

THE WAY TO KEEP HIM



SIR B. FASHION— RAPTURES AND PARADINE POUT
ON THY LIP, AND TO THY HEART BE PRESS'D
ACT. V.

SCENE A.

THE
WAY TO KEEP HIM;

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS;

BY ARTHUR MURPHY, Esq.

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRES ROYAL,
DRURY LANE AND COVENT GARDEN.

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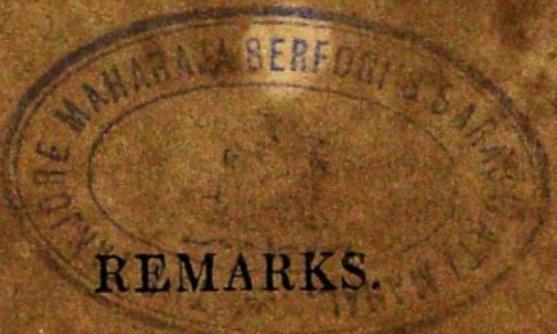
WITH REMARKS

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

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REMARKS.

Churchill, in his admirable poem, "The Rosciad," has said of the author of "The Way to Keep Him"—

" And prudent dulness mark'd him for a mayor."

How little Murphy was deserving of the imputation of dulness, this comedy can testify.—It is nevertheless inferior to his "All in the Wrong:" for there, events are more naturally produced, and no one character proceeds to the very confines of extravagance, like Sir Bashful Constant.

Mr. Murphy wrote "The Way to Keep Him" originally in three acts; then wishing to increase the number to five, he introduced this character of ~~six~~ Bashful.—He added to the length of his play, but diminished its probability. Much genius is however to be discerned in the conception of this part, and is, in some scenes, displayed with the happiest effect. In others, the husband's whimsical timidity proceeds so far, that it appears more like want of understanding than want of manly boldness; and when once a deficiency of intellects is discovered instead of a silly bias in them, all interest is gone for the person concerned.

It is impossible to attend to characters destitute of sense; and delightful to observe particular follies, usurping the reason of those, who, in all other respects, are wise. Fools who accidentally have sapience, are too despicable to be heeded;—but the wise man, who is accidentally a fool, is an instructive picture of human nature, and worthy the most profound meditation.

Most of the remaining characters belong to this valuable class—Lovemore and his wife are both depicted from nature, and their conduct to each other has an excellent tendency to reform the evils, and avert the ills, of the marriage state.

The Widow Bellmour is another well drawn personage. She talks perfect wisdom, and all she says is perfectly with good intent;—but it may be apprehended that her precepts have had too much force with some wives of fashion, whose good humour at home, and indifference to their husbands' incontinence, may have betrayed them into a carelessness about their own.

Mrs. Abington and Miss Farren (the present Countess of Derby) were both, at the two different houses, and at the self same time, much admired in the Widow Bellmour. Mrs. Abington's performance was the best,—yet not so much superior to Miss Farren's, as Miss Farren was superior to Mrs. Abington in youth and personal charms.

Murphy has given a fulsome dedication of this play to the latter actress, more disgraceful to him than Churchill's satire,—and not more true.

The biographical part of that satirical poem, which applies to the author of this comedy, is mere fact. He *was* educated at St. Omer's, and though designed for a priest, he once attempted the profession of a player. He appeared on the stage in the part of Othello; but a strong voice being wanted to assist his strong judgment, and grace of person to embellish its symmetry, he changed this pursuit to the study of the law, and became a member of the Society of Lincoln's Inn. Still, he attached himself to his beloved theatre by the ties of an author; and passed his happiest hours with Garrick, Foote, Dr. Johnson, and other men of wit and imagination.

It had perhaps been happy for Murphy, had the reproach of dulness, which Churchill has cast upon him, been just; for could it have conferred upon him the mayoralty of the city of London, no doubt it would have been a fortunate exchange for that poetic genius which he possessed; and which would not have secured to him in old age a mere existence, but for its claims upon the taste and pity of his ~~S~~— sovereign.

Murphy died in the summer of 1805, a pensioner on the king's private purse: as related in the Remarks on his comedy of "All in the Wrong."

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DRURY LANE. COVENT GARDEN,

LOVEMORE	<i>Mr. Wroughton.</i>	<i>Mr. Murray.</i>
SIR BRILLIANT	<i>Mr. Russel.</i>	<i>Mr. Betterton.</i>
FASHION		
SIR BASHFUL	<i>Mr. Bannister.</i>	<i>Mr. Quick.</i>
CONSTANT	<i>Mr. De Camp.</i>	<i>Mr. Clarke.</i>
WILLIAM	<i>Mr. Purser.</i>	<i>Mr. Farley.</i>
SIDEBOARD		
THE WIDOW	<i>Mrs. Jordan.</i>	<i>Mrs. Abington.</i>
BELMOUR		
MRS. LOVEMORE	<i>Mrs. H. Johnston.</i>	<i>Mrs. Coates.</i>
LADY CONSTANT	<i>Miss Mellon.</i>	<i>Miss Chapman.</i>
MUSLIN	<i>Miss Pope.</i>	<i>Mrs. Mattocks.</i>
MIGNIONET	<i>Miss Tidswell.</i>	
FURNISH	<i>Mrs. Coates.</i>	

SCENE—London.

THE
WAY TO KEEP HIM.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

A Room in LOVEMORE'S House.

WILLIAM at Cards with a Brother Servant.

Will. A plague on it!—I've turn'd out my game.—Is forty-seven good?

Serv. Equal.

Will. A plague go with it—tearce to a queen—

Serv. Equal.

Will. I've ruin'd my game, and be hang'd to me. I don't believe there's a footman in England plays with worse luck than myself.—Four aces is fourteen!

Serv. That's hard:—cruel, by Jupiter!

Will. Four aces is fourteen—fifteen. [Plays.]

Serv. There's your equality.

Will. Very well—sixteen—[Plays.] seventeen—
[Plays.]

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. There's a couple of you, indeed!—You're so fond of the vices of your betters, that you're scarce out of your beds, when you must pretend to imitate them and their ways, forsooth.

Will. Pr'ythee, be quiet, woman, do—Eighteen—
[*Plays.*]

Mus. Set you up, indeed, Mr. Coxcomb—

Will. Nineteen!—Clubs—

[*Plays.*]

Mus. Have done with your foolery, will ye? and send my lady word—

Will. Hold your tongue, Mrs. Muslin, you'll put us out.—What shall I play?—I'll tell you, woman, my master and I desire to have nothing to say to you or your lady.—Twenty—Diamonds! [*Plays.*]

Mus. But I tell you, Mr. Saucebox, that my lady desires to know when your master came home last night, and how he is this morning?

Will. Pr'ythee, be quiet: I and my master are resolved to be teas'd no more by you. And so, Mrs. Go-between, you may return as you came.—What the devil shall I play?—We'll have nothing to do with you, I tell you—

Mus. You'll have nothing to do with us!—But you shall have to do with us, or I'll know the reason why.
[*Snatches the Cards out of his Hands.*]

Will. Death and fury! This meddling woman has destroyed my whole game.

Mus. Now, sir, will you be so obliging as to send an answer to her questions—How and when your rake-helly master came home last night?

Will. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Muslin,—you and my master, will be the death of me at last; that's what you will.—In the name of charity, what do you both take me for? Whatever appearances may be, I am but of mortal mould: Nothing supernatural about me.

Mus. Upon my word, Mr. Powderpuff!—

Will. I have not indeed—And so, do you see, flesh and blood can't hold it always—I can't be for ever a slave to your whims, and your second-hand airs.

Mus. Second-hand airs!—

Will. Yes, second-hand airs!—You take them at your ladies' toilets with their cast gowns, and so you descend to us with them.—And then, on the other hand, there's my master!—Because he chuses to live upon the principal of his health, and so run out his whole stock as fast as he can, he must have the pleasure of my company with him in his devil's dance to the other world.—Never at home till three, four, five, six, in the morning!

Mus. Ay, a vile, ungrateful man! to have so little regard for a wife that doats upon him.—And your love for me, is all of a piece. I've no patience with you both.—A couple of false, perfidious, abandoned, profligate—

Will. Hey, hey! where's your tongue running?—My master is, as the world goes, a good sort of a civil kind of a husband, and I,—Heaven help me,—a poor simpleton of an amorous, constant puppy, that bears with all the follies of his little tyrant here.—Come and kiss me, you jade, come and kiss me.

Mus. Paws off, Cæsar—Don't think to make me your dupe. I know, when you go with him to this new lady, this Bath acquaintance—and I know, you're as false as my master, and give all my dues to your Mrs. Mignonet there.—

Will. Hush,—not a word of that.—I'm ruined, pressed, and sent on board a tender directly, if you blab that I trusted you with that secret.—But to charge me with falsehood, injustice, and ingratitude! My master, to be sure, does drink an agreeable dish of tea with the Widow.—Has been there every night

this month past.—How long it will last, Heaven knows! But thither he goes, and I attend him.—I ask my master,—Sir, says I, what time would you please to want me?—He gives me his answer, and then I strut by Mrs. Mignonet, without so much as tipping her one glance; she stands watering at the mouth, and “A pretty fellow, that,” says she.—“Ay, ay, gaze on,” says I, “gaze on;—I see what you would be at:—you’d be glad to have me,—you’d be glad to have me!—But, sour grapes, my dear! I’ll go home and cherish my own lovely wanton.”—And so I do, you know I do.—Then, after toying with thee, I hasten back to my master—later, indeed, than he desires, but always too soon for him. He’s loath to part; he lingers and dangles, and I stand cooling my heels.—O, to the devil I pitch such a life!

Mus. Why don’t you strive to reclaim the vile man then?

Will. Softly, not so fast; I have my talent to be sure! yes, yes, I have my talent; some influence over my master’s mind:—But can you suppose that I have power to turn the drift of his inclinations, and lead him as I please—and to whom?—to his wife! Pshaw! ridiculous, foolish, and absurd!

Mus. Mighty well, sir! can you proceed?

Will. I tell you, a wife is out of date now-a-days; time was—but that’s all over—a wife’s a drug now; mere tar-water, with every virtue under Heaven, but no body takes it.

Mus. Well, I swear I could slap your impudent face.

Will. Come and kiss me, I say—

Mus. A fiddlestick for your kisses!—while you encourage your master to open rebellion against the best of wives.—

Will. I tell you, it’s her own fault; why don’t she

strive to please him, as you do me?—Come, throw your arms about my neck—

Mus. Ay, as I used to do, Mr. Brazen!—Hush! My lady's bell rings.—How long has he been up?—When did he come home?

Will. At five this morning; rubbed his forehead, damn'd himself for a blockhead, went to bed in a peevish humour, and is now in tiptop spirits with Sir Brilliant Fashion, in the next room. [Bell rings.

Mus. O lud! that bell rings again—There, there, let me be gone. [She kisses him, and exit.

Will. There goes high and low life contrasted in one person: 'tis well I have not told her the whole of my master's secrets: she'll blab that he visits this Widow from Bath. But if they inquire, they'll be told he does not—The plot lies deeper than they are aware of, and so they will only get into a puzzle—hush!—yonder comes my master and Sir Brilliant—Let me get out of the way.—Here, Tom, help me to take away the things. [Exit.

Enter LOVEMORE and SIR BRILLIANT FASHION.

Love. Ha! ha!—my dear Sir Brilliant—I must both pity and laugh at you—I'll swear thou art metamorphosed into the most whimsical being!—

Sir Bril. Nay, pr'ythee, Lovemore, truce with your raillery—it is for sober advice that I apply to you—

Love. Sober advice!—ha! ha!—Thou art very far gone indeed.—Sober advice! There is no such thing as talking seriously and soberly to the tribe of lovers—That eternal absence of mind that possesses ye all—There is no society with you—I was damnable company myself, when I was one of the pining herd; but a dose of matrimony has brought me back again to myself; has cooled me pretty handsomely, I assure you;—Ay! and here comes *repetatur Haustus*.

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. My lady sends her compliments, and desires to know how you are this morning?

Love. O lord! my head aches woefully—it's the devil to be teased in this manner—What did you say, child?

Mus. My lady sent to know how you do, sir—

Love. O, right!—your lady—give her my compliments, and I am very well; tell her—

Mus. She begs you won't think of going out without seeing her.

Love. There again now!—tell her—tell her what you will—I shall be glad to see her—I'll wait on her—any thing—what you will.

**Mus.* I shall let my lady know, sir.

[Exit.]

