tradesmen in the
ante-chamber, and an officer behind every guest’s chair.

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

MAR
[Aside.]
Their malice is intolerable!-

[Aloud.]
Lady Sneerwell,
I must wish you a good morning: I’m not very well.

[Exit.

MRS. CAN
O dear! she changes colour very much.
LADY SNEER
   Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her; she may want your assistance.

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

[Exit.

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

SIR BEN
   The young lady’s penchant is obvious.

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

SIR BEN
   Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you; but depend on’t your brother is utterly undone.
CRAB  
O Lud, ay! undone as ever man was- can’t raise a guinea.

SIR BEN  
And everything sold, I’m told, that was movable.

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

SIR BEN  
And I’m very sorry also to hear some bad stories against him.

[Going.

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

SIR BEN  
But, however, as he’s your brother-

[Going.

CRAB  
Well tell you all another opportunity.
LADY SNEER
   Ha, ha! ’tis very hard for them to leave a subject they
   have not quite run down.

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

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

[Exeunt.

SCENE II.
A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE’S House
Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -

SIR PET
   When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to
   expect? ’Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the
happiest of men- and I have been the most miserable dog ever since! We tift a little going to church, and fairly quarrelled before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution- a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race ball. Yet she now plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of fashion and the town, with as ready a grace as if she never had seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune, and contradicts all my humours; yet the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I’ll never be weak enough to own it.

Enter ROWLEY.

ROW

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

SIR PET

Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.
ROW
What can have happened since yesterday?

SIR PET
A good question to a married man!

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

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

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

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

ROW
Indeed!

SIR PET
Ay; and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she
is always in the wrong! But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the perverseness of her disposition. Then, to complete my vexation, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power of a father over, is determined to turn rebel too, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband; meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

ROW

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

SIR PET

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

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

SIR PET
What! let me hear.

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

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

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

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

ROW

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

SIR PET

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

ROW

Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

SIR PET

What, as we drink health to a friend in consumption! Ah, Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, but he has been steady to his text. Well, he must be soon at my house, though- I’ll instantly give orders for his reception. But, Master Rowley, don’t drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.
ROW
By no means.

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

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

SIR PET
Egad, and so we must- and that’s impossible. Ah! Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves- no- the crime carries its punishment along with it.

[Exeunt.

ACT II

SCENE I.
A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE’S House
Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE. -
SIR PET  
Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I’ll not bear it!

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

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

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

SIR PET  
Old enough!- ay, there it is! Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I’ll not be ruined by your extravagance!
LADY TEAZ
   My extravagance! I’m sure I’m not more extravagant than a
   woman of fashion ought to be.

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

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

SIR PET
   Oons! madam- if you had been born to this, I shouldn’t
   wonder at your talking thus; but you forget what your situation
   was when I married you.

LADY TEAZ
   No, no, I don’t; ‘twas a very disagreeable one, or I
   should never have married you.
SIR PET
Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat a humbler style-the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys at your side, your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working.

LADY TEAZ
Oh, yes! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led. My daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt-book, and comb my aunt Deborah’s lapdog.

SIR PET
Yes, yes, ma’am, ’twas so indeed.

LADY TEAZ
And then, you know, my evening amusements! To draw patterns for ruffles, which I had not the materials to make up; to play Pope Joan with the Curate; to read a sermon to my aunt; or to be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.
SIR PET
I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were
the recreations I took you from; but now you must have your
couch-vis-a-vis- and three powdered footmen before your chair;
and, in the summer, a pair of white cats to draw you to
Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were
content to ride double, behind the butler, on a docked
couch-horse?

LADY TEAZ
No- I swear I never did that; I deny the butler and the
couch-horse.

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

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

SIR PET
My widow, I suppose?
LADY TEAZ

   Hem! hem!

SIR PET

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

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

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

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

   The fashion, indeed! what had you to do with the fashion
   before you married me?
LADY TEAZ
For my part, I should think you would like to have your
wife thought a woman of taste.

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

LADY TEAZ
That's very true, indeed, Sir Peter! and, after having
married you, I should never pretend to taste again, I allow. But
now, Sir Peter, since we have finished our daily jangle, I
presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's?

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

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

SIR PET
Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a
vengeance; for they don't choose anybody should have a character
but themselves! Such a crew! Ah! many a wretch has rid on a hurdle who has done less mischief than these utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation.

**LADY TEAZ**

What, would you restrain the freedom of speech?

**SIR PET**

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

**LADY TEAZ**

Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace. But I vow I bear no malice against the people I abuse: when I say an ill-natured thing, ’tis out of pure good humour; and I take it for granted they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell’s too.

**SIR PET**

Well, well, I’ll call in just to look after my own character.
LADY TEAZ
Then, indeed, you must make haste after me or you’ll be too late. So good-bye to ye.

[Exit.

SIR PET
So- I have gained much by my intended expostulation! Yet with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasantly she shows her contempt for my authority! Well, though I can’t make her love me, there is great satisfaction in quarrelling with her; and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she is doing everything in her power to plague me.

[Exit.

SCENE II.
A Room in LADY SNEERWELL’S House -
LADY SNEERWELL, MRS. CANDOUR, CRABTREE, SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE, and JOSEPH SURFACE, discovered. -
LADY SNEER
   Nay, positively, we will hear it.
JOS SURF
   Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.
SIR BEN
   O plague on’t, uncle! ’tis mere nonsense.
CRAB
   No, no; ‘fore Gad, very clever for an extempore!
SIR BEN
   But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance
   You must know, that one day last week, as Lady Betty Curricle
   was taking the dust in Hyde Park, in a sort of duodecimo
   phaeton, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies; upon
   which, I took out my pocket-book, and in one moment produced
   the following:- -
   Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies;
   Other horses are clowns, but these macaronies:
   To give them this title I am sure can’t be wrong.
   Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long. -
CRAB
    There, ladies, done in the smack of a whip, and on horseback too.

JOS SURF
    A very Phoebus, mounted- indeed, Sir Benjamin!

SIR BEN
    Oh dear, sir!- trifles- trifles.- -

Enter LADY TEAZLE and MARIA. -

MRS. CAN
    I must have a copy.

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

LADY TEAZ
    I believe he’ll wait on your ladyship presently.

LADY SNEER
    Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit down
to piquet with Mr. Surface.
MAR
    I take very little pleasure in cards- however, I’ll do as your ladyship pleases.

LADY TEAZ
    I am surprised Mr. Surface should sit down with her; I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking to me before Sir Peter came.

[Aside.

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

LADY TEAZ
    What’s the matter, Mrs. Candour?

MRS. CAN
    They’ll not allow our friend Miss Vermillion to be handsome.

LADY SNEER
    Oh, surely she is a pretty woman.
CRAB
   I am very glad you think so, ma’am.

MRS. CAN
   She has a charming fresh colour.

LADY TEAZ
   Yes, when it is fresh put on.

MRS. CAN
   Oh, fie! I’ll swear her colour is natural: I have seen it come and go!

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

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

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

CRAB
   Who? Mrs. Evergreen? O Lord! she’s six-and-fifty if she’s an hour!
MRS. CAN
Now positively you wrong her; fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost- and I don’t think she looks more.

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

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

SIR BEN
Nay, now, Lady Sneeewell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, ‘tis not that she paints so ill- but, when she has finished her face, she joins it on so badly to her neck, that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur may see at once that the head’s modern, though the trunk’s antique!

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

SIR BEN
    Why, she has very pretty teeth.

LADY TEAZ
    Yes; and on that account, when she is neither speaking
    nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely
    shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on ajar, as it were- thus.
    [Shows her teeth.

MRS. CAN
    How can you be so ill-natured?

LADY TEAZ
    Nay, I allow even that’s better than the pains Mrs. Prim
    takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till
    it positively resembles the aperture of a poor’s-box, and all
    her words appear to slide out edge-wise, as it were- thus: How
    do you do, madam? Yes, madam.

