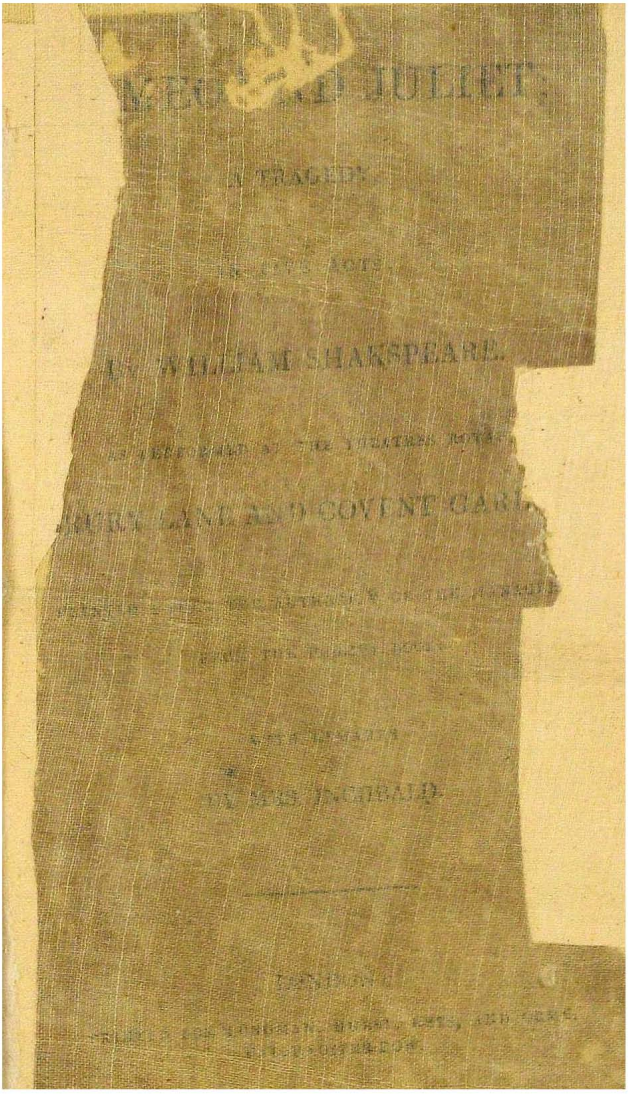
THE

BRITISH THEATRE.



THE

DRAMATIST;

OR,

STOP HIM WHO CAN!

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS;

BY FREDERICK REYNOLDS.

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MANAGERS

FROM THE PROMPT BOOK.

WITH REMARKS

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

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REMARKS.

Plays of former times were written to be read, not seen. Dramatic authors succeeded in their aim; their works were placed in libraries, and the theatres were deserted.—Now, plays are written to be seen, not read—and present authors gain their views; for they, and the managers, are enriched, and the theatres crowded.

To be both seen and read, at the present day, is a degree of honour, which, perhaps, not one comic dramatist can wholly boast, except Shakspeare. Exclusive of his, scarcely any of the very best comedies of the best of former bards will now attract an audience: yet the genius of ancient writers was assisted by various tales, for plots, of which they have deprived the moderns; they had, besides, the privilege to write without either political or moral restraint. Uncurbed by law or delicacy, they wrote at random; and at random wrote some pages worthy posterity—but along with these, they produced others, which disgrace the age that reprints and circulates them.

It might be deemed suspicious to insinuate, that, those persons, perhaps, who so vehemently exclaim against modern dramas, give up with reluctance the old prerogative, of listening to wit and repartee, which would make the refined hearer of the present day blush, and the moral auditor shudder.

To those, who can wisely bear with the faults of their own time, nor think all that is good is gone by, the representation of the present comedy will give high entertainment; particularly in those scenes in which Vapid is concerned.—Reynolds could hardly mistake drawing a faithful portrait of this character, for it is said—he sat for himself.

Yet those, who expect to be highly delighted with "The Dramatist," must bring with them to the theatre a proper acquaintance with the stage, and also of its power over certain of its votaries.

If attraction, if bursts of applause, and still less equivocal approbation, bursts of laughter, constitute perfect success to a comic writer, Mr. Reynolds, in this, as well as in other of his comedies, has been pre-eminently successful.

In this comedy, however, and, perhaps, in one or two more he has written, there is an obstacle to his independent merit as an author—an obstacle which too many dramatic writers willingly place in their path to lasting reputation. He has written for one particular actor to support his play—Lewis—more worthy to be thus considered than almost any other performer: but here, his very skill gives the alarm—for Lewis possesses such unaffected spirit on the

stage, a kind of vivid fire, which tempers burlesque with nature, or nature with burlesque, so happily, that it cannot be hoped any other man will easily support those characters written purposely for him.

Be that as it may—when Reynolds can no more enliven a theatre by his Dramatist, this comedy will grow dull in excellent company—for Congreve's "Way of the World," was hissed, it is said, from a London stage, the last time it was acted, for insipidity.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORD SCRATCH	*Mr. Quick.*
HARRY NEVILLE	*Mr. Holman.*
FLORIVILLE	*Mr. Blanchard.*
WILLOUGHBY	*Mr. Macready.*
ENNUI	*Mr. Munden.*
PETER	*Mr. Thompson.*
VAPID	*Mr. Lewis.*
SERVANT	*Mr. Evatt.*
LOUISA COURTNEY	*Miss Brunton.*
LADY WAITFOR'T	*Mrs. Webb.*
LETTY	*Miss Brangin.*
MARIANNE	*Mrs. Wells.*

SCENE,—Bath.

THE

DRAMATIST.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

The Grove.—LADY WAITFOR'T'S *House.*

Enter MARIANNE, *and* LETTY, *from the House.*

Mari. But I tell you I will come out—I didn't come to Bath to be confined, nor I won't—I hate all their company, but sweet Miss Courtney's.

Letty. I declare, Miss Marianne, you grow worse and worse every day, your country manners will be the ruin of you.

Mari. Don't you talk about that, Letty—It was a shame to bring me up in the country—if I had been properly taken care of, I might have done great things—I might have married the poet I danced with at the ball—But it's all over now.—I shall never get a husband, and, what's worse, my aunt did it on purpose.—She ruined me, Letty, that nobody else might.

Letty. How you talk?—I hope Miss Courtney hasn't taught you all this.

Mari. No,—she's a dear creature,—she has taught me many things; but nothing improper, I'm sure.

Letty. Pray has she taught you why she never plays any tune but the one we heard just now?

Mari. Yes—and if you'll keep it a secret, I'll tell you, Letty; Mr. Harry Neville taught it her last summer,—and now she is always playing it, because it puts her in mind of the dear man;—when it is ended, don't you observe how she sighs from the bottom of her dear little heart?

Letty. Why, I thought they had quarrelled?

Mari. So they have—she won't see him, and I believe my aunt, Lady Waitfor't, has been the occasion of it;—poor Mr. Neville!—I wish I could assist him, for indeed, Letty, I always pity any body that is crossed in love—it may be one's own case one day or other you know.

Letty. True—and for the same reason, I suppose, you rejoice when it is successful.—I'm sure now the intended marriage of Lady Waitfor't and Lord Scratch gives you great pleasure.

Mari. What! the country gentleman who has lately come to his title? No, if you'll believe me, I don't like him at all,—he's a sour old fellow—is always abusing our sex, and thinks there is only one good woman under Heaven:—now, I'm sure that's a mistake, for I know I'm a good woman, and I think, Letty, you are another.

Letty. Yes,—I hope so, though I confess I think your aunt a better than either of us.

Mari. More shame for you—she is a woman of sentiment, and hums you over with her flourishes about purity, and feelings.—Feelings!—'faith, she ought to be ashamed of herself—no other woman would talk in that manner.

Letty. You mistake her—she is a woman of virtue,

and can't help feeling for the vices and misfortunes of others.

Mari. Then why can't she do as I have done, Letty? keep her feelings to herself—if I had given way to them, half so much as she has—Oh Lord! I don't know what might have been the consequence.

Letty. For shame! You never hear Lady Waitfor't speak ill of any body.

Mari. No.—How should she? when she talks of nobody but herself.

Letty. Well, your opinion is of little weight; my Lord sees her merit, and is come to Bath on purpose to marry her—he thinks her a prodigy of goodness.

Mari. Then pray let him have her—every fool knows so, to be sure he does, Letty, that a prodigy of goodness is a very rare thing;—but when he finds her out!—'faith, it will be a rare joke, when he finds her out.

Letty. Shameful, Miss Marianne! do speak a little intelligibly, and remember your aunt's favourite observation.

Mari. What is it?—I have forgot.

Letty. That good sentiments are always plain.

Mari. Yes,—so are good women,—bid her remember, that Letty.

Letty. Hush:—say no more—here she comes, and Mr. Willoughby with her.

Mari. Ay—that man is always with her of late—but come, Letty, let's get out of their way—let's take a walk, and look at the beaux.

Letty. The beaux! ah, I see you long to become a woman of fashion.

Mari. No—though I hate the country, I never will become a woman of fashion—I know too well what it is to do many things one don't like, and 'faith, while there is such real pleasure in following my own incli-

nations, I see no reason why, merely out of fashion, I should be obliged to copy other people's.

[*Exit, with* LETTY.

Enter LADY WAITFOR'T *and* WILLOUGHBY.

Lady. [*To* SERVANT.] When my lord returns, tell him I'm gone to Lady Walton's, and shall be back immediately.

Will. Then your ladyship is certain Harry Neville is arrived.

Lady. Yes—the ungrateful man arrived last night, and as I yet mean to consult his happiness, I have written to him to come to me this evening—but I will ever oppose his union with my lord's ward, Louisa Courtney, because I think it will be the ruin of them both; and you know, Willoughby, one cannot forget one's feelings on those occasions.

Will. Certainly—Ennui, the time-killer, whose only business in life is to murder the hour, is also just arrived; and my Lord is resolved on his marrying Louisa instantly.

Lady. True—and only because he'll make a quiet member for his brother in the west. But for various reasons I am determined she shall be yours—yet it must be done artfully—my circumstances are deranged, and an alliance with my Lord Scratch is the only hope of relief.—Such are the fruits of virtue, Willoughby.

Will. Well—but her fortune is entirely dependent on my Lord's consent, and how is that to be obtained? You know I am no favourite, and Ennui is a great one.

Lady. I know it, and therefore we must incense him against Ennui—let me see——can't we contrive some mode,—some little ingenious story—he is a singular character, you know, and has violent prejudices.

Will. True—and of all his prejudices, none is so violent, or entertaining, as that against authors and actors.

Lady. Yes,—the stage is his aversion, and some way or other———I have it—it's an odd thought, but may do much—suppose we tell him, Ennui has written a play.

Will. The luckiest thought in the world! it will make him hate him directly.

Lady. Well, leave it to me—I'll explain the matter to him myself,—and my life on't it proves successful. You see, Willoughby, my only system is to promote happiness.

Will. It is indeed, Lady Waitfor't—but if this fails, may I still hope for your interest with Miss Courtney?

Lady. Yes—I'm determined she shall be yours, and neither Neville's, nor Ennui's.—But come, it's late—here he is.

Will. We'll get rid of him.

Enter ENNUI.

Lady. Mr. Ennui, your most obedient—we are going to the Parade—have you seen your cousin Neville?

Ennui. I've an idea—I've just left him.

Lady. I suppose we shall see you at Lady Walton's this evening?—till when, adieu.

[*Exeunt* LADY WAITFOR'T *and* WILLOUGHBY.

Ennui. I've an idea, I don't like this Lady Waitfor't—she wishes to trick me out of my match with Miss Courtney, and if I could trick her in return—[*Takes out his Watch.*] How goes the enemy?—only one o'clock!—I thought it had been that, an hour ago:—heigho!—here's my patron, Lord Scratch.

Enter LORD SCRATCH.

Lord. What a wonderful virtue is the art of hear-

ing!—may I die, if a listener be found any where:—Zounds! am not I a peer, and don't I talk by prerogative?—and if I mayn't talk ten times as much as another person, what's the use of my peerage?

Ennui. I've an idea—I don't comprehend you.