Love. My dear Sir Brilliant, you see I am an example before your eyes—Put the Widow Bellmour entirely out of your head, and let my Lord Etheridge—

Sir Bril. Positively no!—My pride is piqued, and if I can, my Lord Etheridge shall find me a more formidable rival than he is aware of.

Enter WILLIAM.

Will. Sir Bashful Constant is in his chariot at the upper end of the street, and has sent his servant to know if your honour is at home.

Love. By all means—I shall be glad to see Sir Bashful. [Exit WILLIAM.] Now here comes another mortifying instance to deter you from all thoughts of marriage.

Sir Bril. Pshaw! hang him; he is no instance for me—a younger brother, who has lived in middling life; comes to an estate and a title on the death of a consumptive baronet, marries a woman of quality, and carries the primitive ideas of his narrow educa-

tion into high life—Hang him!—he is no example for me.

Love. But he is a good deal improved since that time.

Sir Bril. Po! a mere Hottentot; unacquainted with life,—blushes every moment, and looks suspicious, as if he imagined you have some design upon him.

Love. Why, I fancy, I can explain that—I have found out a part of his character lately.—You must know, there is nothing he dreads so much as being an object of ridicule: and so, let the customs and fashions of the world be ever so absurd, he complies, lest he should be laughed at for being particular.

Sir Bril. And so, through the fear of being ridiculous, he becomes substantially so every moment.

Love. Just so.—And then, to see him shrink back as it were, from your observation, casting a jealous and fearful eye all around him. [Mimics him.

Sir Bril. Ha! ha!—that's his way—but there is something worse in him—his behaviour to his lady—Ever quarrelling, and insulting her with nonsense about the dignity of a husband, and his superior reason.

Love. Why, there again now; his fear of being ridiculous, may be at the bottom of that.—I don't think he hates my Lady Constant—She is a fine woman, and knows the world.—There is something mysterious in that part of his conduct.

Sir Bril. Mysterious! not to you—he is ever consulting you—you are in all his secrets.

Love. Yes, but I never can find any of them out! And yet there is something working within, that he would fain tell me, and yet he is shy, and he hints, and he hesitates, and then he returns again into himself, and ends just where he began.—Hark! I hear his chariot at the door.

Sir Bril. Why do you let him come after you?—he is a sad troublesome fellow, Lovemore.

Love. Nay, you are too severe—Come, he has fits of goodnature.

Sir Bril. His wife has fits of goodnature, you mean—How goes on your design there?

Love. Po, po! I have no design, but I take it, you are a formidable man in that quarter.

Sir Bril. Who, I? Pshaw! no such thing.

Love. Never deny it to me;—I know you have made advances.

Sir Bril. Why, faith, I pity my Lady Constant, and cannot bear to see her treated as she is.

Love. Well, that's generous—have a care; I hear him—Sir Brilliant, I admire your amorous charity of all things—ha! ha!—Hush! here he comes.

Enter SIR BASHFUL.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, a good morning to you—Sir Brilliant, your servant, sir.

Sir Bril. Sir Bashful, I am heartily glad to see you—I hope you left my lady well.

Sir Bash. I can't say, sir; I am not her physician.

Sir Bril. What a brute!—Well, Lovemore, I must be gone.

Love. Why in such a hurry?

Sir Bril. I must—I promised to call on a lady over the way—A relation of mine from Wiltshire—I shan't stay long.

Love. Very well—a l'honneur.

Sir Bril. Sir Bashful, your servant—Mr. Lovemore, yours. [Exit.]

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, I am glad he is gone; for I have something to advise with you about.

Love. Have you?

Sir Bash. I have had another brush with my wife!

Love. I am sorry for it, Sir Bashful—I am perfectly glad of it. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. Ay! and pretty warm the quarrel was.—“Sir Bashful,” says she, “I wonder you will disgrace yourself at this rate—you know my pin-money is not sufficient.—My master has been with me again—I can’t bear to be dunn’d at this rate.” and then she added something about her quality—you know, Mr. Lovemore, [Smiling.] she is a woman of quality.

Love. Yes, and a fine woman too!

Sir Bash. No—no—no—do you think she is a fine woman?

Love. Most certainly—A very fine woman!

Sir Bash. [Smiling.] Why, yes—I think she is what you may call a fine woman.—She keeps good company, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. The very best.

Sir Bash. Yes, yes, that she does; your tiptop; none else—but one would not encourage her too much, for all that, Mr. Lovemore—The world would think me but a weak man if I did.

Love. The world will talk, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. So it will;—and so I answered her stoutly. “Madam,” says I, “a fig for your quality—don’t qualify me—I’ll act like a man of sense, madam; and I’ll be master in my own house, madam;—I have made a provision for the issue of our marriage in the settlement, madam; and I would have you to know, that I am not obliged to pay for your cats and your dogs, and your squirrels, and your monkeys, and your gaming debts.”

Love. How could you? That was too sharply said—

Sir Bash. Ay, ay, I gave it her—but for all that [Smiling.] I—I—I am—very good-natured at the bottom, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. I dare say you are, Sir Bashful—

Sir Bash. Yes, yes; but a man must keep up his

own dignity—I'll tell you what I did—I went to the mercer's myself, and paid him the money.

[*Smiles at him.*

Love. Did you?

Sir Bash. I did: but then one would not let the world know that—No, no.

Love. By no means.

Sir Bash. It would make them think me too uxorious.

Love. So it would!—I must encourage that notion of his.

[*Aside.*

Sir Bash. And so I told him; “Mr. Lutestring, says I, “mum's the word—there is your money; but let nobody know that I paid you slyly.”

Love. Well, you have the handsomest way of doing a genteel thing—

Sir Bash. But that is not all I have to tell you.

Love. No!

Sir Bash. No—no—[*Smiles.*] I have a deeper secret than that.

Love. Have ye?

Sir Bash. I have;—may I trust you?

Love. O! upon my honour—

Sir Bash. Well, well! I know you are my friend—I know you are, and I have great confidence in you. Lookye, Mr. Lovemore, you must know—

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. Sir, my lady desires to know, if you will drink a dish of tea with her this morning?

Love. I desire I may not be teased in this manner—tell your mistress—go—go about your business—

[*Turns her out.*

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] Ay! I see he don't care a cherry-stone for his wife.

Love. I hate this interruption—Well, Sir Bashful—

Sir Bash. No ; he does not care a pinch of snuff for her. [Aside.]

Love. Well—Proceed, Sir Bashful—

Sir Bash. It does not signify, Mr. Lovemore ; it's a foolish affair ; I won't trouble you about it—

Love. Nay, that's unkind—

Sir Bash. Well, well ! come, I will—Do you think Muslin did not overhear us ?

Love. Not a syllable—Come, come, we are safe—

Sir Bash. Let me ask you a question first—Pray now, have you any regard for your lady ?

Love. The highest value for her.

Sir Bash. I repose it with you.—You must know, Mr. Lovemore—as I told you—I am at the bottom very goodnatured ; and though appearances may in some sort—[SIR BRILLIANT rings without.] We are interrupted again.

Enter SIR BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Well, I have paid my visit, Lovemore.

Love. This is the most cross accident—So Sir Brilliant !

Sir Bash. Ah ! I see there is no going on now—

Mr. Lovemore, I wish you a good day.

Love. Po ! Pr'ythee—you shan't go.

Sir Bash. Yes, yes ; another time—Suppose you call at my house at one o'clock—nobody shall interrupt us there. [Aside to LOVEMORE.]

Love. With all my heart.

Sir Bash. Do so, then ; do so—we'll be snug by ourselves—Well, Mr. Lovemore, your servant, a good morning—Sir Brilliant, I kiss your hand.—You won't forget, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. Depend upon me.

Sir Bash. Very well.—He is the only friend I have.

[Exit.]

Love. Ha ! ha !—you broke in upon us in the

most critical moment—He was just going to communicate—

Sir Bril. I beg your pardon; I did not know—

Love. Nay, it's no matter; I shall get it out of him another time.

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. My lady, sir, is quite impatient.

Love. Pshaw! for ever teasing!—I'll wait upon her presently. [Exit *MUSLIN*.]

Sir Bril. I'll step and entertain her while you dress—May I take that liberty, Lovemore?

Love. You know you may—no ceremony—how could you ask such a question?—apropos; But, Sir Brilliant, first step one moment into my study—I want just one word with you.

Sir Bril. I attend you.

Love. This absurd Sir Bashful! ha! ha! a ridiculous, unaccountable—ha! ha! [Exit *Love*.]

SCENE II.

Another Apartment.

Mrs. LOVEMORE, and a MAID attending her.

Mrs. Love. This trash of tea!—I don't know why I drink so much of it.—Heigho!—I wonder what keeps Muslin—Do you step, child, and see if she is come back.

Maid. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Love. Surely, never was any poor woman treated with such cruel indifference; nay, with such an open, undisguised insolence of gallantry.

Enter Muslin.

Mrs. Love. Well, Muslin, have you seen his prime minister?

Mus. Yes, ma'am, I have seen Mr. William; and he says, as how my master came home according to custom, at five this morning, and in a huge pickle.—He is now in his study, and has Sir Brilliant Fashion with him.

Mrs. Love. Is he there again?

Mus. He is, ma'am; and as I came by the door, I heard them both laughing as loud as any thing.

Mrs. Love. About some precious mischief, I'll be sworn; and all at my cost too!—Heigho!

Mus. Dear ma'am, why will you chagrine yourself about a vile man, that is not worth—no, as I live and breathe,—not worth a single sigh!

Mrs. Love. What can I do, Muslin?

Mus. Do, ma'am! Lard!—If I was as you, I'd do for him;—As I am a living christian, I would.—If I could not cure my grief, I'd find some comforts, that's what I would.

Mrs. Love. Heigho!—I have no comfort.

Mus. No comfort, ma'am?—Whose fault then?—Would any body but you, ma'am?—It provokes me to think of it.—Would any body, ma'am, young and handsome as you are, with so many accomplishments, ma'am, sit at home here, as melancholy as a poor servant out of place?—And all this, for what?—Why, for a husband! and such a husband!—What do you think the world will say of you, ma'am, if you go on this way?

Mrs. Love. I care not what they say—I am tired of the world, and the world may be tired of me, if it will:—My troubles are my own only, and I must endeavour to bear them.—Who knows what patience may do?—If Mr. Lovemore has any feeling left, my

resignation may some day or other have its effect, and incline him to do me justice.

Mus. But, dear ma'am, that's waiting for dead men's shoes,—incline him to do you justice!—What signifies expecting and expecting? Give me a bird in the hand.—Lard, ma'am, to be for ever pining and grieving!—Dear heart! If all the women in London, in your case, were to sit down and die of the spleen, what would become of all the public places?—They might turn Vauxhall to a hopgarden, make a brew-house of Ranelagh, and let both the playhouses to a methodist preacher. We should not have the racketting with them we have now—“John, let the horses be put to—John, go to my Lady Trumpabout's, and invite her to a small party of twenty or thirty card-tables.—John, run to my Lady Catgut, and let her ladyship know I'll wait on her to the new opera.—John, run as fast as ever you can, with my compliments to Mr. Brandon, and tell him, I shall take it as the greatest favour on earth, if he will let me have a side-box for the new play. No excuse, tell him.” They whisk about the town, and rantipole it with as unconcerned looks, and as florid outsides, as if they were treated at home like so many goddesses, though every body knows possession has ungodessed them all long ago; and their husbands care no more for them,—no, by jingo, no more than they do for their husbands.

Mrs. Love. You run on at a strange rate.

Mus. [In a Passion.] Dear ma'am, 'tis enough to make a body run on—If every body thought like you—

Mrs. Love. If every body lov'd like me.

Mus. A brass thimble for love, if it is not answered by love.—What the deuce is here to do?—Shall I go and fix my heart upon a man, that shall despise me for that very reason;—and, “Aye,” says he, “poor fool, I see she loves me,—the woman's well enough,

only she has one inconvenient circumstance about her: I'm married to her, and marriage is the devil." —And then, when he's going a roguing, smiles impudently in your face, and, " My dear, divert yourself, I'm just going to kill half an hour at the chocolate-house, or to peep in at the play:—your servant, my dear, your servant." —Fye upon 'em!—I know 'em all.—Give me a husband that will enlarge the circle of my innocent pleasures:—but a husband now-a-days, ma'am, is no such a thing.—A husband now—as I hope for mercy, is nothing at all but a scare-crow; to show you the fruit, but touch it if you dare.—A husband!—the devil take 'em all!—Lord forgive me for swearing—is nothing but a bugbear, a snap-dragon; a husband, ma'am, is—

Mrs. Love. Prythee, peace with your tongue, and see what keeps that girl.