LADY SNEER
    Very well, Lady Teazle; I see you can be a little severe.
LADY TEAZ
    In defence of a friend it is but justice. But here comes
    Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry. -

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -

SIR PET
    Ladies, your most obedient-

[Aside.]

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

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

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

MRS. CAN
    Oh, they will allow good qualities to nobody; not even
good nature to our friend Mrs. Pursy.
LADY TEAZ
What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs. Quadrille’s last night?

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

LADY SNEER
That’s very true, indeed.

LADY TEAZ
Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey; laces herself by pulleys; and often, in the hottest noon in summer, you may see her on a little squat pony, with her hair plaited up behind like a drummer’s and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

MRS. CAN
I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

SIR PET
Yes, a good defence, truly.

MRS. CAN
Truly, Lady Teazle is as consorious as Miss Sallow.
CRAB  
Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious-an awkward gawky, without any one good point under heaven.

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

LADY SNEER  
Though, surely, she is handsome still- and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle-light, it is not to be wondered at.

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

SIR BEN  
Ah! you are both of you too good-natured!
SIR PET
Yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! mercy on me!

[Aside.

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

SIR PET
No, to be sure.

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

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

MRS. CAN
Well, I will never join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical on beauty.
CRAB
   Oh, to be sure! she has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen; 'tis a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.

SIR BEN
   So she has, indeed- an Irish front-

CRAB
   Caledonian locks-

SIR BEN
   Dutch nose-

CRAB
   Austrian lips-

SIR BEN
   Complexion of a Spaniard-

CRAB
   And teeth a la Chinoise-

SIR BEN
   In short, her face resembles a table d’hote at Spa- where no two guests are of a nation-
CRAB
    Or a congress at the close of a general war- wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear to have a different interest, and her nose and her chin are the only parties likely to join issue.

MRS. CAN
    Ha! ha! ha!

SIR PET
    Mercy on my life!- a person they dine with twice a week!

[Aside.

LADY SNEER
    Go- go- you are a couple of provoking Toads.

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

SIR PET
    Madam, madam, I beg your pardon- there’s no stopping these good gentlemen’s tongues. But when I tell you, Mrs. Candour, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you’ll not take her part.
LADY SNEER
   Ha! ha! ha! well said, Sir Peter! but you are a cruel creature - too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.

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

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

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

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

SIR PET
   ‘Fore heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting
with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors, and pass an act for the preservation of fame, I believe many would thank them for the bill.

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

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

LADY SNEER
Go, you monster!

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

SIR PET
Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the indorsers.
CRAB
Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale
without some foundation.

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

Enter SERVANT, who whispers SIR PETER. -

SIR PET
Ill be with them directly.-

[Exit SERVANT.]
I'll get away
unperceived.

[Aside.

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

SIR PET
Your ladyship must excuse me; I’m called away by particular
business. But I leave my character behind me.
[Exit.

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

LADY TEAZ
Oh, pray don’t mind that; come, do let’s hear them.

[Exeunt all but JOSEPH SURFACE and MARIA.

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

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

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

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?

Why will you distress me by renewing this subject?

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

Ungenerously urged! But, whatever my sentiments are for that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up, because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.
JOS SURF
   Nay, but, Maria, do not leave me with a frown: by all
   that’s honest, I swear-

[Kneels. -

Re-enter LADY TEAZLE behind. -

[Aside.]
   Gad’s life, here’s Lady Teazle.

[Aloud to MARIA.]
   You must not- no, you shall not- for, though I have the greatest
   regard for Lady Teazle-

MAR
   Lady Teazle!

JOS SURF
   Yet were Sir Peter to suspect-
LADY TEAZ
[Coming forward.]
    What is this, pray? Do you take her for me?- Child, you are
    wanted in the next room.

[Exit MARIA.]
    What is all this, pray?

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

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

JOS SURF
    Oh, she’s a child, and I thought a little bombast- but,
    Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my
    library, as you promised?
LADY TEAZ
   No, no; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you
   know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion requires.

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

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

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

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

JOS SURF
   But we had best not return together.
LADY TEAZ

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

[Exit.

JOS SURF

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

[Exit.

SCENE III.

A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE’S House -
Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY. -

SIR OLIV

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

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?

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

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

ROW

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

SIR OLIV

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

ROW

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

SIR OLIV

Egad, so he does! Mercy on me, he’s greatly altered, and seems to have a settled married look! One may read husband in his face at this distance! -

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -
SIR PET
Ha! Sir Oliver- my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

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

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

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

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

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

Take care, pray, sir.

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

Wild! Ah! my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there; he’s a lost young man, indeed. However, his brother will make you amends; Joseph is, indeed, what a youth should be—everybody in the world speaks well of him.

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

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

SIR OLIV

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

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

SIR OLIV

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

ROW

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

SIR PET

Oh, my life on Joseph’s honour!

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

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

[Exeunt.

ACT III

SCENE I
A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE’S House -
Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, and ROWLEY. -

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

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

SIR OLIV
Ah, he is my brother’s son.

SIR PET
Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to-

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

“a heart to pity, and a hand
Open as day, for melting charity."

**SIR PET**

Psha! What signifies his having an open hand or purse either, when he has nothing left to give? Well, well, make the trial, if you please. But where is the fellow whom you brought for Sir Oliver to examine, relative to Charles’s affairs?

**ROW**

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

**SIR PET**

Pray let us have him in.

**ROW**

Desire Mr. Moses to walk upstairs.

*[Calls to SERVANT]*

**SIR PET**

But, pray, why should you suppose he will speak the truth?
Oh, I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived; so that you may depend on his fidelity to his own interests. I have also another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall shortly produce to remove some of your prejudices, Sir Peter, relative to Charles and Lady Teazle.

SIR PET
I have heard too much on that subject.

ROW
Here comes the honest Israelite. -

Enter MOSES. -

-This is Sir Oliver.

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

MOS
Yes, Sir Oliver, I have done all I could for him; but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.
SIR OLIV
That was unlucky, truly; for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

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

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

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

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

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

SIR PET
Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me!- Charles, you say, does not know Mr. Premium?
MOS  
Not at all.

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

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

SIR PET  
True- so you may.

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

MOS  
You may depend upon me.-

[Looks at his watch.]
This is near the
time I was to have gone.

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

**MOS**
There’s no need- the principal is Christian.

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

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

**MOS**
Not in the least.

**SIR OLIV**
Well, but how must I talk? there’s certainly some cant of
usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.
SIR PET
    Oh, there’s not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands. Hey, Moses?

MOS
    Yes, that’s a very great point.

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

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

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

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

SIR PET
    A good honest trade you’re learning, Sir Oliver!
SIR OLIV
Truly I think so- and not unprofitable.

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

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

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

SIR OLIV
My friend an unconscionable dog, is he?

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

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

SIR PET
I’faith, Sir Oliver- Mr. Premium, I mean- you’ll soon be
master of the trade. But, Moses! would not you have him run out a little against the annuity bill? That would be in character, I should think.

MOS

Very much.

ROW

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

MOS

Ay, great pity!

SIR PET

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

SIR OLIV

So, so- Moses shall give me further instructions as we go together.
SIR PET
You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

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

[Exit with MOSES.

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

ROW
No, upon my word, Sir Peter.
Sir Peter. Well, go bring me this Snake, and I’ll hear what he has
to say presently. I see Maria, and want to speak with her.-

[Exit ROWLEY.]
I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle
and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this
subject to my friend Joseph- I am determined I will do it- he
will give me his opinion sincerely. -

*Enter MARIA.*

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

**MAR**

No, sir; he was engaged.

**SIR PET**

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

**MAR**

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

**SIR PET**

So- here’s perverseness! No, no, Maria, ‘tis Charles only
whom you would prefer. ‘Tis evident his vices and follies have
won your heart.
MAR
This is unkind, sir. You know I have obeyed you in neither seeing nor corresponding with him: I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it culpable, if, while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests pity for his distresses.