Lord. That fellow Neville wouldn't hear a word I had to say:—abandoned young dog:—he's come to Bath to invent tales against that divinity, Lady Waitfor't, again, I suppose—but my ward, Louisa, shall be put out of his power for ever—she shall marry you to-morrow.

Ennui. In fact—I always forgot to give your lordship joy of your title, though not of your dress.

Lord. Not of my dress!—ay, ay;—that's the difference—you poor devils, in humble life, are obliged to dress well, to look like gentlemen—we peers, may dress as we please—[*Looking at his watch.*] but I shall lose my appointments—past two o'clock.

Ennui. Past two o'clock!—delightful!

Lord. Delightful!—what, at your old tricks.

Ennui. I'd an idea—it had been only one.

Lord. And you're delighted because it's an hour later?

Ennui. To be sure I am—my dear friend, to be sure I am—the enemy has lost a limb.

Lord. So you're happy because you're an hour nearer the other world?—tell me now—do you wish to die?

Ennui. No.—But I wish somebody would invent a new mode of killing time—in fact, I think I've found one—private acting.

Lord. Acting!—never talk to me about the stage—I detest a theatre, and every thing that belongs to it: and if ever—but no matter—I must to Lady Waitfor't, and prevail on her to marry me at the same time you marry my ward.—But, remember our agreement—you are to settle your estate on Louisa, and I am to bring you into parliament.

Ennui. In fact, I comprehend—I am to be a hearer, and not a speaker.

Lord. Speaker:—if you open your mouth, the Chiltern Hundreds is your portion.—Lookye—you are to be led quietly to the right side—to sleep during the debate—give a nod for your vote,—and in every respect, move like a mandarin, at my command;—in short, you are to be a mandarin member.—So, fare you well till we're both married. [*Exit.*

Ennui. I've an idea, here's Neville.—In fact—he knows nothing of my marrying Louisa, nor shall he, till after the happy day.—Strange news, Neville.

Enter NEVILLE.

Nev. I've heard it all. Louisa is going to be married; but to whom, I know not,—and my Lord persists in his fatal attachment to Lady Waitfor't.

Ennui. In fact—Why fatal?

Nev. Because it is the source of every mischief.—While she maintains her power over him, I have no hope of love or fortune:—When my father died, he left his estate to my brother, relying on my lord providing for me—and now, how he deserts me!—and all owing to the artifices of an insidious woman.

Ennui. I've an idea, I comprehend her motive—she loves you.

Nev. Yes, 'tis too plain—and, because I would not listen to her advances, she has ruined me in my uncle's opinion, and degraded me in Louisa's;—but I will see Miss Courtney herself—I will hear my doom from her own mouth; and if she avoids me, I will leave her, and this country, for ever.

Enter PETER.

Peter. A letter, sir.

Nev. Without direction!—What can it mean?

Peter. Sir, 'tis from Lady Waitfor't.—The servant, who brought it, said, her ladyship had reasons for not

directing it, which she would explain to you, when she saw you. [*Exit.*

Nev. Oh, the old stratagem:—as it is not directed, she may swear it was designed for another person.

Sir, [*Reads.*

I have heard of your arrival at Bath, and, strange as my conduct may appear, I think it a duty I owe to the virtuous part of mankind, to promote their happiness as much as I can; I have long beheld your merit, and long wished to encourage it.—I shall be at home at six this evening. Yours,

A. WAITFOR'T.

Ennui. In fact—a very sentimental assignation, that would do as well for any other man.

Nev. If I show it to my lord, I know his bigotry is such, that he would, as usual, only suppose it a trick of my own—the more cause there is to condemn, the more he approves.

Ennui. I've an idea, he's incomprehensible.—In fact—who have we here we?

Nev. As I live, Vapid, the dramatic author—he is come to Bath to pick up characters, I suppose.

Ennui. In fact—pick up!

Nev. Yes—he has the ardor scribendi upon him so strong, that he would rather you'd ask him to write an epilogue to a new play, than offer him your whole estate—the theatre is his world, in which are included all his hopes and wishes.—In short, he is a dramatic maniac. And to such an extent does he carry his folly, that if he were not the best natured fellow in the world, every body would kick him out of doors.

Ennui. Has he not a share of vanity in his composition?

Nev. Oh yes—he fancies himself a great favourite with the women.

Ennui. Then I've an idea—I've got a thought, by which you may revenge yourself on Lady Waitfor't—

in fact—give him the letter—he'll certainly believe 'tis meant for himself.

Nev. My dear friend, ten thousand thanks!—We'll flatter his vanity, by persuading him she is young and beautiful, and my life on't it does wonders;—but, hush, he comes.

Enter VAPID.

Nev. Vapid! I rejoice to see you,—'tis a long time since we met; give me leave to introduce you to a particular friend of mine—Mr. Ennui—Mr. Vapid.

Ennui. I've an idea—you do me honour—Mr. Vapid, I shall be proud to be better acquainted with you—in fact—any thing of consequence stirring in the fashionable or political world?

Vapid. Some whispers about a new pantomime, sir, —nothing else.

Nev. And I'm afraid in the present scarcity of good writers, we have little else to expect.—Pray, Vapid, how is the present dearth of genius to be accounted for; particularly dramatic genius?

Vapid. Why, as to dramatic genius, sir, the fact is this —to give a true picture of life, a man should enter into all its scenes,—should follow nature, sir—but modern authors plunder from one another—the mere shades of shadows.—Now, sir, for my part, I dive into the world—I search the heart of man;—'tis true I'm called a rake—but, upon my soul, I only game, drink, and intrigue, that I may be better able to dramatize each particular scene.

Nev. A good excuse for profligacy.— But tell me, Vapid, have you got any new characters since you came to Bath?

Vapid. 'Faith, only two—and those not very new either.

Ennui. In fact—may we ask what they are?

Vapid. If you don't write.

Nev. No, we certainly do not.

Vapid. Then I'll tell you:—The first is a charitable divine, who, in the weighty consideration how he shall best lavish his generosity, never bestows it at all:—and the other is a cautious apothecary, who, in determining which of two medicines is best for his patient, lets him die for want of assistance.—You understand me, I think, this last will do something, eh?

Ennui. I've an idea—the apothecary would cut a good figure in a comedy.

Vapid. A comedy! pshaw! I mean him for a tragedy.

Ennui. In fact—I don't comprehend, nor, possibly, the town.

Vapid. I know it—that's the very thing—harkye, I've found out a secret—what every body understands, nobody approves; and people always applaud most, where they least comprehend.—There is a refinement, sir, in appearing to understand things incomprehensible—else whence arises the pleasure at an opera, a private play, or a speech in parliament? why, 'tis the mystery in all these things—'tis the desire to find out what nobody else can—to be thought wiser than others—therefore—you take me—the apothecary is the hero of my tragedy.

Nev. 'Faith, there is some reason in all this—and I'm amazed we have so many writers for the stage.

Vapid. So am I—and I think I'll write no more for an ungrateful public—you don't know any body that has a play coming out, do you?

Nev. No—why do you ask?

Vapid. He'll want an epilogue you know, that's all.

Nev. Why, you won't write him one, will you?

Vapid. I! oh Lord! no;—but genius ought to be encouraged, and as he's a friend of yours,—what's the name of the play?

Nev. I really don't know any body that has written one.

Vapid. Yes—yes—you do.

Nev. Upon my word, I do not—a cousin of mine, indeed, wrote one for his amusement, but I don't think he could ever be prevailed on to produce it on the stage.

Vapid. He prevailed on!—the manager you mean—but what did you think of it?

Nev. I never read it, but am told it is a good play—and if performed, Vapid, he will be proud of your assistance.

Vapid. I speak in time, because it is material—many a dull play has been saved by a good epilogue.

Nev. True—but I had almost forgot.—Why, Vapid, the lady in the Grove, will enlarge your knowledge amazingly.

Ennui. I've an idea—she's the pattern of perfection.

Nev. The paragon of beauty! Ah, Vapid! I would give worlds for the coldest expression in this letter.

Vapid. That letter!—what do you mean by that letter?

Nev. And you really pretend not to know the young Lady Waitfor't?

Vapid. No,—I hav'n't spoke to a woman at Bath,—but a sweet girl I danced with at the ball; and who she is, by the Lord, I don't know.

Nev. Well, but, Vapid—young Lady Waitfor't—she loves you to distraction.

Vapid. As I hope for fame, I never heard her name before.

Nev. Then she has heard yours, and admires your genius; however, read the letter, and be satisfied she loves you. [VAPID *reads.*

Arrival at Bath—duty I owe—virtuous part of mankind—beheld your merit—wish to encourage—six this evening.—A. Waitfor't—Grove.

Vapid. Yes, yes, it's plain enough now—she admires my talents! —It isn't the first time, Neville, this has happened.—Sweet fond fool:—I'll go and prepare myself directly.

Nev. Ay do, Vapid,—she'll be all on fire to see you.

Vapid. All on fire! I suppose so.—Write a play, Neville, write a play—you see the effect of the muses, and graces, when they unite—you see, Neville, you see——but, hold, hold—how the devil came you by this letter?

Nev. That's true enough. [*Aside.*] I'll tell you—I was at her party last night, and on coming out of the room, she slipt it into my hand, and desired me to direct it, and give it to you.—She has often spoke to me in your favour, and I did you all the good I could —however, to be sure it's no mistake, ask the servant, who admits you, if the name at the bottom, is not her own handwriting.

Vapid. Oh, no!—it's no mistake,—there's no doubt of the matter.—Write a play, Neville, write a play —and charm the ladies, you dog!—adieu! [*Exit.*

Ennui. I've an idea—if we've common fortune, this will do every thing.

Nev. No,—Lady Waitfor't's arts are numberless—she is so perfect a hypocrite, that I even doubt her confessing her real sentiments to her minion Willoughby; and when she does a bad action, she ever pretends 'tis from a good motive.

Enter VAPID.

Vapid. Gad, I forgot—you'll recollect the epilogue, Neville.

Nev. Yes,—I'll write to my cousin to-day.

Vapid. But, not a word of the love affair to him—any where else indeed it might do one a service—but never tell an intrigue to a dramatic author.

Ennui. In fact—why not, sir?

Vapid. Because it may furnish a scene for a comedy—I do it myself.—Indeed, I think, the best part of an intrigue, is the hopes of incident, or stage effect—however, I can't stay.

Nev. Nay, we'll walk with you—I, in pursuit of my brother—you, of your mistress.

Vapid. Ay, Neville, there it is—now, do take my advice, and write a play—if any incident happens, remember, it is better to have written a damned play, than no play at all.—it snatches a man from obscurity—and being particular, as this world goes, is a very great thing.

Nev. But I confess I have no desire to get into print.

Vapid. Get into print!—pshaw!—every body gets into print, now.—Kings and quacks—peers and poets—bishops and boxers—tailors and trading justices—can't go lower, you know—all get into print!—But we soar a little higher,—we have privileges peculiar to ourselves.—Now, sir, I—I, for my part, can talk as I please,—say what I will, it is sure to excite mirth,—for, supposing you don't laugh at my wit, I laugh myself, Neville, and that makes every body else do the same—so allons!

Ennui. I've an idea—no bad mode of routing the enemy. [*Exeunt.*

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in LADY WAITFOR'T'S *House.—Two Chairs.*

Enter VAPID *and a* SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, my lady will wait on you immediately.

Vapid. Harkye, sir.—Is this young lady of yours very handsome?

Serv. Sir?

Vapid. Is your young mistress, sir, very handsome?

Serv. Yes, sir.—My young mistress is thought a perfect beauty.

Vapid. Charming!—What age do you reckon her?

Serv. About twenty, sir.

Vapid. The right interesting age! and fond of the drama, I suppose?

Serv. Sir?

Vapid. Very fond of plays, I presume?

Serv. Yes, sir, very fond of plays, or any thing relating to them.

Vapid. Delightful!—now am I the happiest dog alive:—yes, yes, Vapid! let the town damn your plays, the women will never desert you. [*Seats himself.*] You needn't stay, sir. [*Exit* SERVANT.] That's a good sign, that fellow isn't used to this kind of business—so much the better—practice is the destruction of love——yes, I shall indulge a beautiful woman, —gratify myself, and, perhaps, get the the last scene for my unfinished comedy.

Enter LADY WAITFOR'T.