Mus. Yes, ma'am—Why, Jenny! why don't you come up to my lady? What do you stand a gossipping there for?—A husband, ma'am, is a mere monster;—that is to say, if one makes him so; then for certain, he is a monster indeed;—and if one does not make him so, then he behaves like a monster; and of the two evils, by my troth—Ma'am, was you ever at the play of *Catharine and Mercutio*?—The vile man calls his wife his goods, and his chattels, and his household stuff.—There you may see, ma'am, what a husband is,—a husband is—But here comes one will tell you—Here comes Sir Brilliant Fashion.—Ask his advice, ma'am.

Mrs. Love. His advice! Ask advice of the man who has estranged Mr. Lovemore's affections from me!

Mus. Well, I protest and vow, ma'am, I think Sir Brilliant a very pretty gentleman.—He's the very pink of the fashion!—he dresses fashionably, lives fashionably, wins your money fashionably, loses his own

fashionably, and does every thing fashionably: and then, he is so lively, and talks so lively, and so much to say, and so never at a loss——But here he comes.

Enter SIR BRILLIANT, singing.

Sir Bril. Mrs. Lovemore, your most obedient very humble servant——But, my dear madam, what, always in a vis-a-vis party with your *Suitante*?—You will afford me your pardon, my dear ma'am, if I avow that this does a little wear the appearance of misanthropy.

Mrs. Love. Far from it, Sir Brilliant—We were engaged in your panegyric.

Sir Bril. My panegyric!—Then I am come most apropos to give a helping hand towards making it complete.—Mr. Lovemore will kiss your hand presently, ma'am, he has not as yet entirely adjusted his dress—In the mean time, I can, if you please, help you to some anecdotes, which will perhaps enable you to colour your canvass a little higher.

Mrs. Love. I hope you will be sure, among those anecdotes,—You may go, Muslin,—not to omit the egregious exploit of seducing Mr. Lovemore entirely from his wife.

[*She makes a Sign to MUSLIN to go.—Exit MUSLIN.*

Sir Bril. I, ma'am!—Let me perish, ma'am——

Mrs. Love. O, sir, I am no stranger to——

Sir Bril. May fortune eternally forsake me, and beauty frown on me, if ever——

Mrs. Love. Don't protest too strongly, Sir Brilliant.

Sir Bril. May I never hold four by honours——

Mrs. Love. O, sir, it is in vain to deny——

Sir Bril. Nay, but my dear Mrs. Lovemore, give me leave.—I alienate the affections of Mr. Lovemore!

—Consider, madam, how would this tell in Westminster Hall?—Sir Brilliant Fashion, how say you? guilty of this indictment, or not guilty?—Not guilty, poz.—Thus issue is joined;—you enter the court, and in sober sadness charge the whole plump upon me, without a word as to the how, when, and where;—No proof positive,—there ends the prosecution.

Mrs. Love. But, sir, your stating of the case—

Sir Bril. Dear ma'am, don't interrupt—

Mrs. Love. Let me explain this matter—

Sir Bril. Nay, Mrs. Lovemore, allow me fair play—I am now upon my defence.—You will please to consider, gentlemen of the jury, that Mr. Lovemore is not a ward, nor I a guardian; that he is his own master to do as he pleases; that Mr. Lovemore is fond of gaiety, pleasure, and enjoyment; that he knows how to live; to make use of the senses nature has given him, and pluck the fruit that grows around him.—This is the whole affair.—How say ye, gentlemen of the jury?—Not guilty.—There, ma'am, you see, Not guilty.

Mrs. Love. You run on finely, Sir Brilliant;—but don't imagine that this bantering way—

Sir Bril. Acquitted by my country, ma'am, you see,—fairly acquitted!

Mrs. Love. After the very edifying counsel you give Mr. Lovemore, this loose strain of yours, Sir Brilliant, is not at all surprising; and, sir, your late project—

Sir Bril. My late project!—

Mrs. Love. Yes, sir: Not content with leading Mr. Lovemore into a thousand dissipations from all conjugal affection and domestic happiness, you have lately introduced him to your Mrs. Bellmour,—

Sir Bril. Ma'am, he does not so much as know Mrs. Bellmour.

Mrs. Love. Fie upon it, Sir Brilliant!—falsehood is but a poor—

Sir Bril. Falsehood I disdain, ma'am,—and I, Sir Brilliant Fashion, declare, that Mr. Lovemore, your husband, is not acquainted with the Widow Bellmour. You don't know that lady, ma'am; but I'll let you into her whole history—her whole history, ma'am:—Pray be seated— [Brings Chairs down.] The Widow Bellmour, is a lady of so agreeable a vivacity, that it is no wonder all the pretty fellows are on their knees to her.—Her manner so entertaining, such quickness of transition from one thing to another; and every thing she does, does so become her:—and then she has such a feeling heart, and such generosity of sentiment!—

Mrs. Love. Mighty well, sir!—She is a very vestal—and a vestal from your school of painting must be very curious—But give me leave, sir—How comes it that you desist from paying your addresses in that quarter?

Sir Bril. Why, faith, I find that my Lord George Etheridge,—who I thought was out of the kingdom,—is the happy man: and so all that remains for me, is to do justice to the lady, and console myself in the best manner I can, for the insufficiency of my pretensions.

Mrs. Love. And may I rely on this?

Sir Bril. May the first woman I put the question to, strike me to the centre with a supercilious eye-brow, if every syllable is not minutely true;—so that you see, ma'am, I am not the cause of your inquietude. There is not on earth a man that could be more averse from such a thing; nor a person in the world, who more earnestly aspires to prove the tender esteem he bears ye.— [She rises disconcerted.] You see, my dear ma'am, we both have cause of discontent; we are both disappointed,—both crossed in love——and

so, ma'am, the least we can do, is, both heartily join to—

Lovemore. [Speaks within.] William! is the chariot at the door?

Sir Bril. We are interrupted—There's my friend.

Enter LOVEMORE.

Love. Very well—let the chariot be brought round directly.—How do you do this morning, my dear? Sir Brilliant, I beg your pardon.—How do you do, my dear?

[With an Air of cold Civility.]

Mrs. Love. Only a little indisposed in mind, and indisposition of the mind is of no sort of consequence—not worth a cure.

Love. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Lovemore—Indisposition of the mind—Sir Brilliant, that is really a mighty pretty ring you have on your finger.

Sir Bril. A bauble:—Will you look at it?

Mrs. Love. Though I have but few obligations to Sir Brilliant, yet I fancy I may ascribe to him the favour of this visit, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. [Looking at the Ring.] Nay, now positively you wrong me;—I was obliged to you for your civil inquiries concerning me this morning; and so, on my part, I came to return the compliment before I go abroad.—Upon my word, 'tis very prettily set.

[Gives it.]

Mrs. Love. Are you going abroad, sir?

Love. A matter of business,—I hate business—but business must be done. [Examining his Ruffles.] Pray is there any news?—any news, my dear?

Mrs. Love. It would be news to me, sir, if you would be kind enough to let me know whether I may expect the favour of your company to dinner?

Love. It would be impertinent in me to answer such a question, because I can give no direct positive answer to it;—as things happen—perhaps I may—per-

haps may not.—But don't let me be of any inconvenience to you ;—it is not material where a body eats.—Apropos—you have heard what happened?

[To SIR BRILLIANT.]

Sir Bril. When and where ?

Love. A word in your ear—Ma'am, with your permission—

Mrs. Love. That cold, contemptuous civility, Mr. Lovemore—

Love. Pshaw ! pr'ythee, now—How can you, my dear ?—That's very peevish now, and illnatured. It is but about a mere trifle—Harkye, [Whispers.] I lost every thing I play'd for, after you went,—The foreigner and he understand one another.—I beg pardon, ma'am, it was only about an affair at the opera.

Mrs. Love. The opera, Mr. Lovemore, or any thing, is more agreeable than my company.

Love. You wrong me now ; I declare, you wrong me ;—and if it will give you any pleasure, I'll sup at home.—Can't we meet at the St. Alban's to-night?

[Aside to SIR BRILLIANT.]

Mrs. Love. I believe, I need not tell you what pleasure that would give me : But unless the pleasure is mutual, Mr. Lovemore—

Love. Ma'am, I—I—I perceive all the delicacy of that sentiment ;—But—a—I shall incommod you ;—you possibly may have some private party—and it would be very unpolite in me, to obstruct your schemes of pleasure.—Would it not, Sir Brilliant ?

[Laughs.]

Sir Bril. It would be gothic to the last degree. Ha ! ha !

Love. Ha ! ha !—To be sure ; for me to be of the party, would look as if we lived together like our friend Sir Bashful Constant and his lady, who are for ever like two game cocks, ready armed to goad and wound one another most heartily—Ha ! ha !

Sir Bril. The very thing—Ha ! ha !

Love. So it is—so it is! [Both stand laughing.]

Mrs. Love. Very well, gentlemen ! you have it all to yourselves.

Love. Odso !— [Looking at his Watch.] I shall be beyond my time.—Any commands into the city, madam ?

Mrs. Love. Commands!—I have no commands, sir.

Love. I have an appointment there at my Banker's,—Sir Brilliant, you know old Discount ?

Sir Bril. What, he that was in parliament ?

Love. The same.—Entire Butt, I think, was the name of the borough.—Ha ! ha ! ha !—Can I set you down any where, Sir Brilliant ?

Sir Bril. Can you give me a cast in St. James's Street ?

Love. By all means—*Allons*—Mrs. Lovemore, your most obedient, ma'am.—Who waits there ?—Mrs. Lovemore, no ceremony—your servant.

[Exit, singing.]

Sir Bril. Ma'am, you see I don't carry Mr. Lovemore abroad now—I have the honour, ma'am, to take my leave—I shall have her, I see plainly ;—Sir Brilliant, mind your hits, and your business is done.
[Aside.] Ma'am, your most obedient.

[Exit.]

Enter MUSLIN, hastily.

Mus. Did you call, ma'am ?

Mrs. Love. To be insulted thus by his loose confident carriage !—

Mus. As I live and breathe, ma'am, if I was as you, I would not flutter myself about it.

Mrs. Love. About what ?

Mus. La ! what signifies mincing matters !—I overheard it all.

Mrs. Love. You did!—did you? [Angrily.]

Mus. Ma'am!

Mrs. Love. It does not signify at present.

Mus. No, ma'am, it does not signify, and revenge is sweet, I think; and, by my troth! I don't see why you should stand on ceremony with a husband that stands upon none with you.

Mrs. Love. Again!—Pr'ythee, Mrs. Malapert, none of your advice.—How dare you talk in this manner to me?—Let me hear no more of this impudent freedom. [Walks about.]

Mus. No, ma'am.—It's very well, ma'am.—I have done, ma'am. [Disconcerted, and then she speaks aside.] —What the devil is here to do?—An unmannerly thing, to go for to huff me in this manner!—

Mrs. Love. [Still walking about.] To make his character public, and render him the subject of every tea-table throughout this town, would only serve to widen the breach, and, instead of his neglect, might call forth his anger, and settle at last into a fixed aversion.—Lawyers, parting, and separate maintenance, would ensue.—No,—I must avoid that,—if possible, I will avoid that.—What must be done?

Mus. What can she be thinking of now?—The sulky thing, not to be more familiar with such a friend as I am!—What can she mean?—Did you speak to me, ma'am?

Mrs. Love. Suppose I were to try that!—Muslin.

Mus. Ma'am!—Now for it!—

Mrs. Love. You heard Sir Brilliant deny that Mr. Lovemore visits at this Widow Bellmour's.

Mus. Lard, ma'am, he is as full of fibs as a French milliner,—he does visit there,—I know it all from William,—I'll be hang'd in my own garters, if he does not.

Mrs. Love. I know not what to do!—Heigho!—Let my chair be got ready instantly.

Mus. Your chair, ma'am!—Are you going out, ma'am?

Mrs. Love. Don't tease me with your talk, but do as I bid you,—and bring my cloak down to the parlour immediately.—Heigho! [Exit.

Mus. What is in the wind now?—An ill-natured puss, not to tell me what she is about.—It's no matter,—she does not know what she is about—Before I'd lead such a life as she does, I'd take a lover's leap into Rosamond's pond.—I love to see company, for my part, and not to be mop'd to death here with her humdrum ways—tease, tease, tease—“ Heigho! Muslin, go to William—where's his master?—when did he come home?—how long has he been up?—how does he do?” with the same thing over and over again, to the end of the chapter.—A fine life indeed, for a person that has such fine spirits as I have by nature; it's enough to ruin my constitution. I love to see company, for my part—Bless me! I had like to have forgot, there's that Mrs. Marmalet comes to my rout to-night.—I had as lieve she had stay'd away—She's nothing but mere lumber—So formal—She won't play above shilling whist: who the devil does she think is to make a shilling party for her? No such thing to be done now-a-days—Nobody plays shilling whist now, unless I was to send for the tradespeople—but I sha'n't let myself down at that rate for Madam Marmalet, I promise you. [Exit.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

SIR BASHFUL CONSTANT'S.