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

MAR
Never to his brother!

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

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

Was ever man so crossed as I am, everything conspiring to fret me! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight, before her father, a hale and hearty man, died, on purpose, I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter.

[LADY TEAZLE sings without.]

But here comes my helpmate! She appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little!

Enter LADY TEAZLE.

LADY TEAZ

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

SIR PET

Ah, Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good humoured at all times.
LADY TEAZ
   I am sure I wish I had; for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good humoured now, and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?

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

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

[Offering her hand.

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

LADY TEAZ
   If you please, I’m sure I don’t care how soon we leave off quarrelling, provided you’ll own you were tired first.
SIR PET  
Well- then let our future contest be, who shall be most  
obliging.

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

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

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

SIR PET  
Indeed!  

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

**SIR PET**

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

**LADY TEAZ**

And never differ again?

**SIR PET**

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

**LADY TEAZ**

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

**SIR PET**

Now, see, my angel! take care- contradicting isn’t the way to keep friends.
LADY TEAZ
Then, don’t you begin it, my love!

SIR PET
There, now! you- you are going on. You don’t perceive, my life, that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry.

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

SIR PET
There! now you want to quarrel again.

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

SIR PET
There now! who begins first?

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

SIR PET
No, no, madam: the fault’s in your own temper.
LADY TEAZ
   Ay, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.

SIR PET
   Your cousin Sophy is a forward, impertinent gipsy.

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

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

LADY TEAZ
   So much the metter.

SIR PET
   No, no, madam: ‘tis evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you- a pert, rural coquette, that had refused half the honest ‘squires in the neighbourhood!

LADY TEAZ
   And I am sure I was a fool to marry you- an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with any one who would have him.
SIR PET
Ay, ay, madam; but you were pleased enough to listen to me:
you never had such an offer before.

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

SIR PET
I have done with you, madam! You are an unfeeling,
ungrateful- but there’s an end of everything. I believe you
capable of everything that is bad. Yes, madam, I now believe the
reports relative to you and Charles, madam. Yes, madam, you and
Charles are, not without grounds-

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

SIR PET
Very well, madam! very well! a separate maintenance as soon
as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce! I’ll make an example of
myself for the benefit of all old bachelors. Let us separate,
madam.
LADY TEAZ
Agreed! agreed! And now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a
mind once more, we may be the happiest couple, and never differ
again, you know: ha! ha! ha! Well, you are going to be in a
passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you- so, bye! bye!
[Exit.

SIR PET
Plagues and tortures! can’t I make her angry either! Oh, I
am the most miserable fellow! But I’ll not bear her presuming,
to keep her temper: no! she may break my heart, but she shan’t
keep her temper.

[Exit.

SCENE II.
A Room in CHARLES SURFACE’S House
Enter TRIP, MOSES, and SIR OLIVER SURFACE. -

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

SIR OLIV
Mr. Moses, what is my name?
[Aside to MOSES.

MOS

Mr. Premium.

TRIP

Premium- very well.

[Exit, taking snuff.

SIR OLIV

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

MOS

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

SIR OLIV

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

Re-enter TRIP. -
TRIP  
My master says you must wait, gentlemen: he has company, and
can’t speak with you yet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIV

Bags and bouquets! halters and bastinadoes!

[Aside.

TRIP

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

SIR OLIV

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

[Aside.

MOS

‘Twas not to be done, indeed, Mr. Trip.

TRIP

Good lack, you surprise me! My friend Brush has indorsed it, and I thought when he put his name at the back of a bill ‘twas the same as cash.
MOS
   No, 'twouldn't do.

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

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

[Aside.

MOS
   Well, but you must insure your place.

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

SIR OLIV
   It’s more than I would your neck.

[Aside.

MOS
   But is there nothing you could deposit?
TRIP

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

MOS

Well, well.

[Bell rings.

TRIP

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed!
SCENE III.
Another Room in the same
CHARLES SURFACE, SIR HARRY BUMPER, CARELESS, and
GENTLEMEN, discovered drinking. -

CHAS. SURF
‘Fore heaven, ‘tis true!- there’s the great degeneracy
of the age. Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit, and
politeness; but plague on’t they won’t drink.

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

1ST GENT
But what are they to do who love play better than wine?
CARE
True! there’s Sir Harry diets himself for gaming, and is now under a hazard regimen.

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

2ND GENT
Ay, that I believe.

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

CARE
Now then, Charles, be honest, and give us your real favourite.
CHAS. SURF
Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give a round of her peers, which is impossible - on earth.

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

CHAS. SURF
Here then, bumpers, you rogues! bumpers! Maria! Maria-

SIR HAR
Maria who?

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

CARE
Nay, never study, Sir Harry: we’ll stand to the toast though your mistress should want an eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.
Egad, so I have! and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.

[Sings. -

Here’s to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here’s to the widow of fifty;
Here’s to the flaunting extravagant quean,
And here’s to the housewife that’s thrifty. -
Chorus. Let the toast pass,-
Drink to the lass,
I’ll warrant she’ll prove an excuse for a glass. -
Here’s to the charmer whose dimples we prize;
Now to the maid who has none, sir;
Here’s to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here’s to the nymph with but one, sir. -
Chorus. Let the toast pass,-
Drink to the lass,
I’ll warrant she’ll prove an excuse for a glass. -
Here’s to the maid with a bosom of snow:
Now to her that’s as brown as a berry:
Here’s to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the damsel that’s merry. -
Chorus. Let the toast pass,-
Drink to the lass,
I’ll warrant she’ll prove an excuse for a glass. -
For let ‘em be clumsy, or let ‘em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather;
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
So fill up your glasses, nay, fill to the brim,
And let us e’en toast them together. -
Chorus. Let the toast pass,-
Drink to the lass,
I’ll warrant she’ll prove an excuse for a glass. -
ALL. Bravo! Bravo! -

Enter TRIP, and whispers CHARLES SURFACE. -

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

CARE
     Nay, pr’ythee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless
beauties, I suppose, dropped in by chance?
CHAS. SURF
   No, faith! To tell you the truth, 'tis a Jew and a broker, who are come by appointment.

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

1ST GENT
   Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

2ND GENT
   Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

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

[Exit TRIP.]
   Though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you.

CARE
   Charles, let us give them some generous Burgundy, and perhaps they'll grow conscientious.
CHAS. SURF
Oh, hang ‘em, no! wine does but draw forth a man’s natural qualities; and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery.

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

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

MOS
Yes, sir.

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

[TRIP gives chairs and glasses, and exit.]

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

MOS
Success to usury!
CARE
Right, Moses—usury is prudence and industry, and deserves to succeed.

SIR OLIV
Then here’s—All the success it deserves!

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

1ST GENT
A pint bumper, at least.

MOS
Oh, pray, sir, consider—Mr. Premium’s a gentleman.

CARE
And therefore loves good wine.

2ND GENT
Give Moses a quart glass—this is mutiny, and a high contempt for the chair.
CARE
Here, now for’t! I’ll see justice done, to the last drop of my bottle.

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

CHAS. SURF
No, hang it, you shan’t; Mr. Premium’s a stranger.

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

[Aside.

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

CHAS. SURF
I will! I will!

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

Careless.
CARE

[Returning.]

Well!

CHAS. SURF

Perhaps I may want you.

CARE

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

[Exit.

MOS

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

Sir, I like you the better for it. However, you are mistaken in one thing; I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend; but then he’s an unconscionable dog. Isn’t he, Moses? And must sell stock to accommodate you. Mustn’t he, Moses?

MOS

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

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

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

Nor any stock, I presume?

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

Why, to say the truth, I am.

CHAS. SURF

Then you must know that I have a devilish rich uncle in
the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the
greatest expectations?

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

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

SIR OLIV
    Indeed! this is the first I’ve heard of it.

CHAS. SURF
    Yes, yes, ‘tis just so. Moses knows ‘tis true; don’t
you, Moses?