Lady. Sir, you most obedient.

Vapid. Ma'am. [*Bowing.*

Lady. Pray keep your seat, sir—I beg I mayn't disturb you.

Vapid. By no means, ma'am,—give me leave—[*Both sit.*] Who the devil have we here? [*Aside.*

Lady. I am told, sir, you have business for Lady Waitfor't.

Vapid. Yes, ma'am—being my first appearance in that character, but I could wait whole hours for so beautiful a woman.

Lady. Oh, sir!

Vapid. Yes—I am no stranger to her charms——sweet young creature!

Lady. Nay, dear sir, not so *very* young.

Vapid. Your pardon, ma'am,—and her youth enhances her other merits.—But, oh! she has one charm that surpasses all.

Lady. Has she, sir?—What may that be?

Vapid. Her passion for the stage.

Lady. Sir!

Vapid. Yes, her passion for the stage; that, in my mind, makes her the first of her sex.

Lady. Sir, she has no passion for the stage.

Vapid. Yes, yes, she has.

Lady. But I protest she has not.

Vapid. But I declare and affirm it as a fact, she has a strong passion for the stage, and a violent attachment for all the people that belong to it.

Lady. Sir, I don't understand you—explain.

Vapid. Harkye,—we are alone—I promise it shall go no further, and I'll let you into a secret—I know——

Lady. Well, what do you know?

Vapid. I know a certain dramatic author with whom she——he had a letter from her this morning.

Lady. What?

Vapid. Yes,—an assignation—don't be alarmed—the man may be depended on—he is safe—very safe!—Long in the habit of intrigue—a good person too!—a very good person indeed.

Lady. Amazement!

Vapid. [*Whispering her.*] Harkye, he means to make her happy in less than half an hour.

Lady. [*Rising.*] Sir,—do you know who you're talking to?—do you know who I am?

Vapid. No,—how the devil should I?

Lady. Then know, I am Lady Waitfor't!

Vapid. You Lady Waitfor't?

Lady. Yes, sir—the only Lady Waitfor't!

Vapid. Mercy on me:—here's incident!

Lady. Yes, and I am convinced you were sent here by that traitor, Neville.—Speak, is he not your friend?

Vapid. Yes, ma'am:—I know Mr. Neville.—Here's equivoque!

Lady. This is some trick, some stratagem of his.—He gave you the letter to perplex and embarrass me.

Vapid. Gave the letter! 'gad, that's great.—Pray, ma'am, give me leave to ask you one question—Did you write to Mr. Neville?

Lady. Yes, sir—to confess the truth, I did—but from motives——

Vapid. Stop, my dear ma'am, stop—I have it—now, let me be clear—first, you send him a letter; is it not so? yes:—then he gives it to me—very well: then I come (supposing you only twenty) mighty well!—then you turn out ninety—charming!—then comes the embarrassment: then the eclaircisement! Oh! it's glorious!—Give me your hand—you have atoned for every thing.

Lady. O! I owe all this to that villain, Neville—I am not revengeful—but 'tis a weakness to endure

such repeated provocations, and I'm convinced the mind, that too frequently forgives bad actions, will at last forget good ones.

Vapid. Bravo! encore, encore—it is the very best sentiment I ever heard—say it again, pray say it again—I'll take it down, and blend it with the incident, and you shall be gratified one day or other with seeing the whole on the stage.—"The mind that too frequently forgives bad actions, will at last forget good ones."

[*Taking it down in his common place book.*

Lady. This madman's folly is not to be borne—if my Lord too should discover him [VAPID *sits and takes notes.*] here, the consequences might be dreadful, and the scheme of Ennui's play all undone.—Sir, I desire you'll quit my house immediately—Oh! I'll be revenged, I'm determined. [*Exit.*

Vapid. What a great exit!——Very well!—I've got an incident, however.—'Faith, I have noble talents—to extract gold from lead has been the toil of numberless philosophers: but I extract it from a baser metal, human frailty—Oh! it's a great thing to be a dramatic genius!—a very great thing indeed.

[*As he is going,*

Enter LORD SCRATCH.

Vapid. Sir, your most devoted.——How d'ye do?

Lord. Sir, your most obedient.

Vapid. Very warm tragedy weather, sir!—but, for my part, I hate summer, and I'll tell you why,—the theatres are shut, and when I pass by their doors in an evening, it makes me melancholy—I look upon them as the tombs of departed friends that were wont to instruct and delight me—I don't know how you feel—perhaps you are not in my way.

Lord. Sir!

Vapid. Perhaps you don't write for the stage—if

you do,—harkye—there is a capital character in this house for a farce.

Lord. Why! what is all this—who are you?

Vapid. Who am I?—here's a question! in these times who can tell who he is?—for ought I know I may be great uncle to yourself, or first cousin to Lady Waitfor't—the very woman I was about to—but no matter—since you're so very inquisitive, do you know who you are?

Lord. Lookye, sir, I am Lord Scratch.

Vapid. A peer! pshaw! contemptible;—when I ask a man who he is, I don't want to know what are his titles, and such nonsense; no, Old Scratch, I want to know what he has written, when he had the curtain up, and whether he's a true son of the drama. —Harkye, don't make yourself uneasy on my account—in my next pantomime, perhaps, I'll let you know who I am, Old Scratch. [*Exit.*

Lord. Astonishing! can this be Lady Waitfor't's house—"Very warm tragedy weather, sir!" "In my next pantomime let you know who I am."—Gad, I must go and investigate the matter immediately, and if she has wronged me, by the blood of the Scratches, I'll bring the whole business before parliament, make a speech ten hours long, reduce the price of opium, and set the nation in a lethargy.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Library in LADY WAITFOR'T'S *House.—A sofa, and two chairs.*

Enter VAPID.

Vapid. Either this house is a labyrinth, or I, in reflecting on my incident, have forgot myself; for so

it is I can't find my way out—who have we here? by the sixtieth night, my little partner!

Enter MARIANNE, *with a Book in her hand.*

Mari. The poet I danced with!—he little thinks how much I've thought of him since.—Sir! [*Courtesying.*

Vapid. Ma'am! [*Bowing.*]

Mari. I hope, sir, you caught no cold the other night?

Vapid. No, ma'am, I was much nearer a fever than a cold.—Pray, ma'am, what is your study?

Mari. I have been reading "All for Love."—Pray, sir, do you know any thing about plays?

Vapid. Know any thing about plays!—there's a question!

Mari. I know so much about them, that I once acted at a private theatre.

Vapid. Did you? Then you acted for your own amusement, and nobody's else: what was the play?

Mari. I can't tell.

Vapid. Can't tell!

Mari. No,—nobody knew,—it's a way they have.

Vapid. Then they never act a play of mine.—With all this partiality for the stage—perhaps you would be content with a dramatist for life—particularly if his morals were fine.

Mari. Lord! I don't care about fine morals—I'd rather my husband had fine teeth,—and I'm told most women of fashion are of the same opinion.

Vapid. To be sure they are,—but could you really consent to run away with a poet.

Mari. 'Faith—with all my heart—they never have any money, you know, and as I have none, our distress would be complete; and if we had any luck, our adventures would become public, and then we should get into a novel at last.

Vapid. Into a prison, more probably—if she goes on in this way, I must dramatise her first,—and run away with her afterwards. [*Aside.*] Come, are you ready?

Lady W. [*Without.*] Tell my lord, sir, I'll wait in the library.

Mari. Oh lord! my aunt, what's to be done?

Vapid. What's to be done!—why?

Mari. She mustn't find you here—she'll be the death of us, she is so violent.

Vapid. Well, I'm not afraid—she's no manager.

Mari. If you have any pity for me—here—hide yourself for a moment behind this sofa, and I'll get her out of the room directly.

Vapid. Behind the sofa! here's an incident!

Mari. Nay—pray—she's here! come—quick!—quick!—

[VAPID *gets behind the Sofa,* MARIANNE *sits on it, takes out her work bag, and begins singing*——

Mari. Toll de roll, &c.

Enter LADY WAITFOR'T.

Lady. Marianne, how came you here? I desire you'll leave the room directly.

Mari. Leave the room, Aunt?

Lady. Yes, leave the room immediately—what are you looking at?

Mari. Nothing, aunt, nothing—Lord! lord! what will become of poor, poor Mr. Poet? [*Exit.*

Lady. So—here's my lord—now to mention Ennui's play, and if it does but prejudice him against him, Willoughby marries Louisa, and Neville is in my own power.

Enter LORD SCRATCH.

Lord. That curst pantomime ruffian! nobody knows any thing about him—perhaps my lady has

got a sudden touch of the dramatic mania, and prefers him—here she is—now if she should talk about the stage.

Lady. Pray be seated, my lord—I want to ask you a favour.

Lord. Ask me a favour! Is it possible?

[*They sit.*

Lady. Yes, for our friend Ennui—what do you think he has done?

Lord. What?

Lady. Turned author.—He has written a comedy.

Lord. A comedy!—she has it.

Lady. Yes—it's very true, and it has been approved of by men of the first dramatic fame.

Lord. Dramatic fame! she has it!—dam'me, she has it!

Lady. Nay, if you need further proof, my lord, it has been approved by the manager of one of the theatres, and the curtain is to draw up next winter.

Lord. The curtain draw up!—Lookye, madam, I care no more for the manager or his theatre——

Lady. Now, my lord, the favour I have to ask of you is this—promise me to peruse the play, make alterations, and write the epilogue.

Lord. The epilogue!—fire and forefathers!

[LADY *holds him.*

Lady. Ay, or the prologue.

Lord. The prologue!—blood and gunpowder!

[VAPID *comes from behind the sofa, and smacks him on the back.*

Vapid. Prologue or epilogue!—I'm the man—I'll write you both.

Lord. There he is again!

Lady. Oh! I shall faint with vexation!—My lord, I desire you'll misinterpret nothing—every thing shall be explained to you.—Marianne!

Lord. Here's the curtain up with a vengeance!

Enter MARIANNE.

Lady. Answer me directly, how came that gentleman in this apartment? I know it is some trick of yours.

Vapid. [*Coming down the stage.*] To be sure, never any thing was so fortunate!—upon my soul, I beg your pardon; but, curse me, if I can help laughing, to think how lucky it was for you both I happened to be behind the sofa!—ha! ha! ha!

Mari. [*As if taking the hint.*] 'Faith, no more can I—to be sure it was the luckiest thing in the world! ha! ha! ha!

[*Here they both laugh loud, and point to my* LORD, *and* LADY WAITFOR'T, *who stand between them in amazement.*

Lady. Sir, I insist you lay aside this levity, and instantly explain how you came in this room.

Lord. Ay, sir,—explain.

Vapid. Never fear, old lady—I'll bring you off, depend on't.

Lady. Bring me off, sir! speak out, sir, how came you in this apartment?

Vapid. With all my heart.—By her ladyship's own appointment.

Lady. My own appointment!——I shall run wild.

Vapid. To be sure you have hardly forgot your own hand writing.

Lord. Her own hand writing!—get on, sir,—I beseech you, get on.

Vapid. Why, lookye, old Scratch,—you seem to be an admirer of this lady's.—Now I think it my duty as a moral dramatist—a moral dramatist, sir, mark that—to expose hypocrisy—therefore, sir, there is the letter, read it, and be convinced of your error.

Lord. Very well; have you done, sir?—have you

done?—consider I'm a peer of the realm, and I shall die if I don't talk.

Vapid. And now, sir, I must beg a favour of you—[*Gets close to him.*]—keep the whole affair secret, for if it gets hacknied, it loses its force.—To bring it all on the stage: hush! say nothing—it will have a capital effect, and brother bards will wonder where I stole it—your situation will be wonderful—you hav'n't an idea how ridiculous you will look—you will laugh very much at yourself, I assure you.

Lord. What is all this? Well, now I will speak—I'll wait no longer.

Vapid. Yes, yes, I shall take care of you,—Falstaff in the buck basket will be nothing to it—he was only the dupe of another man's wife,—you'll be the dupe of your own, you know—"think of that, Master Brook, think of that." Well, your servant. [*Exit.*

Lord. He's gone without hearing me!—then there's an end of every thing, for here I stand, once a barrister,—since a country gentleman, and now a peer; and, though I've made twenty attempts to speak, I can't be heard a syllable,—mercy! what will this world come to! A peer, and not be heard.