Enter SIR BASHFUL.[*Knock.*]

Sir Bash. Did not I hear a knock at the door?—Yes, yes, I did—The coach is just driving away—Ay, ay! I am right enough—Sideboard! Sideboard!—come hither, Sideboard!—I must know who it is—My wife keeps the best company in England—but I must be cautious—Servants love to peep into the bottom of their master's secrets.

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Whose coach was that at the door just now?

Side. The Duchess of Hurricane's, please your honour.

Sir Bash. The Duchess of Hurricane's!—A woman of great rank—The Duchess of Hurricane, Sideboard! What did she want?

Side. I can't say, your honour—She left this card.

Sir Bash. A card!—Let me see it.— [Reads.]

The Duchess of Hurricane's compliments to Lady Constant; she has left the rooks, and the country squires,

and the crows, and the fox hunters, and the hounds, to their own dear society for the rest of the winter ; and lets her ladyship know, that she sees company, at Hurricane House, on Wednesdays, for the remainder of the season.

Make me thankful ! Here's a card from a duchess !
[Aside.] What have you in your hand ?

Side. Cards that have been left here all this morning, your honour.

Sir Bash. All the morning !—Why, I may as well—May as well keep the Coach and Horses in Piccadilly—I won't bear this, Sideboard, I can't bear it—
[Aside.] Ha ! ha ! ha !—Let me see,—let me see !

Side. There, your honour. [Gives the Cards.

Sir Bash. What ! all these this morning, Sideboard ?

Side. Yes, please your honour.

Sir Bash. This is too much, Sideboard—it is too much indeed ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! [Aside.] I can't bear it, Sideboard !—No, no—I cannot bear it.—Ha ! ha ! ha !
[Aside.] Make me thankful ! All people of tiptop condition to visit my wife. Ha ! ha ! ha ! [Aside.]

Enter FURNISH.

What's the matter, Furnish ?

Fur. Nothing, sir ; nothing's the matter.

Sir Bash. What are you about ? Where are you going ? What have you to do now ?

Fur. To do, sir ?—Only to tell the chairmen they must go out with the chair this evening, and Black George with a flambeau before them, to pay some visits, that's all.

Sir Bash. What polite ways people of fashion have of being intimate with one another !—An empty chair to return visits for her !—I can't help laughing at it.—Ha ! ha ! ha !—I like to see her do like other

people. [Aside.] But I shall be found out by my servants—I tell you, Sideboard, and I tell you too, Mrs. Impertinence, that my lady leads a life of folly, and noise, and hurry, and cards, and dice, and absurdity, and nonsense; and I won't bear it—I am resolv'd I will not—I think I hear her coming! I do—I do—I will not go on this way! and now, I'll tell her roundly a piece of my mind.

Enter LADY CONSTANT.

She looks charmingly to-day! [Aside.] So, my Lady Constant—I have had my house full of duns again to-day.

Lady Con. Obliging creatures to call so often!—What did they want?

Sir Bash. What did they want!—They wanted their money.

Lady Con. Well, and you paid them—Did not you?

Sir Bash. I pay them!—'Sdeath, madam! what do you take me for?

Lady Con. I took you for a husband, but I find I was mistaken.

Sir Bash. Death and fire!—I see you're an ungrateful woman—I am sure, my Lady Constant, I have behav'd with great good-nature to you.—Did not I go into parliament, madam, to please you?—Did not I go and get drunk at a borough for a month together; ay, and mobbed at the George and Vulture, and pelted and horse-whipp'd the day before election,—and all this, to please you?—Did not I stand up in the House to make a speech merely to gratify your pride?—And did not I expose myself there?—Did I know whether I stood upon my head or my heels?—What the devil had I to do in parliament? What's my country to me?

Lady Con. Who mention'd your country, sir?

Sir Bash. I desire you won't mention it—I have nothing to do with it—No, nor with your debts—I have nothing to do with them; and I desire you will tell your people to come no more after me.—I know how to prevent that—Notice in the Gazette will exempt me from your extravagancies—I did not live in the Temple for nothing!

Fur. I protest, I never heard any body talk so mean in all my days before.

Lady Con. Don't you be so pert, pray.—Leave the room—Go both of you down stairs.

[*Exeunt FURNISH and SIDEBOARD.*]

Sir Bash. I have kept it up pretty well before my servants. She's a fine woman, and talks admirably!

[*Aside.*]

Lady Con. Is there never to be an end of this usage, Sir Bashful?—Am I to be for ever made unhappy by your humours?

Sir Bash. Humours!—I like that expression prodigiously!—Humours indeed!

Lady Con. You may harp upon the word, sir—Humours you have, sir, and such as are become insupportable.

Sir Bash. She talks like an angel! [*Aside.*] Madam, [*Moderating his Voice.*] I should have no humours, as you call them, if your extravagancies were not insupportable.—What would the world say?—Let us canvass the matter quietly and easily—What would the world think of my understanding, if I was seen to encourage your way of life?

Lady Con. What will they think of it now, sir?—Take this along with you, there is a certain set of people, who, when they would avoid an error, are sure to fall into the opposite extreme.

Sir Bash. There's for you!—That's a translation from Horace—Dum vitant stulti vitia—O, she is a notable woman.

[*Aside.*]

Lady Con. Let me tell you, Sir Bashful, there is not in the world a more ridiculous sight, than a person wrapping up himself in imaginary wisdom—If he can but guard against one giant-vice, while he becomes an easy prey to a thousand other absurdities.

Sir Bash. Lord, I am nothing at all to her in an argument! She has a tongue that can reason me out of my senses—I could almost find in my heart to tell her the whole truth.— [Aside.] Lookye, madam, you know I am goodnatur'd at the bottom, and any thing in reason——

Lady Con. When did I desire any thing else?—Is it unreasonable to live with decency?—Is it unreasonable to keep the company I have always been us'd to?—Is it unreasonable to conform to the modes of life, when our own fortune can so well afford it?—

Sir Bash. She's a very reasonable woman, and I wish I had but half her sense! [Aside.] I'll tell you what, my Lady Constant, to avoid eternal disputes, if a sum of money, within moderate compass, would make matters easy—I know you have contracted habits in life—And I know the force of habit is not easily conquer'd.—I would not have her conquer it: my pride would be hurt if she did. [Aside.] And so, madam, if a brace of hundreds—Why should not I give her three hundred? [Aside.] I did not care if I went as far as three hundred—If three hundred pounds, my Lady Constant, will settle the matter—Why, as to the matter of three hundred pounds——

Enter FURNISH, with a Bandbox.

Fur. Your ladyship's things are come home from the milliner's. [Showing the Bandbox.]

Sir Bash. Zookers! this woman has overheard me!

[*Aside.*] As to the matter of three hundred pounds, madam. [*Loud, in a Passion.*] Let me tell you it is a very large sum—ask me for three hundred pounds, madam!—Do you take me for a blockhead?

Lady Con. What does the man fly out so for?

Sir Bash. What right have you to three hundred pounds? I will allow no such doings—Is not my house an eternal scene of your routs, and your drums, and your what-dye-call-em's?—Don't I often come home when the hall is barricado'd with powder-monkey servants, that I can hardly get within my own doors?

Lady Con. What is the meaning of all this, sir?

Sir Bash. Have not I seen you at a game at Loo, put the fee simple of a score of my best acres upon a single card?—And have not I mutter'd to myself—if that woman now were as much in love with me, as she is with Pam, what an excellent wife she would make?

Lady Con. Yes, I have great reason to love you, truly!

Sir Bash. Death and fire!—You are so fond of play, that I should not wonder to see my child resemble one of the court cards, or mark'd in the forehead with a pair-royal of aces. I tell you, once for all, you are an ungovernable woman—Your imaginations are as wild as any woman's in Bedlam—Do, go thither, go; for I tell you once for all, I'll allow no such doings in my house. [*Exit SIR BASH.*]

Lady Con. His head is certainly turn'd!—Did any body ever see such behaviour?

Fur. See it!—no, nor bear it neither—Your ladyship will never be rightly at ease, I'm afraid, till you part with him.

Lady Con. Oh, never; it is impossible!—He not only has lost all decency, but seems to me to have bid adieu to all humanity—That it should be my

fate to be married to such a quicksand ! But I'll think no more of him.

Fur. Oh, madam, I had quite forgot ; Mrs. Lovemore's servant is below, and desires to know if your ladyship would be at home this morning.

Lady Con. Yes, I shall be at home—Step with me to my room, and I'll give you a card to send Mrs. Lovemore—Of all things let a woman be careful how she marries a narrow-minded, under-bred husband.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter SIR BASHFUL and LOVEMORE.

Sir Bash. Walk in, Mr. Lovemore, walk in !—I am heartily glad to see you !—This is kind.

Love. I am ready, you see, to attend the call of friendship.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, you are a friend indeed.

Love. You do me honour, Sir Bashful—Pray how does my lady ?

Sir Bash. Perfectly well !—I never saw her look better—We have had t'other skirmish since I saw you.

Love. Another ?

Sir Bash. Ay ! Another !—And I did not bate her an ace—but I told you I had something for your private ear—Pray now, have you remark'd any thing odd or singular in me ?

Love. Not the least—I never knew a man with less oddity in my life.

Sir Bash. What, nothing at all ? He, he ! [Smiles at him.] Have you remark'd nothing about my wife ?

Love. You don't live happy with her—But that is not singular.

Sir Bash. Po !—I tell you, Mr. Lovemore, I am at the bottom a very odd fellow.

Love. Not at all.

Sir Bash. Yes, yes, yes,—I am—I am indeed—As

odd a fish as lives—And you must have seen it before now.

Love. Not I truly! You are not jealous, I hope?

Sir Bash. You have not hit the right nail o'the head—no—no—not jealous. Do her justice, I am secure there—My lady has high notions of honour. It is not that.

Love. What then?

Sir Bash. Can't you guess?

Love. Not I, upon my soul!—Explain.

Sir Bash. He, he! [Smiling and looking simple.] You could never have imagined it—I blush at the very thoughts of it. [Turns away.]

Love. Come, come, be a man, Sir Bashful—out with it at once, let me be of your council—

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, I doubt you, and yet esteem you—Some men there are, who when a confidence is once repos'd in them, take occasion from thence to hold a hank over their friend, and tyrannize him all the rest of his days.

Love. Oh, fie!—This is ungenerous!—True friendship is of another quality—It feels from sympathy, and is guarded by honour.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, I have no farther doubt of you—and so—Stay, stay a moment—let me just step to the door. [Goes on Tiptoe.]

Love. Jealousy has laid hold of him. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. Servants have a way of listening.

[Pushes the Door open with both Hands.]

Love. He has it, through his very brain! [Aside.] What has he got in his head!

Sir Bash. No, no—all's safe—There was nobody. Mr. Lovemore, I will make you the depositary—the faithful depositary, of a secret, which to you will appear a mystery—My inclinations, Mr. Lovemore—nay, but you'll laugh at me.

Love. No—upon my honour!—No—no.

Sir Bash. Well, well, well—my inclinations, I say,

are changed—no, not changed—but—they are not what they have appeared to be—I am in love—'Sdeath, I am quite ashamed of myself.

Love. Ashamed! Love is a noble passion—But don't tell me any more about it—my Lady Constant will find it out, and lay the blame to me—I must not appear to encourage you—no, no—you must not involve me in a quarrel with her.

Sir Bash. Pshaw!—you don't take me right—quite wide of the mark—hear me out.

Love. I won't—indeed, I won't!—

Sir Bash. Nay, but you shall, you shall—

Love. Positively no!—Let me keep clear—She shall certainly know it, and the devil's in the dice if she does not comply with my desires from mere spirit of revenge. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. I tell you, Mr. Lovemore—the object of my passion—[Leading him back.]—this charming woman, on whom I doat to distraction—

Love. I don't desire to know it.

Sir Bash. You must, you must; this adorable creature—

Love. Keep it to yourself, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. Who looks so lovely in my eyes—is—

Love. I don't desire to know.

Sir Bash. But you shall know—is—this fine woman, is—my own wife.

Love. Your own wife! [Stares at him.]

Sir Bash. [Looks silly, blushes, and turns away from him.] Yes, my own wife.