MOS
    Oh, yes! I’ll swear to’t.

SIR OLIV
    Egad, they’ll persuade me presently I’m at Bengal.

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

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

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

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

What! I suppose you’re afraid that Sir Oliver is too good a life?
SIR OLIV
No, indeed I am not; though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.

CHAS. SURF
There again, now, you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably, poor uncle Oliver. Yes, yes, he breaks apace, I’m told- and is so much altered lately that his nearest relations would not know him.

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

CHAS. SURF
Ha! ha!- you’re glad to hear that, little Premium?

SIR OLIV
No, no, I’m not.

CHAS. SURF
Yes, yes, you are- ha! ha! ha!- you know that mends your chance.
SIR OLIV
   But I’m told Sir Oliver is coming over; nay, some say he has actually arrived.

CHAS. SURF
   Psha! sure I must know better than you whether he’s come or not. No, no, rely on’t he’s at this moment at Calcutta. Isn’t he, Moses?

MOS
   Oh, yes, certainly.

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

MOS
   Yes, most undoubted!

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

CHAS. SURF
   How do you mean?
SIR OLIV
For instance, now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate.

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

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

[Aloud.]

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

CHAS. SURF
Yes, yes, so it was- vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition, so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.
SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

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

[Aloud.]

Pray, what has become of the
books?

CHAS. SURF

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

MOS

I know nothing of books.

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

Not much, indeed; unless you have a mind to the family
pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above: and if you
have a taste for old paintings, egad, you shall have ‘em a
bargain!
SIR OLIV
    Hey! what the devil! sure, you wouldn’t sell your
    forefathers, would you?

CHAS. SURF
    Every man of them, to the best bidder.

SIR OLIV
    What! your great-uncles and aunts?

CHAS. SURF
    Ay, and my great-grandfathers and grandmothers too.

SIR OLIV

    [Aside.]
    Now I give him up!

    [Aloud.]
    What the plague,
    have you no bowels for your own kindred? Odd’s life! do you take
    me for Shylock in the play, that you would raise money of me on
    your own flesh and blood?
CHAS. SURF
   Nay, my little broker, don’t be angry: what need you
care, if you have your money’s worth?

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

[Aside.]
   Oh, I’ll never forgive him this! never! -

Re-enter CARELESS. -

CARE
   Come, Charles, what keeps you?

CHAS. SURF
   I can’t come yet. I’faith, we are going to have a sale
above stairs, here’s little Premium will buy all my ancestors!

CARE
   Oh, burn your ancestors!
CHAS. SURF
No, he may do that afterwards, if he pleases. Stay,
Careless, we want you: egad, you shall be auctioneer- so come
along with us.

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

SIR OLIV
Oh, the profligates!

[Aside.

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

SIR OLIV
Oh, yes, I do, vastly! Ha! ha! ha! yes, yes, I think it a
rare joke to sell one’s family by auction- ha! ha!-

[Aside.]

Oh,
the prodigal!
CHAS. SURF
   To be sure! when a man wants money, where the plague
should he get assistance, if he can’t make free with his own
relations?

[Exeunt.

SIR OLIV
   I’ll never forgive him; never! never!

ACT IV

SCENE I.
A Picture Room in CHARLES SURFACE’S House
Enter CHARLES SURFACE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, MOSES, and CARELESS.

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

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

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

SIR OLIV

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

CHAS. SURF

I hope not. Well, you see, Master Premium, what a domestic character I am; here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family. But come, get to your pulpit, Mr. Auctioneer; here’s an old gouty chair of my grandfather’s will answer the purpose.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

Egad, that’s true. What parchment have we here? Oh, our genealogy in full.
[Taking pedigree down.]

Here, Careless, you
shall have no common bit of mahogany, here’s the family tree for
you, you rogue! This shall be your hammer, and now you may
knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

SIR OLIV

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

[Aside.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside to MOSES.]

Bid him speak.

MOS

Mr. Premium would have you speak.

CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

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

[Aloud.]

Very well, sir, I take him at that.
CHAS. SURF

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

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

[Aloud.]

Five pounds ten- she’s mine.

CHAS. SURF

Knock down my aunt Deborah! Here, now, are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs.- You see, Moses, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair.
SIR OLIV
    Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.

CHAS. SURF
    Well, take that couple for the same.

MOS
    ‘Tis a good bargain.

CHAS. SURF
    Careless! - This, now, is a grandfather of my mother’s, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit. - What do you rate him at, Moses?

MOS
    Four guineas.

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

SIR OLIV
    By all means.
CARE
   Gone.

CHAS. SURF
   And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter
   Blunt, Esquires, both members of Parliament, and noted speakers;
   and, what’s very extraordinary, I believe, this is the first
   time they were ever bought or sold.

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

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

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

SIR OLIV
   No, no; six will do for the mayor.

CHAS. SURF
   Come, make it guineas, and I’ll throw you the two
   aldermen there into the bargain.
SIR OLIV
They’re mine.

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

CARE
Ay ay, that will be the best way.

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

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

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

CHAS. SURF
What, that? Oh; that’s my uncle Oliver! ‘Twas done before he went to India.
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?

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?

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.

[Aside.]

The rogue’s my nephew after all!-

[Aloud.]

But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.
CHAS. SURF
I’m sorry for’ t, for you certainly will not have it.
Oons, haven’t you got enough of them?

SIR OLIV
[Aside.]
I forgive him everything!

[Aloud.]
But, sir,
when I take a whim in my head, I don’t value money. I’ll give
you as much for that as for all the rest.

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

SIR OLIV
[Aside.]
How like his father the dog is.

[Aloud.]
Well, well, I have done.-

[Aside.]

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

[Aloud.]

Here is a draught for your sum.

CHAS. SURF

Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds!

SIR OLIV

You will not let Sir Oliver go?

CHAS. SURF

Zounds! no! I tell you, once more.

SIR OLIV

Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time. But give me your hand on the bargain: you are an honest fellow, Charles- I beg pardon, sir, for being so free.- Come, Moses.
CHAS. SURF
   Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow!- But hark’ee,
   Premium, you’ll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen.

SIR OLIV
   Yes, yes, I’ll send for them in a day or two.

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

SIR OLIV
   I will, I will- for all but Oliver.

CHAS. SURF
   Ay, all but the little nabob.

SIR OLIV
   You’re fixed on that?

CHAS. SURF
   Peremptorily.
SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

A dear extravagant rogue!

[Aloud.]

Good day!-
Come, Moses.

[Aside.]

Let me hear now who dares call him profligate!

[Exit with MOSES.

CARE

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

CHAS. SURF

Egad, he’s the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how the devil Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow.- Ha! here’s Rowley.- Do, Careless, say I’ll join the company in a few moments.
CARE
I will— but don’t let that old blockhead persuade you to
squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such
nonsense; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant
fellows.

CHAS. SURF
Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

CARE
Nothing else.

CHAS. SURF
Ay, ay, never fear.—

[Exit CARELESS.]

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

[Bows ceremoniously to the pictures. -]
Enter ROWLEY.

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

ROW

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

CHAS. SURF

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

ROW

There’s no making you serious a moment.

CHAS. SURF

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

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.

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

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

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

Ay, ay, it’s very true; but, hark’ee, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I’ll give; so, damn your economy! and now for hazard.

[Exeunt.]
SCENE II.
Another room in the same
Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and MOSES. -

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

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

MOS
And loves wine and women so much.

SIR OLIV
But he would not sell my picture.

MOS
And games so deep.

SIR OLIV
But he would not sell my picture. Oh, here’s Rowley. -

Enter ROWLEY. -

ROW
So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase-
SIR OLIV
  Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors
  like old tapestry.

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

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

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

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

ROW
  Not yet awhile; Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about
  this time. -

Enter TRIP. -
TRIP

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

[Exit with MOSES.

SIR OLIV

There’s a fellow for you! Would you believe it, that puppy intercepted the Jew on our coming, and wanted to raise money before he got to his master!