Lady. My lord,—assured of my innocence, I have no doubt of justifying my own conduct, and even by means of that letter increasing your affection.—It was written to another person—your ungrateful nephew.

Lord. My nephew?

Lady. Yes, sir.—I could not perceive him losing the esteem of his friends, without having the desire to reclaim him—indeed, I know no better mode of fulfilling my project, than by personally warning him of his situation.—For this purpose, I wrote that letter, and I never thought it would have been thus misused.—If there is any improper warmth in the expressions, it only proceeds from my anxiety of

ensuring an interview.—I hope, sir, you are satisfied.

Lord. Why, I believe you, my lady; and I should be perfectly satisfied if I could forget your passion for the stage, and that madman behind the sofa.

Lady. As to that, sir, this young lady can best inform you.—I desired him to leave the house an hour ago.

Mari. [*Aside.*] I'm afraid my only way is to confess all.—My lord, if I confess the truth, I hope you'll prevail on my aunt to forgive me.

Lord. Tell what you know, and I'll answer for your forgiveness.

Mari. Why, sir, I found the gentleman alone, and, not having had a *tête-a-tête* a long time, I pressed him to stay, and, on hearing your voice, I put him behind the sofa,—that you might not think any thing had happened,—and, indeed, sir, nothing did happen—upon my word he's as quiet, inoffensive a gentleman as yourself.

Lord. My fears are over! Oh! you finished composition! come to my arms, and when I suspect you again—[*Coughs much.*]—this curst cough, it takes one so suddenly!

Enter ENNUI.

Ennui. I've an idea—Floriville is arrived—in fact—I just now spoke to him.

Lord. Floriville arrived!—Come, my lady—let's go see what his travels have done for him.—Harkye, Ennui—prepare for your interview with Louisa, and remember you make a mandarin member.—Come, my lady—nay, never irritate your feelings.

[*Exeunt* LORD *and* LADY.

Mari. So—poor Mr. Neville is to lose Miss Courtney.—Her present quarrel with him is so violent, that she may marry this idiot merely in revenge.—If I

could dupe him now, and ensure her contempt.—I'll try.—Mr. Ennui, have you seen your intended wife yet?

Ennui. No.

Mari. So I thought—why you'll never please her while you remain as you are.—You must alter your manners.—She is all life!—all spirits!—and loves a man the very opposite to you.

Ennui. I've an idea I'm very sorry—in fact—how can I please her?

Mari. There's the difficulty—let me see—the sort of man she prefers is———you know Sir Harry Hustle?—a man all activity and confidence!—who does every thing from fashion, and glories in confessing it.

Ennui. Sir Harry Hustle?—in fact—he's a modern blood of fashion.

Mari. I know—that's the reason she likes him, and you must become the same, if you wish to win her affection—a new dress—bold looks—a few oaths, and much swaggering, effects the business. [ENNUI *puts himself in attitudes.*] Ay, that's right, you are the very man already.

Ennui. I'm a lad of fashion!—eh, dam'me!—I've an idea—I shall fall asleep in the midst of it.

Mari. No, no;—go about it directly—see Sir Harry Hustle, and study your conversation beforehand—but remember Louisa is so fond of fashion, that you can't boast too much of its vices and absurdities.

Ennui. If virtue was the fashion, I should be virtuous!—I should, dam'me!

Mari. Ay, that's the very thing—well;—good bye, Mr. Ennui—success attend you—mind you talk enough.

Ennui. Talk!—I'll talk till I fall asleep!—I will!—dam'me!

[*Exit, swaggering.*—MARIANNE *laughing.*

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

A Saloon in LADY WAITFOR'T'S *House.*

LOUISA *discovered reading.*

Louisa. Heigho! these poets are wonderfully tiresome- always on the same theme—nothing but love —I'm weary of it. [*Lays down the book, and rises.*] Ungenerous Neville! how could he use me so cruelly? to attempt to gain my affections, and then address another? Lady Waitfor't has convinced me of the fact,—I can never forgive him: yet, I fear I love him still—well, I'll even go examine my heart, and determine whether I do love him or not.

Enter NEVILLE, *as she is going out.*

Mr. Neville!—I thought, sir, I had desired we might never meet again.

Nev. 'Tis true, madam, and I meant to obey your commands, hard as they were, implicitly obey them —but I came hither to welcome my brother, and not to intrude on the happiness of her I am doomed to avoid.

Louisa. If I remember, sir, truth was ever among the foremost of your virtues?

Nev. Yes—and I am confident you have no reason to doubt it—though you have cause to censure my presumption, you have none to suspect my fidelity.

Louisa. Oh no!—I don't suspect your fidelity in

the least, but when people are faithful to more than one, you know, Mr. Neville——

Nev. I don't understand you, ma'am.

Louisa. It is no matter, Mr. Neville—you may spare yourself any trouble in attempting to justify your conduct—I am perfectly satisfied sir, I'll assure you. [*Going.*

Nev. Oh, do not leave me in this anxious state!—perhaps, this is the last time we shall ever meet; and to part thus, would embitter every future moment of my life. Indeed, I have no hopes that concern not your happiness—no wishes that relate not to your esteem.

Louisa. Sir,—I will freely confess to you, had you shown the least perseverance in your affection, or sincerity in your behaviour, I could have heard your addresses with pleasure—but to listen to them now, Mr. Neville, would be to approve a conduct my honour prompts me to resent, and my pride to despise.

Nev. Then I am lost indeed!—'Tis to the perfidious Lady Waitfor't, I owe all this——my present

Enter LADY WAITFOR'T, *behind.*

misery—my future pain—are all the product of her jealous rage!—She is so vile an hypocrite, that—

Lady. [*Coming forward.*] Who is an hypocrite, sir?

Nev. Madam!

Lady. Who is an hypocrite, sir? answer me.

Nev. Ask your own heart, that can best inform you.

Lady. Tell me, Mr. Neville, what have I done, that you dare insult me thus?

Nev. What have you done! look on that lady, madam;—there all my hopes and wishes were combined!—There was the very summit of my bliss!—I thought I had attained it; but in the moment of my happiness, you came, crushed every hope, and baffled all my joys.

Lady. Upon my word, sir, very romantic,—but I thank Heaven, I look for approbation in a better opinion than that of Mr. Neville's.

Nev. 'Tis well you do, madam; for were I your judge, your punishment should be exemplary.—But I'll waste words no more—I only hope [*To* Louisa.] you, madam, are satisfied that one of my errors may at least be forgiven, and this last suspicion for ever blotted from your memory.

Lady. Sir,—from that lady's forgiveness you have nothing to expect—if she consents to pardon you, I'll take care my lord never shall.

Nev. No—I do not hope for forgiveness—I have heard her determination; and, cruel as it is, to that I must resign;—she may be assured, I never will intrude where I know I offend.

Louisa. Do you then leave us, Mr. Neville?

Nev. Yes, madam,—and for ever!——May you be as blest in the gratification of your hopes, as I have been wretched in the disappointment of mine. [*Exit.*

Lady. Tyrant! I wish he had stayed to hear reason—I hope he is not serious in leaving us.

Louisa. You hope!—Why does it concern you?

Lady. Oh! no further than from that general love I bear mankind.—You forget my feelings on these occasions, Louisa.

Louisa. Yes, indeed—I have too much reason to attend to my own!—You'll excuse me—I have particular business—I'll return immediately. [*Exit.*

Lady. Oh! the cause of her confusion is evident—she loves him still—but they shall never meet again—I have already sent a letter to Willoughby, which imparts a scheme I have long cherished. My lord, in his anger about my stage mania, has forgot Ennui's play; so, that there may be no bars to Willoughby's happiness, I am determined Louisa shall be his this very night.

Enter LORD SCRATCH.

Lord. Here's a spectacle for a peer! Floriville is below, and is returned from his travels a finished coxcomb.—I'll not give him a farthing.

Lady. Nay, my lord, perhaps you may be mistaken.

Lord. Mistaken! no,—he has travelled not to see, but to say he had seen.

Enter MARIANNE, *with a French Watch and Chain.*

Mari. Oh, uncle-in-law! look here——I never saw any thing so elegant, in all my life.

Lord. Whose present is this?

Mari. Whose!—why the sweet gentleman's just arrived from Italy.—Lord! he's a dear man!—He has promised to do every thing for me—to get me a fortune—to get me a husband—to get me a——

Lord. Hush! you don't know what you are talking about.

Mari. Yes, but I do though—he has told me every thing—Lord! I have heard such things!—Come here, near— [LORD SCRATCH *gets close to her.*] get my aunt out of the room, and I'll tell you stories that shall make your old heart bound again! Hush! do it quietly—I will, upon my honour.—What an old fool it is! [*Aside.*

Lady. Marianne, you mustn't listen to Mr. Floriville,—for travellers may persuade you into any thing —and many a woman has been ruined in one country, by being told it is the fashion in another.

Lord. Here he comes: I see as plain as my peerage, I sha'n't keep my temper.

Enter FLORIVILLE.

Flor. Ladies, a thousand pardons, for not waiting on

you before, but this is the first vacant moment I have had, since my arrival in Bath.

Mari. Sir, your coming at all, is taken as a very great compliment, I'll assure you.

Lady. Leave the room immediately—no reply—I will be obeyed— [*To* MARIANNE, *who exits.*] Mr. Floriville, we are very happy to see you.

Flor. Ma'am, you do me honour—my lord, where's Harry?—I thought to have found him here;—what, he didn't chuse to stay?—so much the better—it shows he's not a man of ceremony—we do the same in Italy. But, harkye, uncle,—is this the lady I'm to call my aunt?

Lord. My gorge is rising: I shall certainly do him a mischief.

Flor. [*Spying at her.*] Rather experienced or so—a little antique, eh!—however, the same motive that makes her a good aunt to me, will make her a good wife to you—you understand me?

Lord. Dam'me if I do.

Flor. Well, well, no matter—come, I want to hear every thing—to know what remarkable occurences have happened since I left England.—Pray, Lady Waitfor't, inform me—do let me know every little circumstance.

Lady. Rather, sir, we should ask of you what happened in your travels?

Flor. Oh, nothing so shocking!—no man can be the herald of his own praise.

Lady. Yes, sir,—but I wish to know how you like the Chapel of Loretto, the Venus de Medicis of Florence, the Vatican, at Rome, and all the numberless curiosities, peculiar to the countries you have travelled through?

Lord. Lookye—I'll answer for it, he knows nothing of the gentlemen you mention—do you, my sweet pretty?—Oh! you damned puppy!

Flor. Why swear, my lord?

Lord. Swear, my lord! Zounds! it's my prerogative, and, by——tell me how you spent your time, sir?

Flor. Why, in contemplating living angels, not dead antiquities;—in basking in the rays of beauty; not mouldering in the dust of ancestry;—in mirth, festivity, and pleasure; not study, pedantry, and retirement.—Oh, I have lived, sir! lived for myself, not an ungrateful world, who, should I die a martyr to their cause, would only laugh and wonder at my folly.

Lady. You seem to know the world, Mr. Floriville.

Flor. No, ma'am, I know little of mankind, and less of myself,—I have no pilot, but my pleasures;—no mistress, but my passions;—and I don't believe, if it was to save my life, I could reason consequentially for a minute together.

Lord. Granted:—you have seen every thing worth seeing, yet know nothing worth knowing;—and now you have just knowledge enough to prove yourself a fool on every subject.

Flor. Vastly well, my lord—upon my word, you improve with your title, but I am perfectly satisfied, believe me—for what I don't know, I take for granted is not worth knowing—therefore we'll call another topic.—I'm in love, my lord.

Lord. In love!—with who, sir?

Flor. Can't you guess?

Lord. No, sir, I cannot.

Flor. With one that will please you very much—at least ought to please you—you'll be in raptures, dear uncle.

Lord. Raptures! and you shall be in agonies, my dear nephew.

Flor. You have known one another a long while, yet you hav'n't met for years—you have lov'd one an-

other a long while, yet you quarrelled not an hour ago —you have differed from one another all your lives, yet you are likely to be friends as long as you live— and, above all, the person is now in the house.