Love. This is the most unexpected discovery—

Sir Bash. [Fiddling and biting his Nails.] Look ye there now—he laughs at me already! [Aside.]

Love. And can this be possible?—Are you really in love with my Lady Constant?—your own wife!

Sir Bash. Spare my confusion, Mr. Lovemore; spare my confusion—Ay, it's all over with me.

Love. I should never have guess'd this, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. I have made myself very ridiculous, Mr, Lovemore: [Looks at him and drops his Eyes.] I know I have.

Love. Ridiculous!—far from it—Why, do you think it ridiculous, to love a valuable woman? Po! Po!—cheer up man—and now to keep you in countenance I'll deposit a secret with you—I love my wife.

Sir Bash. What!

Love. I am in love with my wife.

Sir Bash. He! he! [Looks at him with great Glee.] Ha! ha!—no, no—you don't love her!—Ha! ha!—Do you, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. Upon my honour!

Sir Bash. What, love your wife?

Love. Most ardently!

Sir Bash. Give me your hand—Give me your hand! He, he, he!—I am glad to know this!

Love. I love her most sincerely—But then I never let her know it—no—nor I would not have the world know it, and therefore I have led the life I have done on purpose to conceal it.

Sir Bash. You are right, Mr. Lovemore—perfectly right—I have quarrell'd with my lady on purpose to cloak the affair, and prevent all suspicion.

Love. That was right; you should keep to that.

Sir Bash. So I intend—but I have done a thousand kindnesses in the mean time.

Love. Have ye?

Sir Bash. Ay, a thousand—She has been plaguing me this long time for a diamond cross, and diamond shoe-buckles—madam, says I, I'll hear of no such trumpery—But then goes me I, and bespeaks them directly of the best jeweller in town, will come to three hundred—She'll have 'em this day, without knowing where they come from.

Love. Sly, sly. He! he!

Sir Bash. Let me alone ; I know what I'm about—And then, Mr. Lovemore, to cover this design—Ha! ha ! I can take occasion to be as jealous as Bedlam, when I see her wear all her diamond baubles.

Love. So you can—I wish he may never be jealous of me in earnest. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. Well, well—give us your hand—give us your hand—my dear brother sufferer—I'll tell you what, Mr. Lovemore—we can, in a sly way, do each other great service, if you will come into my scheme.

Love. As how, pray ?

Sir Bash. I'll tell you—There are some things, which you know our wives expect to be done—

Love. What is he at now ? [Aside.] So they do, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. Now, if you will assist me—

Love. You may depend upon my assistance.

Sir Bash. Look ye, Mr. Lovemore, my Lady Constant wants money—You know she keeps a great deal of company, and makes a great figure there—I could show my wife Mr. Lovemore, in any company in England ; I wish she could say the same of me.

Love. Why truly, I wish she could.

Sir Bash. But I had not those early advantages—Now you know I can't in reason be seen to give her money myself, so I would have you take the money of me, and pretend to lend it to her yourself, out of friendship and regard.

Love. Why you're a very Machiavel—nothing was ever better contriv'd—Here's a fellow pimping for his own horns. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. Here, here, here—take the money—here it is in Bank Notes,—One, two, three—there's three hundred pounds—give her that—give her that, Mr. Lovemore—

Love. I will—This is the rarest adventure ! [Aside.]

Sir Bash. I'll do any thing for your wife in return—

Love. Why I may have occasion for your friendship, Sir Bashful—that is to forgive me if ever you find me out. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. You may always command me—well, lose no time, she's above stairs—Step to her now, and make her easy.

Love. I'll do my endeavour, that you may rely upon—I'll make her easy, if possible.

Sir Bash. That's kind, that's kind!—Well, ha! ha! ha! Mr. Lovemore, is not this a rare scheme? Ha! ha! ha!

Love. 'Tis the newest way of making a wife easy—Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Bash. Ay, ay, let this head of mine alone. Ha! ha!

Love. That I won't if I can help it.

[Exit LOVEMORE.]

Sir Bash. Prosper you, prosper you, Mr. Lovemore! It is the luckiest thing in the world to have so good a friend! make me thankful!—he is a true friend. [SIR BRILLIANT Within.] Hist—Did not I hear a noise?—Is not that Sir Brilliant's voice?—I hope they won't let him in—I gave orders I would not be at home—Zookers! they are letting him in—He shan't see my lady for all that—Shan't interrupt business.

Enter SIR BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Sir Bashful, I kiss your hand; I rejoice to see you. And my lady, how does she do? Is she at home?

Sir Bash. Do you think I have nothing to do but to know whether she is at home or not? I don't trouble my head about her, sir.

Sir Bril. Po! never talk so slightingly of so agreeable a woman—My Lady Constant has spirit, taste, sense, wit, beauty—

Sir Bash. Spirit, taste, sense, wit, beauty!—She has all that sure enough. [Aside.] Sir, I am no sworn appraiser to take an inventory of her effects, and set a just value upon them—I don't know what she has.

Sir Bril. Is her ladyship visible this morning?

Sir Bash. No, sir, she is invisible this morning—and unintelligible this morning—And incomprehensible this morning—She is not well—she has the vapours—She can't be spoke to—

Sir Bril. I'm sorry for it—I came to tell her the rarest piece of news—such a discovery!—

Sir Bash. Ay, what's that?

Sir Bril. You know Sir Amorous La Fool?

Sir Bash. Mighty well.

Sir Bril. Poor devil! he has got into such a scrape!

Sir Bash. What's the matter? Has he been bubbled at play?

Sir Bril. Worse, much worse.

Sir Bash. He is not dead?

Sir Bril. Why that's a scrape indeed!—But it is not that; almost as bad though.

Sir Bash. He's fallen in love with some coquet may be?

Sir Bril. No.

Sir Bash. With some prude?

Sir Bril. Nor that.

Sir Bash. An actress, may be; or an opera singer?

Sir Bril. No, you'll never guess—Like a silly devil, he has fallen in love with his own wife. Ha! ha!

Sir Bash. In love with his own wife!

[*Stares at him.*]

Sir Bril. Ha! ha!—In love with his own wife—I heard it at my Lady Betty Scandal's—there was such laughing, and so much raillery—my dear Sir Bashful, don't you enjoy it? Ha! ha! It's so ridiculous an affair—Is it not, Sir Bashful?

Sir Bash. Ha! ha!—Oh, ay, very ridiculous in-

deed ! Ha ! ha !—nothing can be more pleasant !—
Zooms ! it's my own case directly ! [Aside.]

Sir Bril. The man is lost, abandon'd, ruin'd, dead,
and buried—You don't laugh, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. Who I ;—I—I—I—I laugh as heartily
as I possibly can.

Sir Bril. I want to find Lovemore; he'll be so di-
verted. You know he does not care a pinch of snuff for
his wife.

Sir Bash. No, not in the least, he does not care for
her—no to be sure he does not. [Aside.] Not he ; he
no more cares for his wife than I do for mine.

Sir Bril. Much the same. Poor Sir Amorous !
what a ridiculous figure does he make at last—adieu
for him all the joys of life ! the side-box whisper, the
soft assignation, and the joys of freedom !—He is
retired with his Penelope, to love most heartily for a
month, grow indifferent to each other in two, and hate
most cordially in three—Poor devil ! Ha ! ha !

Sir Bash. Do you think it will end so ?

Sir Bril. Most certainly. But I have not told
you the worst of his case—Our friend, Sir Charles
Wildfire, you know, was about a comedy—now what
has he done, but drawn the character of Sir Amorous
La Fool, and made him the hero of his piece.

Sir Bash. What ! put him into a comedy ?

Sir Bril. Ha ! ha !—Yes, he has—It is call'd, “The
Amorous Husband; or the Man in love with his own
Wife.”—I must send in time for places—Sir Bashful,
you shall be of the party.

Sir Bash. With great pleasure—You may be sure
it will be a very agreeable party to me—You may
depend—I shall enjoy the joke prodigiously.

Sir Bril. It will be the highest scene in nature—
well, a good day !—I must drive to a thousand places
and put it about—farewell ! Apropos, be sure you
let my lady know—It will appear to her so ridi-
culous—

Sir Bash. Do you think it will?

Sir Briz. Certainly!—Well, your servant, your servant, your servant—Poor Sir Amorous La Fool, he'll have his horns added to his coat of arms in a very little time. Ha! ha!

[Exit.]

Sir Bash. I see how it is; I shall get lampooned, berhymed, and niched into a comedy.—Make me thankful! nobody knows of my affair, but Mr. Lovemore—He can't discover against me, for his own sake.—

Enter LOVEMORE.

Well, Mr. Lovemore, well; how have you manag'd?

Love. Just as I could wish—She is infinitely oblig'd to me, and will never forget this civility.

Sir Bash. Ten thousand thanks to you!—She suspects nothing of my being privy to it?

Love. Not the least inkling of it.—She talk'd at first something about delicacy; and thought it rather an indecorum to accept of money even from a friend—But that argument was soon silenced—I told her, I could not but see what a bad husband you was.

Sir Bash. That was right, that was right!

Love. And then I talk'd a few sentences to her,—As, that the person receiving a civility confers the obligation—And that I was sure of wheedling you, in some goodnatur'd moment, to repay me—it was but making you my banker for a short time: and with more jargon to that purpose. And so, with some reluctance, she comply'd, and things are upon the footing I would have them.—Death and fury! there's my wife!

Sir Bash. Ay, and here comes my wife, too.

Love. What the devil brings her here? [Aside.]

Sir Bash. This is the rarest circumstance—Now let me see how he will carry it before Mrs. Lovemore. Walk in, walk in, Mrs. Lovemore.

Enter Mrs. LOVEMORE and LADY CONSTANT.

Lady Con. Mrs. Lovemore, I'm glad to see you abroad, madam.

Mrs. Love. I am highly fortunate in meeting your ladyship at home.—Mr. Lovemore, I am glad to see you too, sir.

Love. Mrs. Lovemore, I thank you.

Sir Bash. Mind him now, mind him now—My Lady Constant seems quite pleas'd—She has got the money. [Aside.]

Mrs. Love. I thought you were gone into the city, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. Why will you mind me, Mrs. Lovemore—I deferred going till evening.—What the devil business had she here! [Aside.]

Mrs. Love. Then I may hope you'll dine at home, sir?

Love. O lord ! how can you tease a man so?

Sir Bash. Ay, ay, I see how it is—he won't let her have the least suspicion of his regard. [Aside.]

Lady Con. No doubt Mr. Lovemore will dine at home, if it gives you any satisfaction—And Sir Bashful, I reckon, will dine at home, for the contrary reason.

Sir Bash. Madam, I'll dine at home, or I'll dine abroad; for what reason I please: I am my own master, I hope, madam.—Lovemore, Lovemore ! Ha ! ha ! [Aside.]

Love. Bravo!—What a silly blockhead it is!

[Aside.]

Mrs. Love. I see your chariot at the door, Mr. Lovemore—I'll send away my chair, and you may set me down.

Love. Ma'am, I have several places to call at.

Sir Bash. Cunning ! Cúming !—He would not be seen in a chariot with her for the world. [Aside.]

Lady Con. I am to have a rout to-morrow evening, Mrs. Lovemore: I wish you would favour us with your company.

Sir Bash. A rout to-morrow evening!—You have a rout every evening, I think.—I wish, madam, you would learn to imitate Mrs. Lovemore, and not make a fool of me as you do.—Hip, Lovemore! Ha! ha!

[*Aside.*]

Love. Ha! ha! Bravo!—Well, I must be gone—My Lady Constant, I have the honour to wish your ladyship a good morning. Ma'am, your most obedient; Sir Bashful, yours—Madam, you know I am yours.

[*Bows gravely to Mrs. LOVEMORE, and exit.*]

Sir Bash. He carries it off finely—Make me thankful! I have kept my own secret too, and she shall never know a word of the matter.—Mrs. Lovemore, your humble servant, madam!—Madam, you know I am yours.

[*Bows gravely to LADY CONSTANT, and exits.*]

Mrs. Love. Two such husbands!

Lady Con. As to my swain, Mrs. Lovemore, I grant you—but you may set your mind at rest; Mr. Lovemore is at least well-bred; whereas, Sir Bashful never qualifies his disrespect with the least tincture of civility.

Mrs. Love. Well, if there is any pleasure in being made miserable with civility, I must allow Mr. Lovemore a most skilful hand.—I have found out another of his intrigues, and I came on purpose to consult with your ladyship about it: There is a Widow Bellmour to whom he pays his addresses.