ROW

Indeed.

SIR OLIV

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

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.

A Library in JOSEPH SURFACE’S House -
Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT. -
JOS SURF  
No letter from Lady Teazle?

SER  
No, sir.

JOS SURF  
[Aside.]  
I am surprised she has not sent, if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet I wish I may not lose the heiress, through the scrape I have drawn myself into with the wife; however, Charles’s imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour.

[Knocking without.

SER  
Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

JOS SURF  
Hold! See whether it is or not, before you go to the door: I have a particular message for you if it should be my brother.
‘Tis her ladyship, sir; she always leaves the chair at the milliner’s in the next street.

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

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. -

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.

O madam, punctuality is a species of constancy very unfashionable in a lady of quality.
Places chairs, and sits after LADY TEAZLE is seated.

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

JOS SURF
I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.

Aside.

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

JOS SURF
Aside.

Indeed I do not.

Aloud.

Oh, certainly I do! for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.
LADY TEAZ

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

JOS SURF

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

LADY TEAZ

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

JOS SURF

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

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

JOS SURF
   Undoubtedly- for your husband should never be deceived in you: and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment to his discernment.

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

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

LADY TEAZ
‘Tis very true!

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

LADY TEAZ
Do you think so?

JOS SURF
Oh, I’m sure on’t; and then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for- in short, your character at present is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying from too much health.

LADY TEAZ
So, so then I perceive your prescription is, that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation?
JOS SURF
   Exactly so, upon my credit, ma’am.

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

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

LADY TEAZ
   Why, if my understanding were once convinced-

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

LADY TEAZ
   Don’t you think we may as well leave honour out of the
   argument?

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

LADY TEAZ
   I doubt they do, indeed; and I will fairly own to you,
   that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir
   Peter’s ill-usage sooner than your honourable logic, after all.

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

[Taking her hand. -

Re-enter SERVANT. -

‘Sdeath, you blockhead- what do you want?

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

JOS SURF
   Sir Peter!- Oons- the devil!

LADY TEAZ
   Sir Peter! O Lud! I’m ruined! I’m ruined!
SER
    Sir, ‘twasn’t I let him in.

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

    [Goes behind the screen.

JOS SURF
    Give me that book.

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

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -

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

    [Pats JOSEPH on the shoulder.

JOS SURF
    Oh, my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon.

    [Gaping, throws away the book.]
I have been dozing over a stupid book.
Well, I am much obliged to you for this call. You haven’t been here, I believe, since I fitted up this room. Books, you know, are the only things I am a coxcomb in.

SIR PET
‘Tis very neat indeed. Well, well, that’s proper; and you can make even your screen a source of knowledge- hung, I perceive, with maps.

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

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

JOS SURF
Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry either.

[Aside.

SIR PET
Well, I have a little private business-
JOS SURF
You need not stay.

[To SERVANT.

SER
No, sir.

(EXIT.

JOS SURF
Here’s a chair, Sir Peter— I beg-

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

JOS SURF
Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it.

SIR PET
Yes, ‘tis but too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what’s worse, I have pretty good authority to suppose she has formed an attachment to another.
JOS SURF
   Indeed! you astonish me!

SIR PET
   Yes! and, between ourselves, I think I’ve discovered the person.

JOS SURF
   How! you alarm me exceedingly.

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

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

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

JOS SURF
   I haven’t the most distant idea. It can’t be Sir Benjamin Backbite!
SIR PET
Oh, no! what say you to Charles?

JOS SURF
My brother! impossible!

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

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

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

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

SIR PET
Ay; but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?
JOS SURF
That’s very true.

SIR PET
And then, you know, the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have any great affection for me; and if she were to be frail, and I were to make it public, why the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

JOS SURF
That’s true, to be sure- they would laugh.

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

JOS SURF
No, you must never make it public.

SIR PET
But then again- that the nephew of my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.
JOS SURF
Ay, there’s the point. When ingratitude barbs the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.

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

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

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

JOS SURF
Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle’s honour.
SIR PET

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

JOS SURF

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

[Aside.]

I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.

SIR PET

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

**JOS SURF**

Nor I, if I could help it.

*Aside.*

**SIR PET**

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

**JOS SURF**

*[Softly.]*

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

**SIR PET**

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

**JOS SURF**

*[Softly.]*

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

‘Sdeath, I shall be ruined every way!

**SIR PET**

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

**JOS SURF**

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

*Re-enter SERVANT.*

Well, sir?

**SER**

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

**JOS SURF**

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

**SIR PET**

Stay- hold- a thought has struck me:- you shall be at home.
JOS SURF
   Well, well, let him up.-

[Exit SERVANT.]

    He’ll interrupt
    Sir Peter, however.

[Aside.

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

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

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

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

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

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

No! then, faith, let her hear it out.- Here’s a closet will
do as well.
JOS SURF
    Well, go in there.

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

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

LADY TEAZ
    [Peeping.]
    Couldn’t I steal off?

JOS SURF
    Keep close, my angel!

SIR PET
    [Peeping.]
    Joseph, tax him home.

JOS SURF
    Back, my dear friend!
LADY TEAZ

[Peeping.]

Couldn’t you lock Sir Peter in?

JOS SURF

Be still, my life!

SIR PET

[Peeping.]

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

JOS SURF

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

Enter CHARLES SURFACE.

CHAS. SURF

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

JOS SURF

Neither, brother, I assure you.
CHAS. SURF
But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAS. SURF
Who, I? O Lud! not I, upon my word.- Ha! ha! ha! ha! so
the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he? - or, what is worse, Lady Teazle has found out she has an old husband?

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

CHAS. SURF
True, true, as you were going to say - then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

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

[raising his voice.]

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

JOS SURF
But sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you-
CHAS. SURF  
Why, look’ee, Joseph, I hope I shall never deliberately  
do a dishonourable action; but if a pretty woman was purposely  
to throw herself in my way- and that pretty woman married to a  
man old enough to be her father-

JOS SURF  
Well!

CHAS. SURF  
Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of  
your morality, that’s all. But, brother, do you know now that  
you surprise me exceedingly, by naming me with Lady Teazle; for  
i’faith, I always understood you were her favourite.

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

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

JOS SURF  
Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest.
CHAS. SURF
   Egad, I’m serious! Don’t you remember one day, when I called here-

JOS SURF
   Nay, pr’ythee, Charles-

CHAS. SURF
   And found you together-

JOS SURF
   Zounds, sir, I insist-

CHAS. SURF
   And another time, when your servant-

JOS SURF
   Brother, brother, a word with you!-

[Aside.]

   Gad, I must
   stop him.

CHAS. SURF
   Informed, I say, that-
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.

How, Sir Peter! Where is he?

Softly, there!

[Points to the closet.

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

No, no-

I say, Sir Peter, come into court.-

What! my old guardian!- What!- turn inquisitor, and take evidence, incog.? Oh, fie! Oh, fie!
SIR PET
Give me your hand, Charles- I believe I have suspected you
wrongfully; but you mustn’t be angry with Joseph- ’twas my plan!

CHAS. SURF
Indeed!

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

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

SIR PET
Ah! you would have retorted on him.

CHAS. SURF
Ah, ay, that was a joke.

SIR PET
Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.
CHAS. SURF
But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter, for all that. Mightn’t he, Joseph?

SIR PET
Well, well, I believe you.

JOS SURF
Would they were both out of the room!

[Aside.

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

Re-enter SERVANT and whispers JOSEPH SURFACE. -

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

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

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

[Aside.]
They must not be left together.

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

[Aside to SIR PETER.]
Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

SIR PET

[Aside to JOSEPH SURFACE.]
I! not for the world!-

[Exit
JOSEPH SURFACE.]
Ah, Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment. Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment.
CHAS. SURF
Psha! he is too moral by half; and so apprehensive of his good name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest into his house as a wench.