Lord. In this house! let me know who it is this moment, or by the blood of the Scratches——

Flor. One who has charms enough to set the world on fire;—one who has fortune enough to set a state at war, sir;—one who has talents, health, and prosperity, and yet not half what the person deserves:—can I you tell now, sir?

Lord. No, sir, and if you don't tell this instant——

Flor. Then I'll tell you, [*Slaps him on the back.*] it's myself, sir! my own charming self!—I have searched the world over, and I don't find any thing I like half so well. [*Walks up the stage.*

Lord. I won't disgrace myself,—I won't lower the dignity of peerage, by chastising a commoner;—else, you Prince of Butterflies——come, my lady—— lookye, sir—I intend to be handed down to posterity; and, while you are being lampooned in ballads and newspapers, I mean to cut a figure in History of England:—so, come along, my lady—in the History of England, you coxcomb!

[*Exeunt* LORD *and* LADY.

Flor. If the face is the picture of the mind, that intended aunt of mine is a great hypocrite, and the story I heard of the poet proves it.—But now for a frolic—'gad it's very strange I could never reform, and become a serious thinking being—but what's the use of thinking?—

Reason stays till we call, and then not oft is near,
But honest instinct comes a volunteer!— [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

An Apartment in LADY WAITFOR'T'S *House.*

Enter WILLOUGHBY *and* SERVANT.

Will. [*To* SERVANT.] Tell your mistress I shall be punctual to the appointment. [*Exit* SERVANT.] So, thanks to Fortune, Lady Waitfor't has at length consented to my entreaties, and this night makes Louisa mine for ever!—now to read the letter once more.

[*Reads.*

Louisa accompanies me to-night to Lady Walton's, which you know is at the extremity of the town—on some pretence or other I'll tell her I have ordered the servant at the back gate which adjoins the paddock,—there I'll leave her—and if you have a chaise waiting near the spot, you may conduct her where you please.—You know my feelings on this occasion, but it is for her good only, I'll assure you—she don't deserve it, Mr. Willoughby:—indeed she don't deserve it.

A. WAITFOR'T.

So—this is beyond my hopes!—ha! my Lord, and Louisa with him, come to receive Ennui, who to my astonishment I met just now swearing and capering, and boasting of the vices of fashion—but no matter—I must to the rendezvous immediately,—now, Louisa, tremble at my vengeance! [*Exit.*

Enter LORD SCRATCH *and* LOUISA.

Lord. Yes, yes:—Ennui will be here in an instant—but he's so reserved—and so mild.—

Louisa. So I understand, sir—and so very silent that he won't talk so much in a year, as I intend in an hour.

Lord. I know—that's the reason I bring him into parliament—he'll never speak—only say "Ay" or

"No", and be up stairs to beef-steaks in an instant. [*Knock.*] Here he is!—now encourage him—don't mind his diffidence—

Louisa. No, sir—I'll do all in my power to make him talk.

Lord. That's well—I'll leave you together—I won't interrupt you, [*Stamping without.*] Odso!—I must get out of the way,—encourage him; Louisa—I beseech you encourage him! [*Exit.*

Ennui. [*Without.*] Stand by! no ceremony, damme!—

Louisa. Heaven!—is this diffidence?

Enter ENNUI *and* SERVANT.

Ennui. Get down stairs, you dog—get down,—[*Exit* SERVANT.] Here I am, ma'am:—ease is every thing—I'll seat myself—now for business!—yaw—aw!— [*Yawns aside.*

Louisa. Sir!

Ennui. In one word, I'll tell you my character,—I'm a lad of fashion!—I love gaming—I hate thinking—I like racing—I despise reading—I patronize boxing—I detest reasoning—I pay debts of honour,—not honourable debts—in short, I'll kick your servants—cheat your family, and fight your guardian—and so if you like me, take me—heh, damme!—I'm tir'd already!—yaw—aw. [*Yawns aside.*

Louisa. Astonishing!—Mr. Ennui— [*Aside.*

Ennui. Ma'am: yaw—aw!

Louisa. Mr. Ennui, can you be in your senses!

Ennui. In fact—I don't comprehend [*Forgetting himself.*]—Oh—ay—senses! [*Recollecting himself.*] a lad of fashion in his senses!—that's a very good joke!—if one of us had any sense, the rest would shut him up in a cabinet of curiosities, or show him as a wonderful animal:—they would, damme!—I can't support it!—yaw—aw. [*Yawns aside.*

Louisa. So, you glory in your ignorance!

Ennui. Ma'am—yaw! aw! [*Aside.*

Louisa. So, you glory in your ignorance—in your vices!

Ennui. I've an idea—I can't understand—[*Forgetting himself.*]—vices! Oh:—ay, damme, to be sure; [*Recollecting himself.*] you must be wicked, or you can't be visited—singularity is every thing,—every man must get a character, and I'll tell you how I first got mine:—I pretended to intrigue with my friend's wife,—paragraph'd myself in the newspapers, —got caricatur'd in the printshops—made the story believ'd,—was abus'd by every body,—notic'd for my gallantry by every body—and at length visited by every body—I was, damme!—I'm curst sleepy,—yaw—aw! [*Yawns aside.*

Louisa. Incredible!—but if singularity is your system, perhaps being virtuous would make you as particular as any thing.

Ennui. Vastly well!—'gad, you're like me, a wit, and don't know it. [*Taking out his Watch.*] How goes the enemy?—more than half the day over!—tol de rol lol! [*Humming a tune.*] I'm as happy as if I was at a fire, or a general riot.—Come to my arms, thou angel—thou—[*As he goes to embrace her,* LORD SCRATCH *enters—he embraces him.*] Ah,—Scratch!—my friend Scratch!—sit down, my old boy—sit down, —we've settled every thing. [*Forces him into a Chair, and sits by him.*]

Lord. Why,—what is all this?

Ennui. She's to intrigue, and you and I are to go halves in the damages—some rich old Nabob—we'll draw him into *crim. con.*—bring an action directly, and a ten thousand pound verdict at least—eh, damme!—

Lord. Why he's mad!—that dramatic maniac has bit him.

Ennui. Get a divorce—marry another, and go halves again, damme!

Lord. [*Rising.*] Why, lookye, you impostor!—you—didn't you come here to pay your addresses to this lady? and wasn't I to bring you into parliament, for your quiet silent disposition.

Ennui. [*Pushing him out of his way.*] Hold your tongue! out of the way, Scratch!—out of the way, or I'll do you a mischief—I will, damme!—Zounds!—a'nt I at the top of the beau monde? and don't I set the fashions?—if I was to cut off my head, wouldn't half the town do the same?—they would, damme!—I get sleepy again!—yaw—aw!—[*Aside.*]

Lord. Here now!—here's a mandarin member;—why he'd have bred a civil war!—made ten long speeches in a day!—cut your head off, indeed;—curse me but I wish you would—you must be silent then—you couldn't talk without a head, could you?

Ennui. Yes, in parliament—as well without a head as with one—do you think a man wants a head for a long speech, damme!—

Enter SERVANT.

Servant. Her Ladyship is waiting, ma'am.

Louisa. Oh, I attend her,—Mr. Ennui, your most obedient.

Ennui. [*Taking her Hand.*] With your leave, ma'am.—You see, Scratch—you see.

Lord. Why, Louisa!—

Ennui. Keep your distance, Scratch—contemplate your superiors,—look at me with the same awful respect a city beau looks at a prince,—this way, most angelic—Scratch, cut your head off—this way, most angelic.— [*Exit with* LOUISA.

Lord. Here's treatment!—was ever poor peer so tormented?—what am I to do!—I'll go to Lady Waitfor't, for from her alone I meet relief,—find a silent member, indeed!—by my privilege one might as soon find a pin in the ocean,—charity in a bench of Bishops,—or wit in Westminster Hall! [*Exit.*

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

The Paddock near LADY WALTON'S *House—A View of the House at a distance, and partly moonlight.*

WILLOUGHBY *alone.*

'Tis past the hour Lady Waitfor't appointed—why does she delay? I cannot have mistaken the place—yonder's Lady Walton's house—Oh! 'would all were past, and Louisa safely mine! I hear a noise—by Heaven 'tis she! and with her all my happiness—I'll withdraw a while, and observe them. [*Retires.*

Enter Lady WAITFOR'T *and* LOUISA COURTNEY.

Louisa. My dear Lady Waitfor't, why do you loiter here? you cannot find your servants in this place—let us return to Lady Walton's.

Lady. No, no, they must be here,—I ordered them to wait in this very spot, to avoid confusion. What can have become of Willoughby? [*Aside.*

Louisa. If you have the least sense of fear for yourself, or regard for me, I beg we may return to Lady Walton's.

Lady. No, no, I tell you I ordered William at the back gate, that he might conduct us through the paddock to our carriage; you know we might have been whole hours getting through the crowd the other way—do be a little patient, hav'nt I as much reason to be alarmed as yourself?

Louisa. Yes, but you have not the apprehension I have; I don't know why, but I am terrified beyond description.

Lady. Well, well, never fear; [*Looking out.*] Oh, yonder's Willoughby! now for the grand design! [*Aside.*] Louisa, if you'll wait here a moment, I'll

step to the next gate, and see if they are there;—they cannot escape us then.

Louisa. No, no, don't leave me;—I would'nt stay by myself for the world.

Lady. Ridiculous! can't you protect yourself for an instant? must you be all your life watch'd like a baby in leading strings? Oh! I am asham'd of you—only wait a moment, least they pass by in my absence, and I'll return to you immediately.

Louisa. Well: don't stay.

Lady. Stay! what have you to be frightened at? I shall not be out of call;—besides, if there's any fear of a personal attack, may not I be as terrified as yourself? It isn't the first time, I'll assure you, but that's no matter;—show yourself a woman of spirit, and, at least, emulate one of my virtues.—Now, Willoughby, the rest is thine! [*Exit.*

WILLOUGHBY *comes forward.*

Willoughby. Be not alarmed, Miss Courtney.

Louisa. Mr. Willoughby!

Willoughby. Yes, madam, the man, you most avoid.

Louisa. Tell me, sir, immediately, how, and by whose appointment you came here?

Willoughby. By love, madam, the same passion that has prompted me to pursue you for years, now happily conducts me hither;—I come to lessen your fears, not to increase them.

Louisa. Then, leave me, sir, I can protect myself.

Willoughby. No, not till you have heard, and pitied me; I have been long your suitor, and long scorned by you; you have treated me with indifference, and preferred my inferiors; how I have deserved all this, yourself can best explain, but to prove all former cruelties are forgotten, I here offer you my hand, and, with it, my heart.

Louisa. Sir,—this is no time for hearing you on this subject; if you wish to oblige me, leave me.

Willoughby. No, not till I am answered,—years may elapse ere I shall have another opportunity like the present, therefore no time can be so well as now.

Louisa. Then I command you to leave me,—I will not be threatened into a compliance.

Willoughby. Lookye, Miss Courtney—I would avoid taking advantage of your situation—nay, start not—but if you persist in your contempt of me, I know not to what extremities passion may hurry me; I have every motive for redress, and, if you do not instantly give me your word, to prefer me to that beggar, Neville, I may do that, my cooler sense would scorn.

Louisa. Beggar, sir!

Willoughby. Yes, and were he not beneath my resentment, I'd tell you more;—but he is too poor—too—

Louisa. Hold, sir; did you resemble him, I might esteem, nay, adore you; but, as you are, I loath, I despise, I defy you;—you take advantage of my situation! Hear me, sir,—though not a friend is near,—though night opposes me, and Heaven deserts me; yet can I smile upon your menaces, and make you tremble, villain as you are.

Willoughby. Have a care, madam! another declaration like that, and I'll delay no longer;—I'll force you to my purpose.

Louisa. You dare not; on your life you dare not.

Willoughby. Nay, then—I am not to be terrified by threats,—[*Lays hold of her.*] all struggling is in vain; this moment gratifies my revenge,—away!

Louisa. Off,—let me go, Oh, help! help!

[*As he is forcing her out, enter* FLORIVILLE, *half drunk.*]

Flor. "Donne, donne, donne, dow." [*Singing part of an Italian air.*] Oh, this Burgundy's a glorious liquor! heyday! who have we here?

Louisa. Oh, sir! if you have any pity for an in-

jured, helpless woman, assist one who never knew distress till now!