Lady Con. The Widow Bellmour!—

Mrs. Love. But first give me leave, Lady Constant, to tell you the whole circumstances of the affair.

Lady Con. All scandal, take my word for it.—But, if I must hear your story, let us adjourn the debate to my dressing-room, and I will promise to confute your whole accusation.—My dear Mrs. Lovemore,

are you not tending a little towards jealousy?—Beware of that, ma'am; you must not look through that medium:

That jaundice of the mind, whose colours strike,
On friend and foe, and paint them all alike.

[*Exeunt*.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

A Room at the WIDOW BELLMOUR'S, in which are disposed, up and down, several Chairs, a Toilette, a Book-vase, and a Harpsicord;—MIGNIONET, her Maid, is settling the Toilette.

Mig. I don't well know what to make of this same Lord Etheridge—He is coming here again to-day, I suppose; all this neatness, and all this care, must be for him. Well, it does not signify, there is a pleasure in obeying Madam Bellmour—She is a sweet lady, that's the truth of it. 'Twere a pity any of these men, with their deceitful arts, should draw her into a snare—But she knows them all—They must rise early, who can outwit her.

Enter MRS. BELLMOUR, reading a Volume of Pope.

*Oh! blest with temper, whose unclouded ray,
Can make to-morrow, cheerful as to-day ;
She who can own a sister's charms, and hear
Sighs for a daughter, with unwounded ear ;
That never answers, till a husband cools,
And if she rules him, never shows she rules :*

Sensible, elegant Pope !

*Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
Yet has her humour most, when she obeys.*

[Seems to read on.]

Mig. Lord love my mistress ! She's always so happy and so gay.

Mrs. Bell. These charming characters of women ! — 'Tis like a painter's gallery, where one sees the portraits of all one's acquaintance.— Here, Mignonet, put this book in its place.

Mig. Yes, ma'am.— There, ma'am, you see your toilet looks most charmingly.

Mrs. Bell. Does it ?— I think it does.— Apropos, Where's my new song ?— Here it lies.— I must make myself mistress of it.— Mignonet, do you know that this is a very pretty song— 'tis written by my Lord Etheridge ;— I positively must learn it before he comes.— [Sings a Line.] Do you know, Mignonet, that I think my lord not wholly intolerable.

Mig. Yes, ma'am, I know that.

Mrs. Bell. Do you ?

Mig. And if I have any skill, ma'am, I fancy you think him more than tolerable.

Mrs. Bell. Really ! then you think I like him, I suppose ?— Do ye think I like him ?— I don't well know how that is,— and yet I don't know but I do like him ;— no,— no,— I don't like him neither,— not

absolutely like—but I could like, if I had a mind to humour myself.—The man has a softness of manner, an elegant turn of thinking, and has a heart—has he a heart?—yes, I think he has;—and then he is such an observer of the manners,—and shows the ridiculous of them with so much humour.

Mig. Without doubt, ma'am, my lord is a pretty man enough; but lack-a-day, what o'that?—You know but very little of him,—your acquaintance is but very short— [MRS. BELLMOUR hums a Tune.] Do, pray, my dear madam, mind what I say,—for I am at times, I assure you, very speculative,—very speculative indeed; and I see very plainly—Lord, ma'am, what am I doing?—I am talking to you for your own good, and you are all in the air, and no more mind me, no, no more, than if I was nothing at all.—

Mrs. Bell. [Hums a Tune still.] Why, indeed, you talk wonderfully well upon the subject.—Do you think I shall play the fool, Mignonet, and marry my lord?

Mig. You have it, ma'am, through the very heart of you—I see that.

Mrs. Bell. Do you think so?—May be I may marry, and may be not.—Poor Sir Brilliant Fashion,—What will become of him?—But I won't think about it.

Enter POMPEY.

What's the matter, Pompey?

Pom. There's a lady below in a chair, that desires to know if you are at home, madam?

Mrs. Bell. Has the lady no name?

Pom. She did not tell her name.

Mrs. Bell. How awkward you are!—Well, show her up. [Exit POMPEY.]

Mig. Had not you better receive the lady in the

drawing-room, ma'am?—Things here are in such a confusion—

Mrs. Bell. No, it will do very well here. I dare say it is somebody I am intimate with, though the boy does not recollect her name.—Here she comes.

Enter MRS. LOVEMORE.—*They both look with a grave Surprise at each other, then courtesy with an Air of distant Civility.*

Mrs. Bell. Ma'am, your most obedient.

[With a Kind of Reserve.]

Mrs. Love. Ma'am, I beg your pardon for this intrusion. [Disconcerted.]

Mrs. Bell. Pray ma'am walk in—Won't you please to be seated?—Mignonet, reach a chair.

[*MRS. LOVEMORE crosses the Stage, and they salute each other.*]

Mrs. Love. I'm afraid this visit, from one unknown to you, will be inconvenient and troublesome.

Mrs. Bell. Not at all, I dare say;—you need not be at the trouble of an apology.—Mignonet, you may withdraw. [Exit MIGNONET.]

Mrs. Love. Though I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, ma'am, there is a particular circumstance which has determined me to take this liberty with you; for which I intreat your pardon.

Mrs. Bell. The request is wholly unnecessary;—but a particular circumstance, you say—Pray, ma'am, to what circumstance am I indebted for this honour?

Mrs. Love. I shall appear perhaps very ridiculous, and indeed I am afraid I have done the most absurd thing—But, ma'am, from the character you bear for tenderness of disposition and generosity of sentiment, I easily incline to flatter myself, you will not take offence at any thing; and that if it is in your power, you will afford me your assistance.

Mrs. Bell. You may depend upon me.

Mrs. Love. I will be very ingenuous:—Pray, ma'am, an't you acquainted with a gentleman whose name is Lovemore?

Mrs. Bell. Lovemore!—No;—no such person in my list.—Lovemore!—I don't know him, ma'am.

Mrs. Love. Ma'am, I beg your pardon—I won't trouble you any farther. [Going.]

Mrs. Bell. "Tis mighty odd, this—[Aside.] Madam, I must own my curiosity is a good deal excited;—[Takes her by the Hand.] Pray, ma'am, give me leave—I beg you will sit down,—pray don't think me impertinent—may I beg to know who the gentleman is?

Mrs. Love. You have such an air of frankness and generosity, that I will open myself to you.—I have been married to him these two years; I admired my husband for his understanding, his sentiment, and his spirit; I thought myself as sincerely loved by him as my fond heart could wish; but there is of late such a strange revolution in his temper, I know not what to make of it:—instead of the looks of affection, and expressions of tenderness, with which he used to meet me, 'tis nothing now but cold, averted, superficial civility.—While abroad, he runs on in a wild career of pleasure; and, to my deep affliction, has fix'd his affections upon another object.

Mrs. Bell. If you mean to consult with me in regard to this case, I am afraid you have made a wrong choice;—there is something in her appearance that affects me—[Aside.] Pray excuse me, ma'am, you consider this matter too deeply—Men will prove false, and if there is nothing in your complaint but mere gallantry on his side,—upon my word, I can't think your case the worse for that.

Mrs. Love. Not the worse!

Mrs. Bell. On the contrary, much better. If his

affections, instead of being alienated, had been extinguished, he would have sunk into a downright stupid, habitual insensibility; from which it might prove impossible to recal him.—In all love's bill of mortality, there is not a more fatal disorder;—but your husband is not fallen into that way. By your account, he still has sentiment, and where there is sentiment, there is still room to hope for an alteration.—But in the other case, you have the pain of seeing yourself neglected, and for what?—for nothing at all;—the man has lost all sense of feeling, and is become, to the warm beams of wit and beauty, as impenetrable as an ice-house.

Mrs. Love. I am afraid, ma'am, he is too much the reverse of this, too susceptible of impressions from every beautiful object.

Mrs. Bell. Why, so much the better, as I told you already;—some new idea has struck his fancy, and he will be for a while, under the influence of that.

Mrs. Love. How light she makes of it! [Aside.]

Mrs. Bell. But it is the wife's business to bait the hook for her husband with variety; and to draw him daily to herself:—that is the whole affair, I would not make myself uneasy, ma'am.

Mrs. Love. Not uneasy! when his indifference does not diminish my regard for him!—Not uneasy! when the man I doat on, no longer fixes his happiness at home!

Mrs. Bell. Ma'am, you'll give me leave to speak my mind freely.—I have often observ'd, when the fiend jealousy is rous'd, that women lay out a wonderful deal of anxiety and vexation to no account; when perhaps, if the truth were known, they should be angry with themselves instead of their husbands.

Mrs. Love. Angry with myself, madam!—calumny can lay nothing to my charge,—the virtue of my conduct, madam— [Rises.]

Mrs. Bell. Oh, I would have laid my life, you

would be at that work—that's the folly of us all.—But virtue is out of the question at present. It is *la Belle Nature*,—Nature embellished by the advantages of art, that the men expect now-a-days;—and really, ma'am, without compliment, you seem to have all the qualities that can dispute your husband's heart with anybody; but the exertion of those qualities, I am afraid, is suppressed.—You'll excuse my freedom, I have been married, ma'am, and am a little in the secret.—It is much more difficult to keep a heart than win one—After the fatal words, “For better for worse,” the general way with wives is, to relax into indolence, and while they are guilty of no infidelity, they think that is enough:—but they are mistaken; there is a great deal wanting—an address, a manner, a desire of pleasing—

Mrs. Love. But when the natural temper—

Mrs. Bell. The natural temper must be forced—Home must be made a place of pleasure to the husband, and the wife must throw infinite variety into her manner. And this, I take to be the whole mystery, the way to keep a man.—But I run on at a strange rate—Well, to be sure, I'm the giddiest creature.—Ma'am, will you now give me leave to inquire, how I came to have this favour?—Who recommended me to your notice?—And pray, who was so kind as to intimate that I was acquainted with Mr. Lovemore?

Mrs. Love. I beg your pardon for all the trouble I have given you, and I assure you, 'tis entirely owing to my being told that his visits were frequent here.

Mrs. Bell. His visits frequent here!—They have imposed upon you, I assure you—and they have told you, perhaps, that I have robbed you of Mr. Lovemore's heart?—Scandal is always buzzing about; but, I assure you, I have not meddled with his heart—

O lud! I hear a rap at the door—I positively won't be at home.

Enter MIGNIONET.

Mig. Did you call, madam?

Mrs. Bell. I am not at home.

Mig. 'Tis Lord Etheridge, ma'am,—he's coming up stairs; the servants told him you were within.

Mrs. Bell. Was ever any thing so cross? Tell him, there is company with me, and he won't come in.—Mignonet run to him.

Mrs. Love. Ma'am, I beg I mayn't hinder you.

Mrs. Bell. Our conversation begins to grow interesting, and I would not have you go for the world.—I won't see my lord.

Mrs. Love. I beg you will—don't let me prevent—I'll step into another room.

Mrs. Bell. Will you be so kind?—There are books in that room, if you will be so obliging as to amuse yourself there, I shall be glad to resume this conversation again.—He shan't stay long.

Mrs. Love. I beg you will be in no hurry—I can wait with pleasure.

Mrs. Bell. This is a lover of mine; and a husband and a lover should be treated in the same manner;—perhaps it will divert you to hear how I manage him. I hear him on the stairs—for Heaven's sake, make haste. Mignonet, show the way.

{*Exeunt Mrs. LOVEMORE and MIGNIONET.*}

Mrs. Bell. Let me see how I look to receive him.—[Runs to her Glass.—

Enter LOVEMORE, with a Star and Ribband, as LORD ETHERIDGE.

Looking in her Glass.] Lord Etheridge! Walk in, my lord.

Love. [Repeats.] *A heav'ly image in the glass appears,*

To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Repairs her smiles—

Mrs. Bell. Repairs her smiles, my lord! I don't like your application of that phrase—Pray, my lord, are my smiles out of repair; like an old house in the country, that wants a tenant?

Love. Nay now, that's wresting the words from their visible intention.—You can't suppose I thought you want repair, whatever may be the case, ma'am, with regard to the want of a tenant?

Mrs. Bell. And so you think I really want a tenant? And perhaps you imagine too, that I am going to put up a bill, [Looking in her Glass.] to signify to all passers by, that here is a mansion to let?—Well, I swear, I don't think it would be a bad scheme.—I have a great mind to do so.

Love. And he who has the preference—

Mrs. Bell. Will be very happy—I know you mean so. But I'll let it to none but a single gentleman, that you may depend upon.

Love. What the devil does she mean by that! She has not got an inkling of the affair, I hope. [Aside.] None else could presume, madam, to—

Mrs. Bell. And then, it must be a lease for life—But nobody will be troubled with it—I shall never get it off my hands.—Do you think I shall, my lord?