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

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

CHAS. SURF
Oh, hang him! he’s a very anchorite, a young hermit!

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

CHAS. SURF
Why, you won’t tell him?

SIR PET
No- but- this way.-
[Aside.]

Egad, I’ll tell him.

[Aloud.]

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

**CHAS. SURF**

I should like it of all things.

**SIR PET**

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

[Whispers.]

**CHAS. SURF**

What! Joseph? you jest.

**SIR PET**

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

**CHAS. SURF**

The devil she is!
SIR PET
   Hush! I tell you.

[Points to the screen.

CHAS. SURF
   Behind the screen! Odds life, let’s unveil her!

SIR PET
   No, no, he’s coming:- you shan’t indeed!

CHAS. SURF
   Oh, egad, we’ll have a peep at the little milliner!

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

CHAS. SURF
   I’ll stand by you-

SIR PET
   Odds, here he is!

[CHARLES SURFACE throws down the screen.

Re-enter JOSEPH SURFACE.
CHAS. SURF
Lady Teazle, by all that’s wonderful!

SIR PET
Lady Teazle, by all that’s damnable!

CHAS. SURF
Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners
I ever saw. Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves
here at hide and seek, and I don’t see who is out of the secret.
Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word!- Brother,
will you be pleased to explain this matter? What! is Morality
dumb too?- Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps
you are not so now! All mute! Well- though I can make nothing of
the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another; so
I’ll leave you to yourselves.-

[Going.]

Brother, I’m sorry to
find you have given that worthy man grounds for so much
uneasiness.- Sir Peter! there’s nothing in the world so noble as
a man of sentiment!

Exit.
JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

If you please, sir.

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

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

LADY TEAZ

For not one word of it, Sir Peter!
SIR PET
   How! don’t you think it worth while to agree in the lie?

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

SIR PET
   I believe you, upon my soul, ma’am!

JOS SURF
   [Aside to LADY TEAZLE.]
   ‘Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?

LADY TEAZ
   Good Mr. Hypocrite, by your leave, I’ll speak for myself.

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

LADY TEAZ
   Hear me, Sir Peter!- I came here on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman’s pretensions to
her. But I came, seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness.

SIR PET

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

JOS

SURF. The woman's mad!

LADY TEAZ

No, sir; she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means.- Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me- but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated so to my heart, that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honourable addresses to his ward- I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him.

[Exit.
JOS SURF  
Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows-

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

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

[Exeunt SIR PETER and JOSEPH SURFACE, talking.

ACT V

SCENE I.-  
The Library in JOSEPH SURFACE’S House -  
Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and SERVANT. -  

JOS SURF  
Mr. Stanley! and why should you think I would see him?  
you must know he comes to ask something.
SER
Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr. Rowley came to
the door with him.

JOS SURF
Psha! blockhead! to suppose that I should now be in a
temper to receive visits from poor relations!- Well, why don’t
you show the fellow up?

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

JOS SURF
Go, fool!-

[Exit SERVANT.]

Sure Fortune never played a
man of my policy such a trick before! My character with Sir
Peter, my hopes with Maria, destroyed in a moment! I’m in a rare
humour to listen to other people’s distresses! I shan’t be able
to bestow even a benevolent sentiment on Stanley.- So! here he
comes, and Rowley with him. I must try to recover myself, and
put a little charity into my face, however.
SIR OLIV
   What! does he avoid us? That was he, was it not?

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

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

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

SIR OLIV
   Yet he has a string of charitable sentiments at his
   fingers’ ends.
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.

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

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.

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

Without losing a moment.

[Exit.

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

Re-enter JOSEPH SURFACE. -
JOS SURF
Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting.- Mr. Stanley, I presume.

SIR OLIV
At your service.

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

SIR OLIV
Dear sir- there’s no occasion.

[Aside.]
Too civil by half!

JOS SURF
I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr. Stanley; but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think, Mr. Stanley?
SIR OLIV
I was, sir; so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may
do discredit to her wealthy children, else I should not have
presumed to trouble you.

JOS SURF
Dear sir, there needs no apology: he that is in distress,
though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the
wealthy. I am sure I wish I was one of that class, and had it in
my power to offer you even a small relief.

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

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

SIR OLIV
I should not need one- my distresses would recommend me.
But I imagined his bounty would enable you to become the agent
of his charity.
JOS SURF
   My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver
   is a worthy man, a very worthy man; but avarice, Mr. Stanley, is
   the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence,
   what he has done for me has been a mere nothing; though people,
   I know, have thought otherwise, and, for my part, I never chose
   to contradict the report.

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

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

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

[Aside.

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

SIR OLIV

Not I, for one!

[Aside.

JOS SURF

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

SIR OLIV

[Aside.]

Dissembler!

[Aloud.]

Then, sir, you can’t assist
me?
JOS SURF
   At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever
   I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

SIR OLIV
   I am extremely sorry-

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

SIR OLIV
   Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

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

[Calls to SERVANT.

SIR OLIV
   O, dear sir, no ceremony.

JOS SURF
   Your very obedient.
SIR OLIV

Your most obsequious.

JOS SURF

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

SIR OLIV

Sweet sir, you are too good.

JOS SURF

In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

SIR OLIV

Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

JOS SURF

Sir, yours as sincerely.

SIR OLIV

Charles!- you are my heir.

[Exit.

JOS SURF

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

Re-enter ROWLEY.

ROW

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

JOS SURF

Always happy to see Mr. Rowley.

[Aside. Reads the letter.]

Sir Oliver Surface! My uncle arrived!

ROW

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

JOS SURF

I am astonished! William! stop Mr. Stanley, if he’s not gone.
[Calls to SERVANT.]

ROW

Oh! he’s out of reach, I believe.

JOS SURF

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

ROW

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

JOS SURF

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

[Aside.]

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

ROW

You will be delighted to see how well he looks.
JOS SURF
Oh! I’m overjoyed to hear it.-

[Aside.]
Just at this time!

ROW
I’ll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

JOS SURF
Do, do; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I
cannot express the sensations I feel at the thought of seeing
him.-

[Exit ROWLEY.]
Certainly his coming just at this time is
the cruellest piece of ill fortune.

[Exit.

SCENE II.-
A Room in SIR PETER TEAZLE’S House -
Enter MRS. CANDOUR and MAID. -
MAID
   Indeed, ma’am, my lady will see nobody at present.

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

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

MRS. CAN
   Do go again; I shall be glad to see her, if it be only for a moment, for I am sure she must be in great distress. — [Exit

MAID
   Dear heart, how provoking! I’m not mistress of half the circumstances! We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers, with the names of the parties at length, before I have dropped the story at a dozen houses. -

*Enter SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE.*

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

SIR BEN
   Of Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface-
MRS. CAN
   And Sir Peter’s discovery-

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

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

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

MRS. CAN
   Mr. Surface! Why, ‘twas with Charles Lady Teazle was
   detected.

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

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

SIR BEN
   I tell you I had it from one-
MRS. CAN
And I have it from one-

SIR BEN
Who had it from one, who had it-

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

Enter LADY SNEERWEL. -

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

MRS. CAN
Ay, my dear friend, who would have thought-

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

MRS. CAN
To be sure, her manners were a little too free; but then she was so young!
LADY SNEER
And had, indeed, some good qualities.

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

LADY SNEER
No; but everybody says that Mr. Surface-

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

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

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

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

SIR BEN
Well, I’ll not dispute with you, Mrs. Candour; but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter’s wound will not-
MRS. CAN
  Sir Peter’s wound! Oh, mercy! I didn’t hear a word of their fighting.

LADY SNEER
  Nor I, a syllable.

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

MRS. CAN
  Not a word.

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

LADY SNEER
  Pray let us hear.

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

SIR BEN
  "Sir," says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery,
  "you are a most ungrateful fellow."
MRS. CAN
Ay, to Charles-

SIR BEN
No, no- to Mr. Surface- “a most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir,” says he, “I insist on immediate satisfaction.”