Flor. Go on, ma'am, go on—both damn'd drunk, I perceive.

Louisa. Do not be deaf to my entreaties—do not desert me—

Flor. Go on, ma'am, go on—I love oratory in a woman.

Louisa. Gracious Heaven! how have I deserved all this? I see, sir, you avoid me. I see you are indifferent to my fate.

Flor. No, ma'am, you wrong me—but in Italy—observe—we always take these things coolly—now, sir, will you explain?

Willoughby. No, sir, I will not.

Flor. You will not!

Willoughby. No, sir, and I warn you not to listen to the wild ravings of a senseless woman—it may be better for you, sir.

Flor. Why so, Prince Prettiman?

Willoughby. No matter, sir, I will not be amused from my purpose.

Flor. You won't, old Pluto, won't you? then, ma'am, observe! you shall behold my mode of fighting—I'll kill him like a gentleman, and he shall die without a groan;—you'll be delighted, ma'am—I learnt it all in Italy.—Come, Belzebub, are you ready?

Willoughby. 'Sdeath! what can I do? he is drunk, perhaps I may disarm him.

Flor. Now, thou original sin, thou prince of darkness! come out; never let her see thy black infernal visage more, or by my life I'll pulverize you—you see, ma'am, no bad orator either—learnt it all in Italy.

Willoughby. Come on, sir.

Flor. Ay, now old Sysiphus, push home—but fight like a gentleman, if you can, for remember, there is a

lady in company—observe, ma'am, observe; you won't see it again. [*They fight.*—FLORIVILLE *disarms* WILLOUGHBY.]

Flor. What, vanquished Tarquin? hah! hah! [*Parrying up and down the stage by himself.*]—You see, ma'am, you see!—Oh! Italy's your only country!—Now, ma'am, would you have me kill him here, "in Allegro," or postpone it, that you may have the pleasure of pinking him yourself, "in Penseroso."

Louisa. [*Coming near* FLORIVILLE, *and discovering him.*] Floriville, my deliverer!—generous man!—No, sir, whatever are his crimes, do not kill him; his greatest punishment will be to live.

Flor. There, then, caitiff, take your sword, and d'ye hear, retire;—that black front of thine offends the lady;—if you want another flourish, you will soon find Floriville—abscond!

Willoughby. Sir, you shall hear from me—distraction! [*Exit.*

Flor. And now, my dear little angel, how can I assist you? I'm very sorry, but I can't help it—I'm cursed drunk, and not proper company for a lady of your dignity,—but I won't affront you—I mean to make myself agreeable, and if I do not—it is the fault of that place, [*Pointing to his head.*] and not of this [*Pointing to his heart.*].

Louisa. Sir, your conduct has endeared you to me for ever, and while I live, your generosity and valour shall be engraven on my heart.

Flor. Gently, gently, have a care, make no declarations; if you're in love with me, as I suppose you are, keep it secret,—for at this moment, you might raise a flame that would consume us both;—poor creature! how fond she is of me! any other time I would indulge her, but not now—[*Looks at her sometime, then runs, and kisses her hand.*]—Oh, you paragon!—"Angels must paint, to look as fair as you."—[*Goes*

from her again.]—I'll leave you, or, by Heaven, it will be all over with us.

Louisa. No, no, don't desert me, alas! I have no way left but to commit myself to your care—if I could bring him to recollect me, all would be safe. Mr. Floriville, don't you know me?

Flor. No, 'would to Heaven I did.

Louisa. What, not Miss Courtney?

Flor. What, Louisa? my brother's idol?

Louisa. Alas! the very same.

Flor. Then may I die, if I don't get out of your debt before I leave you—where—where shall I conduct you?

Louisa. I know not—return to Lady Waitfor't's again, I will not—I had rather be a wanderer all my life—to Lady Walton's there is no excuse for returning, and I know no friend in Bath I dare intrude upon,—I have so high an opinion, Mr. Floriville, of your honour, that, notwithstanding your present situation, there is no man on earth I would sooner confide in;—can you then think of any place, where I may rest in safety for a few hours, and then I will set out for my uncle's, in the country.

Flor. Indeed I cannot, I am a wanderer myself;—I have no home but what this gentleman is to purchase me [*Taking out his purse.*]—you cannot partake of that.

Louisa. Oh! what will become of me?

Flor. Let me see—I have it—I'll take her to my brother's;—she'll be safe there, and not a soul shall come near her.—Well, Miss Courtney,—I have recollected a place where I know you'll be safe—a friend's house, that will be as secure—nay, don't droop—in Italy we're never melancholy.

Louisa. Oh, Mr. Floriville, to what a hazard has Lady Waitfor't exposed me!—to her perfidy I owe it all—but yonder's that wretch again—pray let us begone.

Flor. Belzebub again,—no, no, we mustn't stir;—what! an angel fly from a devil? damme, I'll stay and crush him.

Louisa. Nay, sir, reflect,—'twere madness to remain.

Flor. 'Faith, that's true; I believe it's braver to retire,—therefore, Tarquin, adieu; come, my best angel! I'll fight your battles, and if I don't sink all your enemies, may I never see Italy again as long as I live! [*Exeunt.*

Enter WILLOUGHBY.

Ha! gone,—I am sorry for it—I would have seen them—Lady Waitfor't has just left me, and treated me like her slave,—insulted and derided me; but I'll have done with her for ever,—I'll be her dupe no more;—she is now gone to Neville's lodgings, under pretence of pursuing Louisa, but in fact, to see him, and prevent his leaving Bath;—this I will write to my lord, and then let him follow, and be witness of her infamy;—thus, I hope, I shall make some reparation for the wrongs I have committed, and prove at last I have some sense of virtue. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

NEVILLE'S *Lodgings—A Closet in back Scene.—Two Chairs, and a Table, with Wine on it.—A knocking at the Door.*

Enter PETER, *reading a Card.*

Vapid presents his Compliments to his Friend Neville, has thought of nothing but writing the epilogue for his friend's play since they parted; he has made great progress, and will wait on him to take his judgment on it in a few minutes. If the gentleman

should come soon, I fear my master won't be at home to receive him.

[*Knocks.*—PETER *opens the Door, and lets in* VAPID.

Vapid. Well, here it is—where's Neville?

Peter. Not within, sir.

Vapid. Yes, yes, here it is;—I must see him.

Peter. Sir, he's gone out.

Vapid. Gone out? impossible!

Peter. Impossible! it's very true, sir.

Vapid. Gone out! why, I've brought him the epilogue—the new epilogue to Mr. What's-his-name's comedy; the very best thing I ever wrote in my life; I knew it would delight him.

Peter. Sir, he has been gone out above these two hours.

Vapid. Then he'll never forgive himself as long as he lives; why, it's all correct—all chaste! only one half line wanting at the end to make it complete.

Peter. Indeed, sir, it's very unfortunate.

Vapid. Unfortunate! I wanted to have heard him read it too; when another person reads it, one often hits on a thought that might otherwise have escaped; then, perhaps, he would have hit on that cursed half line, I have so long been working at.

Peter. Sir, if it is not impertinent, and you'd permit me to read it.

Vapid. You read it!

Peter. Yes, sir, if you'd allow me that honour.

Vapid. 'Faith, I should have no objection,—but wouldn't it lower one's dignity? No, no, Moliere us'd to read his plays to his servants, so I believe all's regular.—Come, sir, begin. [PETER *reading Epilogue.*

In ancient times, when agonizing wars,
And bleeding nations, fill'd the world with jars;
When murder, battle, sudden death, prevail'd,
When——

Vapid. Stop—stop—I have it!—not a word for

your life; I feel it—it's coming on—the last line directly—quick! quick! [PETER *reads.*

The tyrant totters, and the senate nods,
Die all, die nobly!——

[*Here's something wanting, sir.*

Vapid. I know it, say nothing—I have it—
[*Walks backwards and forwards.*

The tyrant totters, and the senate nods,
Die all, die nobly!——

Oh, damn it! damn it! damn it!—that cursed half line!—I shall never accomplish it—all so chaste—all so correct,—and to have it marr'd for want of one half line,—one curst half line! I could almost weep for disappointment.

Peter. Never mind, sir, don't perplex yourself,—put in any thing.

Vapid. Put in any thing! why, 'tis the last line, and the epilogue must end with something striking, or it will be no trap for applause—no trap for applause, after all this fine writing!—Put in any thing!—what do you mean, sirrah?

Peter. Methinks, this is a strange epilogue to a comedy—[*Knock at the door.*]—Perhaps this is my master—[*Looks out.*]—no, as I live, 'tis Mr. Floriville and Miss Courtney! she mustn't on any account be seen by this gentleman.

Vapid. Well, who is it?—"The tyrant totters"—

Peter. Sir, it's a friend of my master's, who has brought a lady with him—I'm sure you've too much gallantry to interrupt an amour; and, therefore, you'll be kind enough to get out of the way directly.

Vapid. Get out of the way! what the devil, in the middle of my composition?—"Die all, die nobly"—

Peter. Nay, sir, only step for a moment into this closet, and you shall be released,—now, pray sir,—pray be prevailed on.

Vapid. Well, let me see—in this closet! why, here's china, zounds! would you put a live author in a china closet?

Peter. What can I do, sir? there is no way out but that door—get in here for an instant, and I'll show them into the library—now do, sir.

Vapid. Well, be brief then,—"Die all! die nobly!"—oh! oh! oh!

[*Enters Closet, and* FLORIVILLE *and* LOUISA *enter.*

Flor. Heyday!—my old acquaintance, Peter! where's my brother?

Peter. Sir, he has been out the whole evening.

Louisa. In the same house with Neville!—oh, Heavens!

Flor. Well, Miss Courtney, I hope now you are convinced of your safety.

Louisa. Yes, sir, but I would it were in any other place; Lady Waitfor't, ere this, is in pursuit of me, and if she discovers me here, you know too well how much I have to dread.

[*Knock at the Door—Exit* PETER.

Flor. Don't be alarm'd, there's nothing shall molest you.

Louisa. Oh, sir! you don't know the endless malice of Lady Waitfor't—she will triumph in my misery, and till my lord is convinced of her duplicity, I see no hope of your brother's happiness, or my own.

Enter PETER.

Peter. Lady Waitfor't is below, inquiring for that lady, or my master.

Flor. For my brother?

Peter. Yes, sir, and my lord has sent to know if Mr. Vapid, or her ladyship, have been here;—he was in bed, but on receiving a letter, got up, and will be here in an instant.

Louisa. For Heaven's sake, Mr. Floriville, let me retire,—I cannot support the conflict.

Flor. Promise to recall your spirits, and you shall.

Louisa. What I can do I will.

Flor. Then know no apprehension, for, on my life, you shall not be disturbed.

[*Leads her to the Door of the Library, and talks in dumb show.*

Vapid. [*From Closet.*] Peter! Peter! can't you release me?

Peter. No, sir, don't move, you'll ruin every thing.

Vapid. Then give me that candle—I have pen and ink—I think I could finish my epilogue.

Peter. Here, sir. [*Giving Candle.*

Vapid. That curst half line!—"Die all"—

[PETER *shuts him in.*

Flor. So, now the storm begins, and if I don't have some sport with the enemy—[*Sits at table, and begins drinking.*]—here she comes!—

Enter LADY WAITFOR'T.

Flor. Chairs, Peter, chairs.—Sit down, ma'am—sit down—you honour me exceedingly.

Lady. Where is your brother, sir? I insist on seeing him.

Enter LORD SCRATCH.

Lord. There she is!—in a man's lodgings at midnight!—here's treatment!

Lady. My lord, I came here in search of Louisa, who has been betrayed from my power.

Lord. Lookye, my lady—read that letter, that's all; read that letter, and then say, if we shan't both cut a figure in the print-shops.

Lady. [*Taking Letter.*] Ha! Willoughby's hand! [*Reads.*] *Lady Waitfor't, (I have only time to tell you) is gone to Neville's lodgings, to meet one she has long had a passion for—follow her, and be convinced of her duplicity.* Oh, the villain! well, my lord, and pray who is the man I come to meet?

Lord. Why, who should it be, but the stage ruffian? if there was a sofa in the room, my life on't, he'd pop from behind it.—Zounds! that fellow will lay straw before my door every nine months!