Love. Why that question, madam? You know I am devoted to you, even if it were to be bought with life.

Mrs. Bell. Heav'ns! what a dying swain you are! And does your lordship really intend to be guilty of matrimony?—Lord, what a question have I asked?—Well, to be sure, I am a very mad-cap!—My lord, don't you think me a strange mad-cap?

Love. A wildness, like yours, that arises from vivacity and sentiment together, serves only to exalt your beauty, and give new poignancy to every charm.

Mrs. Bell. Well, upon my word, you have said it finely!—But you are in the right, my lord,—I hate your pensive, melancholy beauty, that sits like a well-grown vegetable in a room for an hour together, 'till at last she is animated to the violent exertion of saying yes, or no, and then enters into a matter-of-fact conversation.—“Have you heard the news? Miss Beverly is going to be married to Captain Shoulder-knot. My Lord Mortgage has had another tumble at Arthur's. Sir William Squanderstock has lost his election. They say, short aprons are coming into fashion again.”

Love. O lord! a matter-of-fact conversation is insupportable.

Mrs. Bell. Pray, my lord, have you ever observed the manner of one lady's accosting another at Ranelagh?—She comes up to you with a demure look of insipid serenity,—makes you a solemn salute—“Ma'am, I am overjoyed to meet you,—you look charmingly.—But, dear ma'am, did you hear what happened to us all the other night?—We were going home from the opera, ma'am—you know, my aunt Relypoly—it was her coach—there was she, and Lady Betty Fidget—Your most obedient servant, ma'am— [Courtesying to another, as it were going by.] Lady Betty, you know, is recovered—every body thought it over with her—but Doctor Snakeroot was called in—no, not Doctor Snakeroot, Doctor Bôlus it was—and so he altered the course of medicine—and so my Lady Betty recovered:—Well, there was she and Sir George Bragwell,—a pretty man, Sir George—finest teeth in the world—Your ladyship's most obedient. We expected you last night, but you did not come—he! he!—And so, there was he and the rest of us,—and so, turning the corner of Bond Street, the villain of a coachman—

How do you do, madam?—the villain of a coachman overturned us all;—my aunt Rolypoly, was frightened out of her wits, and Lady Betty has been nervish ever since:—Only think of that,—such accidents in life.—Ma'am, your most obedient—I am proud to see you look so well."

Love. An exact description—the very thing—Ha! ha!

Mrs. Bell. And then, from this conversation they all run to cards,—“Quadrille has murdered wit.”

Love. Ay, and beauty too; for upon these occasions, “the passions in the features are”—I have seen many a beautiful countenance change in a moment into absolute deformity; the little loves and graces, that before sparkled in the eye, bloom’d in the cheek, and smil’d about the mouth, all fly off in an instant, and resign the features which they before adorn’d, to fear, to anger, to grief, and the whole train of fretful passions.

Mrs. Bell. Ay, and the rage we poor women are often betrayed into on these occasions—

Love. Very true, ma’am; and if by chance they do bridle and hold in a little, the struggle they undergo is the most ridiculous sight imaginable.—I have seen an oath quivering upon the pale lip of a reigning toast, for half an hour together, and then at last, when the whole room burst out into one loud universal uproar—“My lord, you flung away the game—No, ma’am, it was you—Sir George, why did not you rough the diamond?—Captain Hazard, why did not you lead through the honour?—Ma’am, it was not the play.—Pardon me, sir—But, ma’am—But, sir—I would not play with you for straws.—Don’t you know what Hoyle says?—If A and B are partners against C and D, and the game nine-all, A and B have won three tricks, and C and D four tricks, C leads his suit, D puts up the king, then returns the suit, A passes, C puts up the queen, B trumps the next?” And so, A and B, and C and D, are banged

about, and all is jargon, confusion, uproar, and wrangling, and nonsense, and noise.—Ha! ha!

Mrs. Bell. Ha! ha! A fine picture of a rout;—but one must play sometimes—we must let our friends pick our pockets sometimes, or they'll drop our acquaintance.—Pray, my lord, do you never play?

Love. Play, ma'am!—I must lie to the end of the chapter—[*Aside.*] play! now and then, out of necessity;—otherwise, I never touch a card.

Mrs. Bell. Oh! very true, you dedicate your time to the muses; a downright rhyming peer.—Do you know, my lord, that I am charmed with your song?

Love. Are you?

Mrs. Bell. I am indeed. I think you'd make a very tolerable Vauxhall poet.

Love. You flatter me, ma'am.

Mrs. Bell. No, as I live and breathe, I don't;—and do you know, that I can sing it already?—Come, you shall hear me,—you shall hear it. [Sings.

SONG.

I.

*Attend all ye fair, and I'll tell ye the art,
To bind every fancy with ease in your chains,
To hold in soft fetters the conjugal heart,
And banish from Hymen his doubts and his pains.*

II.

*When Juno accepted the cestus of love,
At first she was handsome; she charming became;
With skill the soft passions it taught her to move,
To kindle at once, and to keep up the flame.*

III.

*'Tis this gives the eyes all their magic and fire;
The voice melting accents; impasions the kiss;
Confers the sweet smiles, that awaken desire,
And plants round the fair, each incentive to bliss.*

IV.

*Thence flows the gay chat, more than reason that charms ;
The eloquent blush, that can beauty improve ;
The fond sigh, the fond vow, the soft touch that alarms,
The tender disdain, the renewal of love.*

V.

*Ye fair, take the cestus, and practise its art ;
The mind unaccomplish'd, mere features are vain,
Exert your sweet pow'r, you will conquer each heart,
And the loves, joys, and graces, shall walk in your
train.*

Love. My poetry is infinitely obliged to you for the embellishments, your voice and manner confer upon it.

Mrs. Bell. O, fulsome!—I sing horridly, and I look horridly.—[Goes to the Glass.] How do I look, my lord?—But don't tell me—I won't be told.—I see you are studying a compliment, and I hate compliments;—well, what is it? let's hear your compliment—why don't you compliment me?—I won't hear it now.—But pray now, how came you to chuse so grave a subject as connubial happiness?

Love. Close and particular that question. [Aside.]

Mrs. Bell. Well, upon my word, you have drawn your picture so well in this little song, that one would imagine you had a wife at home to sit for it.

Love. Ma'am—[Embarrassed.] the compliment—a—you are but laughing at me—I—I—I—Zounds! I am afraid she begins to suspect me.—[Aside.] A very scanty knowledge of the world will serve: and—and there is no need of one's own experience in these cases:—and when you, madam, are the original, it is no wonder that this copy—

Mrs. Bell. O lard, you are going to plague me again with your odious solicitations, but I won't hear them;—you must be gone.—If I should be weak enough to listen to you, what would become of Sir Brilliant Fashion?

Love. Sir Brilliant Fashion!

Mrs. Bell. Yes, don't you know Sir Brilliant Fashion?

Love. No, ma'am, I don't know the gentleman:—I beg pardon, if he is your acquaintance, but from what I have heard of him, I should not chuse him to be among my intimates.

Enter MIGNONET, in a violent Hurry.

Mig. O, undone! undone!

Mrs. Bell. What's the matter?

Mig. O lud! I am frightened out of my senses!—The poor lady——Where's the hartshorn drops?—

Love. The lady! What lady?

Mig. Never stand asking what lady——she has fainted away, ma'am, all of a sudden.—Give me the drops.——

[*Exit.*]

Mrs. Bell. Let me run to her assistance.—Adieu, my lord,—I shall be at home in the evening.—My lord, you'll excuse me; I expect you in the evening.

[*Exit.*]

Love. I shall wait on you, ma'am.—What a villain am I to carry on this scheme against so much beauty, innocence and merit.—Ay, and to have the impudence to assume this badge of honour, to cover the most unwarrantable purposes!—But no reflection—have her I must, and that quickly too.—If I don't prevail soon, I am undone—she'll find me out:—egad, I'll be with her betimes this evening, and press her with all the vehemence of love.—Women have their soft, unguarded moments, and who knows?—But to take the advantage of the openness and gaiety of her

heart! And then, my friend Sir Brilliant, will it be fair to supplant him?—Pr'ythee, be quiet, my dear conscience; don't you be meddling; don't you interrupt a gentleman in his amusements. Don't you know, my good friend, that love has no respect of persons, knows no laws of friendship;—besides, 'tis all my wife's fault—why don't she strive to make home agreeable?

*For foreign pleasures, foreign joy, I roam,
No thought of peace, or happiness at home.*

[Going.]

[SIR BRILLIANT is heard singing within.]

What the devil is Madam Fortune at now?—Sir Brilliant, by all that's odious!—No place to conceal in!—No escape!—The door is lock'd!—Mignonet, Mignonet! open the door!

Mignonet. [Within.] You can't come in here, sir.

Love. This cursed star, and this ribband, will ruin me.—Let me get off this confounded tell-tale evidence. [Takes off the Ribband in a Hurry.]

Enter SIR BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. My dear madam, I most heartily rejoice—
Ha!—Lovemore!

Love. Your slave, Sir Brilliant, your slave—

[Hiding the Star with his Hat.]

Sir Bril. How is this?—I did not think you had been acquainted here!

Love. I came to look for you,—I thought to have found you here;—and so I have scrap'd an acquaintance with the lady, and made it subservient to your purposes.—I have been giving a great character of you.

Sir Bril. Well, but what's the matter?—What are you fumbling about?

[Pulls the Hat.]

Love. 'Sdeath, have a care!—for Heaven's sake—
[Crams his Handkerchief there.]

Sir Bril. What the devil ails you?

Love. Taken so unaccountably; my old complaint—

Sir Bril. What complaint?

Love. I must have a surgeon,—occasioned by the stroke of a tennis-ball;—my Lord Rackett's unlucky left hand.—Let me pass—there is something forming there—let me pass.—To be caught is the devil.—

[*Aside.*] Don't name my name, you'll ruin all that I said for you, if you do.—Sir Brilliant, your servant—There is certainly something forming. [Exit.]

Sir Bril. Something forming there—I believe there is something forming here!—What can this mean?—I must have this explain'd.—Then Mrs. Lovemore's suspicions are right; I must come at the bottom of it.

Enter MRS. BELLMOUR.

My dear Mrs. Bellmour!—

Mrs. Bell. Heavens! What brings you here?

Sir Bril. I congratulate with myself upon the felicity of meeting you thus at home.

Mrs. Bell. Your visit is unseasonable—you must be gone.

Sir Bril. Madam, I have a thousand things—

Mrs. Bell. Well, well, another time.

Sir Bril. Of the tenderest import.

Mrs. Bell. I can't hear you now;—fly this moment!—I have a lady taken ill in the next room.

Sir Bril. Ay, and you have had a gentleman taken ill here too.

Mrs. Bell. Do you dispute my will and pleasure?—fly this instant. [Turns him out.] So—I'll make sure of the door.

Enter Mrs. LOVEMORE, leaning on MIGNONET.

Mig. This way, madam, here's more air in this room.

Mrs. Bell. How do you find yourself, ma'am? Pray sit down. [She sits.

Mrs. Love. My spirits are too weak to bear up any longer against such a scene of villainy.

Mrs. Bell. Villainy! What villainy?

Mrs. Love. Of the blackest dye!—I see, madam, you are acquainted with my husband.

Mrs. Bell. Acquainted with your husband!

Mrs. Love. A moment's patience;—that gentleman that was here with you, is my husband! [Rises.

Mrs. Bell. Lord Etheridge your husband?

Mrs. Love. Lord Etheridge, as he calls himself, and as you have been made to call him also, is no other than Mr. Lovemore.

Mrs. Bell. And has he then been base enough to assume that title, to ensnare me to my undoing?

Mrs. Love. To see my husband carrying on this dark business,—to see the man I have loved—the man I have esteem'd—the man I am afraid I must still love, though esteem him again I cannot, to be a witness to his complicated wickedness, it was too much for sensibility like mine—I felt the shock too severely, and sunk under it.

Mrs. Bell. I am ready to do the same myself now—I sink into the very ground with amazement. The first time I ever saw him, was at Mrs. Loveit's—she introduced him to me; the appointment was of her own making.

Mrs. Love. You know her character, I suppose, madam?

Mrs. Bell. She's a woman of fashion, and sees a great deal of good company.

Mrs. Love. Very capable of such an action for all that.

Mrs. Bell. Well, I could never have imagined that any woman would be so base as to pass such a cheat upon me.—Step this moment and give orders never to let him within my doors again. [Exit MIGNONET.] I am much obliged to you, madam, for this visit;—to me it is highly fortunate, but I am sorry for your share in't, as the discovery brings you nothing but the conviction of your husband's baseness.