MRS. CAN
Ay, that must have been to Charles; for ’tis very unlikely Mr. Surface should fight in his own house.

SIR BEN
‘Gad’s life, ma’am, not at all- “giving me immediate satisfaction.”- On this, ma’am, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for hartshorn and water; then, madam, they began to fight with swords- -

Enter CRABTREE. -

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

MRS. CAN
Oh, Mr. Crabtree, then it is all true!
CRAB    Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded-

SIR BEN  By a thrust in second quite through his left side-

CRAB    By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

MRS. CAN  Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

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

MRS. CAN  I knew Charles was the person.

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

CRAB    But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude-

SIR BEN  That I told you, you know-
CRAB Do, nephew, let me speak!- and insisted on immediate-

SIR BEN Just as I said-

CRAB Odds life, nephew, allow others to know something too! A pair of pistols lay on the bureau (for Mr. Surface, it seems, had come home the night before late from Salthill, where he had been to see the Montem with a friend, who has a son at Eton), so, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

SIR BEN I heard nothing of this.

CRAB Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles’s shot took effect, as I tell you, and Sir Peter’s missed; but, what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Shakspeare that stood over the fireplace, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.
SIR BEN
   My uncle’s account is more circumstantial, I confess; but I
   believe mine is the true one for all that.

LADY SNEER

[Aside.]

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

[Exit.

SIR BEN

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

CRAB

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

MRS. CAN

   But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

CRAB

   Oh! they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though
   the servants are ordered to deny him.
MRS. CAN  
I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

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

SIR BEN  
Hey! who comes here?

CRAB  
Oh, this is he: the physician, depend on’t.

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

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE.

CRAB  
Well, doctor, what hopes?

MRS. CAN  
Ay, doctor, how’s your patient?

SIR BEN  
Now, doctor, isn’t it a wound with a small-sword?
CRAB  A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred!

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIV  Not a word!

CRAB  Not of his being dangerously wounded?

SIR OLIV  The devil he is!
SIR BEN  
Run through the body-

CRAB  
Shot in the breast-

SIR BEN  
By one Mr. Surface-

CRAB  
Ay, the younger.

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

SIR BEN  
Oh, yes, we agree in that.

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

SIR OLIV  
Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation, he is the most imprudent man alive; for here he comes, walking as if nothing at all was the matter. -
Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE. -

Odds heart, Sir Peter! you are come in good time, I promise you; for we had just given you over!

SIR BEN

[Aside to CRABTREE.]

Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

A small-sword and a bullet?

SIR OLIV

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

SIR PET

Why, what is all this?
SIR BEN  
We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortune.

SIR PET  
So, so; all over the town already.

[Aside.

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

SIR PET  
Sir, what business is that of yours?

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

SIR PET  
Plague on your pity, ma’am! I desire none of it.

SIR BEN  
However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on the occasion.
SIR PET  
Sir, sir! I desire to be master in my own house.

CRAB  
‘Tis no uncommon case, that’s one comfort.

SIR PET  
I insist on being left to myself: without ceremony, I insist on your leaving my house directly!

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

[Exit.

SIR PET  
Leave my house!

CRAB  
And tell how hardly you’ve been treated.

[Exit.

SIR PET  
Leave my house!
SIR BEN
    And how patiently you bear it.

[Exit.

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

SIR OLIV
    They are very provoking indeed, Sir Peter. -

Enter ROWLEY. -

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

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

ROW
    Well, I’m not inquisitive.

SIR OLIV
    Well, Sir Peter, I have seen both my nephews in the manner
    we proposed.
SIR PET
   A precious couple they are!

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

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

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

SIR OLIV
   And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

ROW
   It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

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

SIR PET
   Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.
What! do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

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

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.

And does Sir Oliver know all this?

Every circumstance.

What, of the closet and the screen, hey?

Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. Oh, I have been vastly diverted with the story! ha! ha! ha!
SIR PET
‘Twas very pleasant.

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

SIR PET
Oh, vastly diverting! ha! ha! ha!

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

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

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

SIR PET
Ha! ha! ‘twas devilish entertaining, to be sure!

SIR OLIV
Ha! ha! ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen
your face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha!
SIR PET
Yes, my face when the screen was thrown down: ha! ha! ha!
Oh, I must never show my head again!

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

SIR PET
Oh, pray don’t restrain your mirth on my account: it does
not hurt me at all! I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yet,
yes, I think being a standing jest for all one’s acquaintance a
very happy situation. Oh, yes, and then of a morning to read the
paragraphs about Mr. S__, Lady__, and Sir P__, will be
entertaining!

ROW
Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of
fools. But I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room; I am
sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

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

SIR PET

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

ROW

We’ll follow.

[Exit SIR OLIVER SURFACE.

SIR PET

She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

ROW

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

SIR PET

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

ROW

Oh, this is ungenerous in you!
SIR PET

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

ROW

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

SIR PET

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

ROW

Certainly.

SIR PET

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

ROW

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

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

ROW

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

SIR PET

Hold, Master Rowley! if you have any regard for me, never
let me hear you utter anything like a sentiment: I have had
enough of them to serve me the rest of my life.

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.-

The Library in JOSEPH SURFACE’S House
Enter JOSEPH SURFACE and LADY SNEERWELL.

LADY SNEER

Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled
to Charles, and of course no longer oppose his union with Maria?
The thought is distraction to me.
JOS SURF
Can passion furnish a remedy?

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

JOS SURF
Surely, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

LADY SNEER
Because the disappointment doesn’t reach your heart; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.

JOS SURF
But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment?

LADY SNEER
Are you not the cause of it? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in imposing upon Sir Peter, and
supplanting your brother, but you must endeavour to seduce his wife? I hate such an avarice of crimes; ’tis an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.

**JOS SURF**

Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, but I don’t think we’re so totally defeated either.

**LADY SNEER**

No!

**JOS SURF**

You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us?

**LADY SNEER**

I do believe so.

**JOS SURF**

And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove, that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour to your ladyship, which some of his former letters to you will serve to support?
LADY SNEER
This, indeed, might have assisted.

JOS SURF
Come, come; it is not too late yet.-

[Knocking at the door.]

But hark! this is probably my uncle, Sir Oliver: retire to that room; we’ll consult further when he’s gone.

LADY SNEER
Well, but if he should find you out too.

JOS SURF
Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his own credit’s sake- and you may depend on it I shall soon discover Sir Oliver’s weak side!

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

JOS SURF
I will, I will!-

[Exit LADY SNEERWELL.]
So! 'tis confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one’s confederate in evil. Well, at all events, my character is so much better than Charles’s, that I certainly- hey!- what- this is not Sir Oliver, but old Stanley again. Plague on’t that he should return to tease me just now! I shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here- and- -

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE.

Gad’s life, Mr. Stanley, why have you come back to plague me at this time? You must not stay now, upon my word.

SIR OLIV
Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so penurious to you, I’ll try what he’ll do for me.

JOS SURF
Sir, ‘tis impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg-
Come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be assisted.

SIR OLIV
No: Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

JOS SURF
Zounds, sir! then I insist on your quitting the room directly.
SIR OLIV
Nay, sir-

JOS SURF
Sir, I insist on’t!- Here, William! show this gentleman out. Since you compel me, sir, not one moment- this is such insolence.

[Going to push him out.
Enter CHARLES SURFACE. -

CHAS. SURF
Heyday! what’s the matter now? What the devil have you got hold of my little broker here? Zounds, brother, don’t hurt little Premium. What’s the matter, my little fellow?

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

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

JOS SURF
Borrowing! no! But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every-
CHAS. SURF
   O Gad, that’s true! Noll mustn’t find the little broker
   here, to be sure.

JOS SURF
   Yet, Mr. Stanley insists-

CHAS. SURF
   Stanley! why his name’s Premium.

JOS SURF
   No, sir, Stanley.

CHAS. SURF
   No, no, Premium.