Lady. This is fortunate.—[*Aside.*] Well, sir, if I discover Louisa, I hope you'll be convinced I came here to redeem her, and not disgrace myself. Tell me, sir, immediately, where she is concealed.

[*To* FLORIVILLE.

Flor. Sit down, ma'am—sit down: drink, drink, then we'll talk over the whole affair—there is no doing business without wine; come, here's "The glory of gallantry"—I'm sure you'll both drink that.

Lady. No trifling, sir; tell me where she is concealed;—nay, then I'll examine the apartment myself—[*Goes to Door of Library.*]—the door lock'd! give me the key, sir.

Flor. [*Drinking.*] "The glory of gallantry, ma'am."

Lord. Hear me, sir, if the lady is in that apartment, I shall be convinced that you and your brother, are the sole authors of all this treachery; if she is there, by the honour of my ancestors, she shall be Willoughby's wife to-morrow morning.

Flor. [*Rising.*] Shall she, my lord? Pray, were you ever in Italy?

Lord. Why, coxcomb?

Flor. Because, I'm afraid you've been bitten by a tarantula—you'll excuse me, but the symptoms are wonderfully alarming—There is a blazing fury in your eye—a wild emotion in your countenance, and a green spot—

Lord. Damn the green spot! open that door, and let me see immediately: I'm a peer, and have a right to look at any thing.

Flor. [*Standing before the Door.*] No, sir; this door must not be open'd.

Lord. Then I'll forget my peerage, and draw my sword.

Flor. [*To* LADY WAITFOR'T, *who is going to interfere.*] Don't be alarmed, ma'am, I'll only indulge him for my own amusement—mere trout fishing, ma'am—

Enter LOUISA, *from the Apartment.*

Louisa. Hold! I charge you, hold!—let not my unhappy fate be the source of more calamities.

Lord. 'Tis she herself;—My lady did not come to meet the madman.

Flor. By the lord, ma'am, you have ruined all.

Louisa. I know, sir, the consequences of this discovery, and I abide by them.—But, what I have done, I can justify, and 'would to Heaven all here could do the same!

Flor. Indeed, I can't tell—I wish I was in Italy.

Lord. Mark me, madam:—nay, tears are in vain,—to-morrow shall make you the wife of Willoughby; and he shall answer for your follies.—No reply, sir, [*To* FLORIVILLE, *who is going to speak.*] I won'dn't hear the Chancellor.

Lady. Now, who is to blame? Oh, virtue is ever sure to meet its reward!—Come to meet a mad poet, indeed!—My lord, I forgive you only on condition of your signing a contract to marry me to-morrow, and Louisa to Willoughby, at the same time.

Lord. I will, thou best of women!—draw it up immediately—and Neville shall starve for his treachery.

[LADY WAITFOR'T *goes to the Table, and writes.*

Louisa. [*Falling at the Feet of* LORD SCRATCH.] Hear me, sir,—not for myself, but a wrong'd friend, I speak:—Mr. Neville knows not of my concealment; on my honour, he is innocent:—if that lady's wrongs must be avenged, confine the punishment to me—I'll bear it, with patience bear it.

Lord. Let go!—let go, I say!—Lady Waitfor't, make haste with the contract.

Lady. It only wants the signature.—Now, my lord.

Flor. Lookye, uncle—she's the cause of all this mischief, and if you are not lost——

Lord. Out of my way!—O'd—noise and nonsense! —don't fancy yourselves in the House of Commons! we're not speaking twenty at a time. Here! give me the pen—I'll sign directly; and now—

[*As he is going to sign,* VAPID *breaks the China in the Closet, and rushes out, with the Epilogue in his Hand.*

Vapid. "Die all! die nobly! die like demi gods!"—Huzza, huzza! 'tis done! 'tis past! 'tis perfect!

Flor. Huzza!—the poet at last; "Stop him who can!"

Lady. Confusion!—tell me, sir, immediately, what do you mean by this new insult?

Vapid. "Die all! die nobly! die like demi gods!"—oh, it's glorious!—Ah, Old Scratch! are you there? —Joy, joy! give me joy!—I've done your business! the work's past!—the labour's o'er, my boy!—"think of that, Master Brook—think of that!"

Lady. My lord, I am vilely treated.—I desire you'll insist on an explanation.

Flor. He can't speak, madam.

[*All this time, my* LORD *is slowly walking away.*

Lady. How, are you going to leave me, my lord?

Vapid. [*Taking out his Common-place Book.*] 'Faith this mustn't be lost!—here's something worth observing. [*Exit* LORD SCRATCH.

Lady. Oh, I shall burst with rage!—Mr. Vapid, I desire you'll explain how you came in that closet. —Why don't you answer me, sir?

Vapid. Your pardon, ma'am, I was taking a note of the affair—and yet I'm afraid——

Lady. What are you afraid of, sir?

Vapid. That it has been dramatized before;—it is certainly not a new case.

Lady. Insupportable?—But I take my leave of you all!—I abandon you for ever!—I!—oh, I shall go wild! [*Exit, in a rage.*

Flor. Ay, ay, follow his lordship—virtue is ever sure to meet its reward. Now, Mr. Vapid, tell us how you came in that closet.

Vapid. 'Faith, I can't.—I believe the servant hurried me there on your approach.

Flor. Then you didn't come to meet Lady Waitfor't?

Vapid. Meet Lady Waitfor't!—no, I came to read my epilogue to Neville; and a wonderful production it is—"The tyrant totters, and the senate nods."

[*Walking about.*

Louisa. To what a strange fatality of circumstances has her character been exposed!—but vice often finds its punishment for a crime it never committed, when it escapes for thousands it daily practises.

Flor. Well, Miss Courtney, I hope now your apprehensions are at an end?

Louisa. Yes, sir, I shall remain for the short time necessary to prepare for my journey, and beg I may detain you no longer. I'm afraid I have already been a great intruder.

Flor. No, you have been the occasion of more happiness than ever I experienced. But you won't leave Bath, till you've seen my brother?

Louisa. Oh, I have been cruelly deceived, Mr. Floriville! I have injured your brother so much, that, though I wish, I almost dread to see him.

Flor. Then I'll go in search of him,—and if I don't reconcile you——Come, Mr. Vapid, will you walk?

Vapid. With all my heart.

Flor. [*Taking him by the hand.*] By Heaven, you are an honest fellow.

Vapid. Madam, good night!—If I can be of any service to you in the dramatic, or any other way, you may command me.

Flor. Ay, I'll answer for him,—he would die to serve you.

Vapid. Die to serve her! ay, "Die all!—die nobly!—die like demigods!" [*Exeunt.*

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

LADY WAITFOR'T'S *Apartment.*

LADY WAITFOR'T *discovered at her Toilette.* LETTY *waiting.*

Lady. Mr. Vapid not come yet, Letty?

Letty. No, ma'am,—but the servant, who found him at the tavern, said he would be here immediately.

Lady. I protest, I am almost weary of them all.—[*Noise without.*] See who's there.

[LETTY *listens, and returns.*

Letty. Mr. Vapid, at last:—now, pray your ladyship, insist on his explaining every thing to my lord.

Lady. Yes; but vilely as he has treated me, I must still be calm.

VAPID, *putting his head in.*

Walk in, sir, walk in.

Vapid. No, ma'am, I'd rather stay here.

Lady. I beg you'll be seated, Mr. Vapid—I have something of consequence to impart to you.

Enter VAPID, *gently.*

Vapid. I'd never have ventured, but in hopes of seeing my dear Marianne.

Lady. Indeed I will not detain you a moment.

Vapid. Very well, ma'am, if that's the case—— [*Slowly seating himself.*] It's very alarming. [*Aside.*

Lady. Letty, leave the room, and fasten the door. [*Exit* LETTY.

Vapid. No, no!—don't do that, I beseech you!

Lady. You're very much frightened, Mr. Vapid;—I hope you don't suppose I have any design against you?

Vapid. I don't know, really, ma'am—such things are perfectly dramatic.

Lady. Well, but to release you from your fears, I'll tell you why I have given you this trouble.—My business, Mr. Vapid, was to converse with you on the farcical affair, that happened at Neville's.

Vapid. Farcical!

Lady. Yes, sir, the farcical affair that happened at Mr. Neville's.

Vapid. Farcical!—what, my epilogue, ma'am?—I hope you don't mean to reflect on that?

Lady. No, sir, far from it—I have no doubt but it is a very elegant composition.

Vapid. Doubt!—here it is, read it!—the very first production of the age! A regular climax of poetic beauty!—The last line the ne plus ultra of genius.

Lady. But, to be serious, Mr. Vapid——

Vapid. Why, I am serious:—and I'll tell you, Lady Waitfor't, 'tis the last line of an epilogue, and the last scene of a comedy, that always distracts me—'tis the reconciliation of lovers—there's the difficulty!—You find it so in real life, I dare say?

Lady. Yes.—But, Mr. Vapid, this affair concerns me excessively, and I wish to know what is to be done.

Vapid. I'll tell you,—write a play,—and bad as it may possibly be, say it's a translation from the French, and interweave a few compliments on the English, and, my life on't, it does wonders.—Do it, and say you had the thought from me.

Lady. Sir, do you mean to deride me?

Vapid. No.—But only be cautious in your style—women are in general apt to indulge that pruriency and warm luxuriancy of fancy they possess,—but do be careful—be decent—if you are not, I have done with you.

Lady. Sir, I desire you'll be more respectful.—I don't understand it at all. [*Rising.*

Enter MARIANNE.

Vapid. Then here comes one that will explain every thing.

" There's in her all that we believe of Heaven;
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love!"

My dear sweet little partner, I rejoice to see you!

Mari. And my dear sweet Mr. Poet, I rejoice to see you!

Lady. Provoking!—Have I not told you a thousand times, never to break in upon me, when I am alone?

Mari. Alone, my lady! do you call Mr. Vapid nobody, then?

Lady. Suppose I should,—what is it to you?

Mari. Then I have a wrong notion of your nobodies.—I always thought them harmless, unmeaning things; but Mr. Vapid's not so very harmless either—are you, Mr. Vapid?

Vapid. Indeed, ma'am, I am not.

Mari. There now,—I told you so.—Upon my word, you rely too much on your time of life,—you do indeed. You think, because you're a little the worse

for wear, you may trust yourself any where,—but you're mistaken—you're not near so bad as you imagine—nay, I don't flatter, do I, Mr. Vapid?

Vapid. Indeed, ma'am, you do not.

Lady. Lookye, miss,—your insolence is not to be borne,—you have been the chief cause of all my perplexities.

Mari. Nay, aunt, don't say that.

Lady. No matter,—your behaviour is shameless, and it is high time I exerted the authority of a relation—you are a disgrace to me—to yourself, and your friends—therefore, I am determined to put into execution a scheme I have long thought of.

Mari. What is it? something pleasant I hope.

Lady. No, you shall retire to a convent, till you take possession of your fortune.

Mari. A convent! Oh lord! I can't make up my mind to it, now don't, pray don't think of it—I declare it's quite shocking.

Lady. It is a far better place than you deserve; my resolution is fixed, and we shall see whether a life of solitude and austerity will not awaken some sense of shame in you.

Mari. Indeed, I can't bear the thoughts of it,—Oh do speak to her, Mr. Vapid—tell her about the nasty monks, now do, a convent! mercy! what a check to the passions? Oh! I can't bear it.

[*Weeping.*

Vapid. Gad, here's a sudden touch of tragedy—pray, Lady Waitfor't, reflect—you can't send a lady to a convent when the theatres are open.

Mari. It will be the death of me! pray, my dear aunt———

Lady. Not a word—I am determined—to-morrow you shall leave this country, and then I have done with you for ever.

Mari. Oh! my poor heart! Oh, Oh!

Vapid. See! she'll faint!

Mari. Oh! oh! oh!

[MARIANNE *faints in* LADY WAITFOR'T's *Arms.*

Lady. Oh; I have gone too far, Mr. Vapid!

Vapid. I fly, I'll call the servants. Have you got any drops?

Lady. I have some drops in this closet may recover her—hold her a moment, and for Heaven's sake take care of her. [*Exit.*

[MARIANNE *lays in* VAPID's *arms.*

Here's a situation!—Poor girl! how I pity her! I really loved her.

Mari. Did you really love me, Mr. Vapid?

Vapid. Heyday! recovered!—here's incident!

Mari. But did you really love me, Mr. Vapid?

Vapid. Yes I did,—here's stage effect!

Mari. And would you have really run away with me, Mr. Vapid?

Vapid. Yes, I really would.—

Mari. Then come along, this moment.

Vapid. Hush!—here's the old lady! keep dying, as before, and we'll effect the business—more equivoque!

Enter LADY WAITFOR'T.

Lady. Well, Mr. Vapid, how does she do? lord! she's in strong convulsions.

Vapid. Yes, ma'am, she's dying; where are the drops?

Lady. Here, sir.

Vapid. There are very few—are there any more of the same kind?

Lady. Yes, plenty.

Vapid. Fetch them,—'tis the only hope—if you have any hartshorn too, bring a little of that.

Lady. I'm quite shocked! [*Exit.*

Mari. Well, Mr. Vapid, now let's run away—come—why what are you thinking of?

Vapid. My last act, and I fear—

Mari. What do you fear?

Vapid. That it can't be managed—let me see—we certainly run away, and she returns—'faith, I must see her return.

Mari. No, no, pray let us begone, think of this another time.

Vapid. So I will—it will do for the fourth, though not for the fifth act,—therefore my dear little girl, come away, and we'll live and die together.

Mari. Die together.

Vapid. Ay, "Die all! die nobly! die like demi-gods!" [*Exeunt.*

Enter LADY WAITFOR'T.

Lady. Here, Mr. Vapid—here are the drops!—What, gone!—ruined by a writer of epilogues!—Oh! I shall burst with disappointment! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Another Apartment in NEVILLE'S *House—In the back Scene, Glass Doors, with Curtains.*

Enter LOUISA COURTNEY.

Louisa. Still in the same house, yet still afraid to meet him! Oh, Neville! my superior in every thing; how can I hope for your forgiveness? while you revealed an affection it had done you credit to deny, I concealed a passion I might have been proud to confess.

Enter VAPID *and* MARIANNE.

Mari. Oh! Miss Courtney! my sweet Miss Courtney! Mr. Vapid, here, has run away with me, and I am so frightened for fear of Lady Waitfor't.

Louisa. Yes, she may well alarm you,—she has destroyed my peace for ever! but have you seen Mr. Neville? yet, why do I ask?

Vapid. Seen Mr. Neville!—What, doesn't he yet know you are in his lodgings?

Louisa. No, and I hope never will—the moment his brother returns, I shall set out for my uncle's, and perhaps never see him more.

Vapid. And why not see him, ma'am?

Louisa. Because I cannot bear the sight of one I have so injured.

Vapid. This'll do—mutual equivoque! equal misunderstanding! my own case exactly!

Mari. Your own case! Lord! you base man, have you got a young lady in your lodgings?

Vapid. Ridiculous! don't talk about young ladies at such an awful—the very situation in my comedy! the last scene to a syllable!—here's an opportunity of improving the denouement!

Enter PETER.

Peter. Ma'am, my master is return'd—the occasion of his delay has been a long interview with Mr. Willoughby,—he doesn't know you are here.

Louisa. Marianne excuse me—you'll be safe from Lady Waitfor't here—indeed I'm very ill.

Mari. Nay—where are you going.

Louisa. Alas! any where to avoid him—farewell! and may you enjoy that happiness I have for ever lost! [*Exit.*

Mari. Poor dear girl! I mustn't leave her thus—Mr. Vapid, we won't run away till something is done for her.

Vapid. Go,—there's a good girl—follow her, and comfort her.

Mari. I will—Lord! if they must be happy in being friends again what must I be who make them so! [*Exit.*

Vapid. The picture before me! all from nature,—I must heighten his distress, for contrast is every thing—Peter, not a word for your life.

Enter NEVILLE.

Nev. Vapid, I am glad to see you—any letter from my brother? [*To* PETER.

Peter. None, sir.

Nev. Nor message?

Peter. No, sir.

Nev. Then I need doubt no longer—'tis evident he avoids me—cruel, ungenerous Floriville!—

[*Seats himself.*

Vapid. [*Leaning over his Chair.*] Miss Courtney will never see you again.

Nev. I know it—too well I know it—that, and that alone, makes me determined to leave this country for ever.

Vapid. You are unhappy then.

Nev. Completely so.

Vapid. Then stop.—[*Sits by him.*] She was an angel, Harry.

Nev. Ay, a divinity!

Vapid. And then to lose her!

Nev. [*Rising.*] 'Sdeath!—don't torment me!—my griefs are already beyond bearing.

Vapid. It will do—he's as unhappy as I could wish.

Peter. I can hold no longer—Sir!—

Vapid. Hush!—you d—d dog, you'll ruin the catastrophe.

Peter. I don't care—I'll tell him every thing—Sir!—Mr. Neville!

Vapid. You villain!—Do you ever go to a play?—do you ever sit in the gallery?

Peter. Yes, sir, sometimes.

Vapid. Then know this is all for your good——you'll applaud it some day or other you dog—curse it,

won't he have happiness enough bye and bye?—What—you are going abroad, Neville?

Nev. Yes, for ever.—Farewell, Vapid.

Vapid. Farewell, Neville—good night———Now for the effect!—Miss Courtney is in the next room.

Nev. What!

Vapid. Miss Courtney is in the next room.

Nev. Louisa! Is it possible?

Vapid. There's light and shade!—Yes, your brother brought her here, and she expects him to return every moment.

Nev. My brother! then 'tis he means to marry her—nay, perhaps they are already married—Heavens! I shall go wild!

Vapid. Don't, don't go wild—that will ruin the denouement.

Nev. No matter—I am resolved—I'll bid her farewell for ever—Vapid, 'tis the last favour I shall ask of you—give her this [*A Letter.*] and tell her, since I have resented Willoughby's attack on her honour, I think I may be allowed to vindicate my own; tell her, great as have been my faults, my truth has still been greater, and wherever I wander—

Vapid. Here's a flourish, now;—why you misunderstand—she is not married, nor going to be married.

Nev. Come, this is no time for raillery.

Vapid. Raillery!—why, I'm serious—serious as the fifth act—she is now weeping on your account.

Nev. Pr'ythee leave fooling, it will produce no effect, believe me.

Vapid. Won't it? it will produce a very great effect though, believe me. Zounds! go to her, preserve the unity of action,—marry her directly, and if the catastrophe does not conclude with spirit, damn my comedy,—damn my comedy—that's all, damn my comedy.

Nev. 'Would to Heaven you were in earnest.

Vapid. Earnest! why there it is now! the women, dear creatures, are always ready enough to produce effect—but the men are so curst undramatic.—Go to her,—I tell you, go to her,—

[*Exit* NEVILLE.—VAPID *stands aside.*

Enter LORD SCRATCH *and* FLORIVILLE.

Lord. That curst dramatic maniac,—if I see him again——

Flor. My dear uncle, consent to Harry's marriage, and depend on't he shall trouble you no more.

Lord. I tell you again, sir, I will not.

Flor. Will you give any hopes of future consent?

Lord. By the word of a peer, I will not.

[VAPID, *coming forward, touching* LORD SCRATCH *on the Shoulder, and writing in common-place Book.*

Vapid. Master Brook, let me persuade you.

Lord. Flames and firebrands, the fiend again!

Vapid. Give consent, and I'll give Neville a fortune—he shall have the entire profit of the different plays in which I intend to have the honour of introducing yourself, and the old Lady Hurlothrumbo.

Lord. Oh, that I was not a peer! if I was any thing else—but, thank Heaven, Louisa is more averse to the match than myself.

Vapid. Is she?

Lord. Yes, she knows his falsehood, and despises him.

Vapid. What, you are confident of it?

Lord. Out of my way, sir,—I'll not answer you,—I'll go take her to town directly.—Out of my way, sir.

Vapid. Stop—you're wrong, Master Brook—she's in that room.

Lord. Where?—behind me?

Vapid. Yes—there—there! [*Pointing.*] Now for it! —what an effect!

[LORD S. *opens the Glass Doors, and discovers* NEVILLE *kneeling to* LOUISA. MARIANNE *with them.*

Vapid. There, Peter! there's catastrophe!—Shakspeare's invention nothing!—Applaud it, you dog—clap, clap, Peter, clap!

Lord. What are you at, you impudent rascal?—get out of the room. [*Exit* PETER.

Vapid. I should set this down—I may forget.

Mari. Lord! he has a very bad memory,—I hope he won't forget our marriage.

Nev. Oh! Louisa, what am I to think?

Louisa. That I have wronged thee, Neville! [*Embracing.*

Flor. My dear Harry, let this be my apology for not having seen you before. [*Giving him a Paper.*] Miss Courtney, ten thousand joys;—could I have found my brother, you should have seen him sooner.

Nev. Why, here is a deed of gift of half your estate!

Flor. I know it, but say nothing. When you gave me money, five years ago, did I say any thing?—no, I forgot it as soon as it was over; and should never have recollected, at this moment, but for my lord's inhumanity.—Uncle, I thank you,—you have made me the happiest man alive.

Lord. Don't perplex me;—what a compound of folly and generosity.

Mari. Uncle-in law, what are your feelings on this occasion?—as my aunt says.

Lord. Feelings!—I never knew a peer had any.

Mari. Didn't you?

Lord. No; but now I find the contrary: I begin to think I've a heart like other men. It's better to atone for an error, than persist in one—therefore give me

that deed, Neville——there, sir, [*Giving it to* FLORIVILLE.] do you think nobody has estates but yourself?—Louisa and her fortune are your own, Neville; and after my death, you shall have all mine:—and now there's a cursed burden off my mind.

Mari. Now, you're a dear creature! and I won't marry,—that's what I won't, without consulting you.

Lord. You marry! why, who should you marry?—And pray, how came you here?

Mari. A gentleman run away with me;—he is now in the room.

Lord. In the room! what, Floriville?

Mari. No, behind you.

[*Pointing to* VAPID, *who is writing at a Table.*

Lord. Ghosts and spectres! my evil genius!

Mari. Come, my dear, haven't you almost finished?

[VAPID *rises.*

Vapid. Yes, the denouement is complete, and now, Mrs. Vapid, I resign myself to love and you.

Mari. Come, give consent, my lord,—my husband will get money, though I have none.

Lord. None!—I dare say he can tell you, you will have twelve thousand pounds in less than a year.

Vapid. That's a new incident!

Mari. Shall I! then, 'faith, Mr. Vapid, we'll build a theatre of our own; you shall write plays, and I'll act them.

Enter ENNUI.

Ennui. I've an idea—I give you joy, Neville.—I mean to kill time, by living single; and, therefore, I hope, the lady and the borough may be yours.

Mari. Mr. Ennui, I hope you'll forgive me, and Sir Harry Hustle, the fatigue we occasioned you?

Ennui. Yaw, aw—don't mention it.—The very recollection makes me faint.—In fact—my lord, I just

met one of Lady Waitfor't's servants, who tells me she has left Bath in a rage.

Flor. I am afraid she has escaped too easily.

Lord. Oh, never think of her! I can answer for her punishment being adequate to her crimes—Willoughby has told me all her schemes,—and if ever I hear her name again, may I lose my peerage, and dress like a gentleman.

Ennui. My lord—I've an idea—

Vapid. Sir, I beg your pardon; but really, if you have an idea, I will trouble you to spare it me for my comedy.

Ennui. In fact—I don't comprehend. I have read your "die all" epilogue, and—

Vapid. Oh, then I don't wonder at your having ideas!

Lord. Oh, poor fellow! he's always talking about what he never has.—Neville, my boy, may you be as happy as I am.

Flor. Ay, I'll answer for his happiness by my own. —Miss Courtney, notwithstanding my brother, I will "still live in your eye,—die in your lap—and be buried in your heart:" and, moreover, I will stay with you both in England.

Louisa. Yes, Floriville, if you would behold pure, unsullied, love, never travel out of this country. Depend on't,

No foreign climes such high examples prove,
Of wedded pleasure, or connubial love.
Long in this land have joys domestic grown,
Nurs'd in the cottage—cherish'd on the throne.

THE END.