JOS SURF
   Well, no matter which- but-

CHAS. SURF
   Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, ‘tis the same thing, as you
   say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides
   A. B. at the coffee-house.

[Knocking.
JOS SURF
  ‘Sdeath! here’s Sir Oliver at the door. Now I beg, Mr. Stanley-

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

SIR OLIV
  Gentlemen-

JOS SURF
  Sir, by heaven you shall go!

CHAS. SURF
  Ay, out with him, certainly.

SIR OLIV
  This violence-

JOS SURF
  Sir, ‘tis your own fault.

CHAS. SURF
  Out with him, to be sure.

[Both forcing SIR OLIVER out.
Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE, MARIA, and ROWLEY.-
SIR PET
   My old friend, Sir Oliver- hey! What in the name of wonder!- here are dutiful nephews- assault their uncle at his first visit!

LADY TEAZ
   Indeed, Sir Oliver, ‘twas well we came in to rescue you.

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

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

JOS SURF
   Charles!

CHAS. SURF
   Joseph!

JOS SURF
   ‘Tis now complete!
CHAS. SURF
Very.

SIR OLIV
Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley too—look on that elder
nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my
bounty; and you also know how gladly I would have regarded half
my fortune as held in trust for him? judge, then, my
disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of truth,
charity, and gratitude!

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

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

SIR PET
Then, I believe, we need add no more: if he knows himself,
he will consider it as the most perfect punishment that he is
known to the world.
CHAS. SURF
If they talk this way to Honesty, what will they say to me, by-and-by?

[Aside.
[SIR PETER, LADY TEAZLE, and MARIA retire.

SIR OLIV
As for that prodigal, his brother, there-

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

[Aside.

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

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

[Aside.

SIR OLIV
I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself?
[To JOSEPH SURFACE.

   JOS SURF
       I trust I could.

   SIR OLIV

[To CHARLES SURFACE.]

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

   CHAS. SURF
       Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.

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

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

   ROW
       Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles’s follies
       with anger.
SIR OLIV
Odd’s heart, no more I can; nor with gravity either. Sir
Peter, do you know the rogue bargained with me for all his
ancestors: sold me judges and generals by the foot, and maiden
aunts as cheap as broken china.

CHAS. SURF
To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with
the family canvas, that’s the truth on’t. My ancestors may rise
in judgment against me, there’s no denying it; but believe me
sincere when I tell you- and upon my soul I would not say so if
I was not- that if I do not appear mortified at the exposure of
my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest
satisfaction at seeing you, my liberal benefactor.

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

CHAS. SURF
Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still
increased.
LADY TEAZ

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

[Pointing to MARIA.

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

SIR PET
Well, child, speak your sentiments.

MAR
Sir, I have little to say, but that I shall rejoice to hear
that he is happy; for me, whatever claim I had to his attention.
I willingly resign to one who has better title.

CHAS. SURF
How, Maria!
SIR PET  
Heyday! what’s the mystery now? While he appeared an 
incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and 
now that he is likely to reform I’ll warrant you won’t have him.

MAR  
His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

CHAS. SURF  
Lady Sneerwell!

JOS SURF  
Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak 
on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and Lady 
Sneerwell’s injuries can no longer be concealed.

[Opens the door.  
*Enter LADY SNEERWELL.*

SIR PET  
So! another French milliner! Egad, he has one in every room 
in the house, I suppose!

LADY SNEER  
Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised, and feel 
for the indelicate situation your perfidy has forced me into.
CHAS. SURF

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

JOS SURF

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

SIR PET

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

ROW

Walk in, Mr. Snake.

Enter SNAKE. -

I thought his testimony might be wanted; however, it happens
unluckily, that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, not to
support her.

LADY SNEER

A villain! Treacherous to me at last! Speak, fellow,
have you too conspired against me?
SNAKE
I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons: you paid me
extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I unfortunately
have been offered double to speak the truth.

LADY SNEER
The torments of shame and disappointment on you all!

[Going.

LADY TEAZ
Hold, Lady Sneerwell- before you go, let me thank you for
the trouble you and that gentleman have taken, in writing
letters from me to Charles, and answering them yourself; and let
me also request you to make my respects to the scandalous
college, of which you are president, and inform them, that Lady
Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they
granted her, as she leaves off practice, and kills characters no
longer.

LADY SNEER
You too, madam!- provoking- insolent! May your husband
live these fifty years!

[Exit.
SIR PET
  Oons! what a fury!

LADY TEAZ
  A malicious creature, indeed!

SIR PET
  What! not for her last wish?

LADY TEAZ
  Oh, no!

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

JOS SURF
  Sir, I am so confounded, to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr. Snake in this manner, to impose on us all, that I know not what to say: however, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly.

[Exit.

SIR PET
  Moral to the last drop!
SIR OLIV
Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and vinegar!-
egad, you’ll do very well together.

ROW
I believe we have no more occasion for Mr. Snake at present?

SNAKE
Before I go, I beg pardon once for all, for whatever
uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the
parties present.

SIR PET
Well, well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

SNAKE
But I must request of the company, that it shall never be
known.

SIR PET
Hey! what the plague! are you ashamed of having done a
right thing once in your life?
Ah, sir, consider- I live by the badness of my character; and, if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

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

[Exit SNAKE.

There’s a precious rogue!

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

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

Thank you, dear uncle.
SIR PET  What, you rogue! don’t you ask the girl’s consent first?

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

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

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

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

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

SIR OLIV  You do, indeed, Charles.
ROW
If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded you would have been in my debt for the attempt- but deserve to be happy- and you over-repay me.

SIR PET
Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform.

CHAS, SURF
Why as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises, and that I take to be a proof that I intend to set about it. But here shall be my monitor- my gentle guide.- Ah! can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine? - Though thou, dear maid, shouldst wave thy beauty’s sway, Though thou, dear maid, shouldst wave thy beauty’s sway, Thou still must rule, because I will obey: An humble fugitive from Folly view, No sanctuary near but Love and you:

[To the audience.
You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove, For even Scandal dies, if you approve.

[Exeunt omnes.]
EPILOGUE

By Mr. Colman -
SPOKEN BY LADY

TEAZLE. -

I, WHO was late so volatile and gay,
Like a trade-wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
To one dull rusty weathercock- my spouse!
So wills our virtuous bard- the motley Bayes
Of crying epilogues and laughing plays!
Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
Learn from our play to regulate your lives:
Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her-
London will prove the very source of honour.
Plunged fairly in, like a cold bath it serves,
When principles relax, to brace the nerves:
Such is my case; and yet I must deplore
That the gay dream of dissipation’s o’er.
And say, ye fair! was ever lively wife,
Born with a genius for the highest life,
Like me untimely blasted in her bloom,
Like me condemn’d to such a dismal doom?
Save money- when I just knew how to waste it!
Leave London- just as I began to taste it!
Must I then watch the early crowing cock,
The melancholy ticking of a clock;
In a lone rustic hall for ever pounded,
With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats surrounded?
With humble curate can I now retire,
(While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire,)
And at backgammon mortify my soul,
That pants for loo, or flutters at a vole.
Seven’s the main! Dear sound that must expire,
Lost at hot cockles round a Christmas fire;
The transient hour of fashion too soon spent,
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
Farewell the plumed head, the cushion’d tete,
That takes the cushion from its proper seat!
That spirit-stirring drum!- card drums I mean,
Spadille- odd trick- pam- basto- king and queen!
And you, ye knockers, that, with brazen throat,
The welcome visitors’ approach denote;
Farewell all quality of high renown,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious town!
Farewell! your revels I partake no more,
And Lady Teazle’s occupation’s o’er!
All this I told our bard he smiled, and said ‘twas clear,
I ought to play deep tragedy next year.
Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play,
And in these solemn periods stalk’d away:—
“Bless’d were the fair like you; her faults who stopp’d.
And closed her follies when the curtain dropp’d!
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool at large on life’s great stage.”

THE END