Mrs. Love. I am determined to be no further uneasy about him; nor will I live a day longer under his roof.

Mrs. Bell. Hold! hold! make no violent resolutions.—You'll excuse me—I can't help feeling for you, and I think this incident may be still converted to your advantage.

Mrs. Love. That can never be—I am lost beyond redemption.

Mrs. Bell. Don't decide that too rashly.—Besides, you have heard his sentiments.—Perhaps you are a little to blame yourself. We will talk this matter over coolly—Ma'am, you have saved me, and I must now discharge the obligation.—You shall stay and dine with me.

Mrs. Love. I can't possibly do that—I won't give you so much trouble.

Mrs. Bell. It will be a pleasure, ma'am—you shall stay with me—I will not part with you; and I will lay such a plan as may ensure him yours for ever.—Come, come, my dear madam, don't you still think he has some good qualities to apologize for his vices?

Mrs. Love. I must own, I still hope he has.

Mrs. Bell. Very well then, and he may still make atonement for all;—and, let me tell you, that a man who can make proper atonement for his faults, should not be entirely despised.—Allons—Come, come, a man is worth thinking a little about, before one throws the hideous thing away for ever.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

SIR BASHEUL CONSTANT'S.

Enter LADY CONSTANT, with a Card, and FURNISH.

Lady Con. Is the servant waiting?

Fur. He is, madam.

Lady Con. Very well—I need not write—Give my humble service to Mrs. Lovemore, and I shall certainly wait on her.

Fur. I shall, madam.

[*Going.*]

Lady Con. Has the servant carried back the things to Sir Brilliant Fashion, as I ordered?

Fur. We expect him back every moment, madam.

Lady Con. The insolence of that man, to think he can bribe me with his odious presents!—Very well, go and send my answer to Mrs. Lovemore.—[*Exit FURNISH.*] What can this mean? [Reads.]

Begs the favour of her ladyship's company to cards this evening.— Cards at Mrs. Lovemore's—there's something new in that.— [Reads.] Hopes her ladyship will not refuse, as it is a very particular affair requires Mrs. Lovemore's friends to be present.—

There is some mystery in all this—What can it be?

Enter SIR BASHFUL CONSTANT.

Sir Bash. Here she is—Now let me see whether she will take any notice of the diamond buckles—Your servant, madam.

Lady Con. Your servant, sir.

Sir Bash. You seem out of humour, I think.

Lady Con. And considering that you never give me cause, that's very strange, is it not?

Sir Bash. My Lady Constant, if you did not give me cause—

Lady Con. For Heaven's sake, sir, let us have no more disagreeable altercation—I am tired of your violence of temper; your frequent starts of passion, and unaccountable fancies, which you too often mistake for realities.

Sir Bash. Fancies, madam! When do I take fancies for realities?—Do I only fancy that you are eternally making exorbitant demands upon me for money, for the various articles of your expenses? And when you were for ever teasing me for diamonds, and I know not what, was that a fancy I had taken into my head without foundation?

Lady Con. Pray, sir, let us not dispute—I promise you, never to trouble you on that head again.

Sir Bash. She has received them I see, and is obstinately resolved not to tell me. [Aside.] Madam, I will not render myself ridiculous in the eyes of the world, for your whims.

Lady Con. Nor will I, sir, be ridiculous any longer on account of your caprice.—I have wrote to my Solicitor to attend me here to-morrow morning with the articles of separation; and I presume, sir, that you can have no objection to their being carried into execution.—I have no time now to squander in fri-

volous debates, I must prepare to go out.—Your servant, sir.

[Exit.

Sir Bash. I must unburden myself at last!—Must disclose the secrets of my heart—She has possessed my very soul;—is ever present to my imagination;—mingles with all my thoughts;—inflames my tenderest passions, and raises such a conflict here—I cannot any longer keep this fire pent up—I'll throw myself open to her this very moment—Is any body in the way?

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Where's your mistress?

Side. In her own room, sir.

Sir Bash. Draw that table over this way—A letter will do the business—it shall be so.—Reach me a chair.—You blockhead, why don't you reach a chair?

Side. There, your honour.

Sir Bash. Do you stay while I write a letter—You shall carry it for me. [He sits down to write.

Side. Yes, sir—I hope he has got some intrigue upon his hands—A servant always thrives under a master that has his private amusements.—Love on, say I, if you are so given; it will all bring grist to my mill.

Sir Bash. This will be a strange surprise upon my Lady Constant—Soft, passionate, and tender, so far,—and yet it does not come up to what I feel. It is a hard thing, in excessive love like mine, to speak as delicately as we think, to the person that we adore.

[Writes on.

Side. Let me see if there is any news in the paper of to-day. [Takes a Newspaper out of his Pocket and reads.] What in the name of wonder is all this?—O lord! O lord!—I can't help laughing—Ha! ha!—I never heard of the like before—Ha! ha!

Sir Bash. What does this rascal mean? [Stares at him.] He does not suspect me, does he?

Side. Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Bash. [Stares still at him.] Perhaps he overheard my conversation with Mr. Lovemore—Harkye, sirrah! [Rises.] If ever I find that you dare listen at any door in the house, I'll cut your ears off, I will.

Side. Sir!—

Sir Bash. Confess the truth;—have not you been listening, and overhearing my conversation?

Side. Who, I sir?—Not I, sir; as I hope to live, sir, I would not be guilty of such a thing, sir, for ever so much—I never did the like in my born days.

Sir Bash. What was you laughing at, rascal?

Side. An article, sir, I found in the newspaper, that's all, sir—I'll read it to you, sir— [Reads.]

We hear that a new comedy is now in rehearsal at one of the theatres, and will speedily be perform'd, entitled, The Amorous Husband; or, the Man in Love with his own Wife.

Sir Bash. Sir Brilliant told me truth, I see. [Aside.] —Well, and what do you see to laugh at there, sir?

Side. Lord bless me, sir, I never heard of the like before,—I have served in a great many families, and I never heard of such a thing.

Sir Bash. Lookye ye there now!— [Aside.] Sirrah! let me never hear that you have the trick of listening at any of my doors.

Side. No, sir—to be sure, sir—What has he got in his head?

Sir Bash. Wounds! I shall be laugh'd at by my own servants.—But no more scruples—pass that by; it shall all out— [Sits down.] That fellow has so disconcerted me!—There, I have laid my whole heart open to her—I'll seal it directly.—Here, take this, and bring me an answer—And, do you hear?—

come hither—mind what I say; take care that nobody sees you.

Side. I warrant, sir.

[*Exit SIDEBOARD.*

Sir Bash. I feel as if a load was off my breast—and yet I fear—but I'm embark'd and so I'll wait the event.

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Side. A word or two by way of direction, sir, would not be amiss.

Sir Bash. Blockhead!—Have not I directed it?

[*Takes it back.*

Side. I could never have suspected him of having an intrigue. [Aside.

Sir Bash. This rascal does not know the secret of my heart, and he shall remain so—Lovemore shall open the affair to her—I am glad I have not trusted him—should I direct this, the fellow would find me out—You may go about your business, Sideboard—I don't want you.

Side. Very well, sir—what's he at now?—If he does not let me manage his intrigues for him, I'll give him warning. [*Exit.*

Sir Bash. Ay, Mr. Lovemore shall do it—the explanation will be more natural and easy from him.—this scoundrel is coming again—no, it is not he.

Enter LOVEMORE.

Sir Bash. Ha! Mr. Lovemore!—I am glad to see you!—Mr. Lovemore, you are heartily welcome!

Love. You see me here this second time to-day, Sir Bashful, entirely on the score of friendship.

Sir Bash. I thank you, Mr. Lovemore; heartily thank you!

Love. I broke away from company on purpose to attend you—they would have had me stay the even-

ing,—but I have more pleasure in serving my friends
—Well, how does my lady?

Sir Bash. We don't hit at all, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. Not?

Sir Bash. No, no—not at all—I think she has been
rather worse since you spoke to her.

Love. A good symptom, that. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. She still talks of parting; and has even
sent to her lawyer about it.—Obstinate as a mule,
Mr. Lovemore!—has had the diamond buckles, and
sulky still—not one word about them.

Love. Time will bring things about—

Sir Bash. Po! there is not a moment to be lost.—
She is set upon it, Mr. Lovemore; and when she sets
in, she blows like a trade wind, all one way,—and so,
to prevent extremities, I have e'en thought of ex-
plaining myself to her.

Love. What! acquaint her with your passion?

Sir Bash. Yes, and trust to her honour.—I know I
could not do it myself in person—I should blush,
and look silly, and falter—So I e'en set down to
write her a letter—here it is, Mr. Lovemore, signed
and sealed—but it is not directed—I got into a puz-
zle about that—for my servant, you know, would
wonder at my writing a letter to her.

Love. So he would.

Sir Bash. Yes, yes, he would have smok'd me,—
but you are come most opportune—I'll tell you what,
you shall direct it and send it to her—Nobody will
be a jot the wiser.

Love. Well, I'll take it home with me, and send it
to her to-morrow morning.

Sir Bash. No, no; now, directly now.

Love. I'll step to her then and speak for you—Why
should you send a letter—if it does not take, she has
you in her power—you can't go back—She'll have
it under your hand.

Sir Bash. Why, that's true—that's true—And yet if I can obtain a letter from her, I shall have it under her hand.—It must be so—if you go, she'll send a verbal answer by you, and then deny it afterwards.

Love. But I shall be a witness against her.

Sir Bash. That will never do—I shall this way draw her in to write a letter, and then I shall have her bound down.

Love. Better take a little time to consider of it.

Sir Bash. No, no, I can't defer it a moment; it burns like a fever here—I must have immediate relief; Mr. Lovemore, you must be my friend—Sit you down, and direct it for me—I'll step and send my servant to carry it for you—Sit down, sit down.

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Side. Sir Brilliant Fashion, sir, is below.

Sir Bash. Sir Brilliant Fashion!—Rascal! why did you say I was at home?

Side. I had no orders to the contrary, sir.

Love. 'Sdeath, he must not come up—Step to him, Sir Bashful; amuse him, talk to him; tell him the news, any thing, rather than let him come hither to interrupt us.

Sir Bash. No, no, he shan't come up.

Love. By no means; and be sure you don't let him know that I am here—The fellow follows me every where I go.
[*Aside.*]

Sir Bash. Never fear—He shan't come near you—and in the mean time, be sure you direct the letter.

Love. I will; but you lose time; away; begone!
[*Pushes him out.*] A lucky accident this—I have gain'd time by it—what in the name of wonder has he wrote to her?—I am defeated if this preposterous fellow brings things to an explanation—matters were in a fine train, and he himself levelling the road for me; and now, if this takes, I am blown up into the air at once: some unlucky planet rules to day—First the Widow

Bellmour—and now this will-o'the-wisp—what can he have wrote to her?—Friendship and wafer, by your leave—but will that be delicate? No—but 'twill be convenient. [Opens it.] This letter shall never go—I'll write another myself—a lucky thought!—I absolve my stars—here is every thing ready—[Sits down.]—What shall I say?—Any thing will do—

[Reads and writes.]

Why should I conceal, my dear madam, that your charms have touch'd my heart?—Um—loved you long; adored—Um—Um—flatter—Um—Um—Um—happiest of mankind—Um—Um—Um—sweetest revenge—Um—Um—husband—Um—Um—Um—Um—Um—Secret pleasure of rewarding the tenderness of your sincerest admirer LOVEMORE.
This will do—Let me seal it, and now direct it.

Enter SIR BASHFUL CONSTANT.

Sir Bash. Well, well, have you sent it?

Love. No. Your servant has not been with me yet.

Sir Bash. Sideboard! why don't you wait on the gentleman as I order'd—Sideboard—I have got rid of Sir Brilliant.

Love. Have you?

Sir Bash. Yes, yes, I would not let him come up for the world.

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Sir Bash. Here, sirrah! Mr. Lovemore wants you.

Love. Master Sideboard, you must step to your lady with this letter.

Sir Bash. Charming! Charming! Ha! ha![*Aside.*] You must take it up to her directly.

Side. Take it up, sir; my lady's in the next room.

Sir Bash. Is she? then take it in there then to her—make haste—begone!

[Exit SIDEBOARD.]

Love. No danger in this, she'll know her own interest, and have prudence to conceal every thing. [Aside.

Sir Bash. I hope this will succeed, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. I hope it will.

Sir Bash. I shall for ever be oblig'd to you—and so will my lady too.

Love. I dare believe she won't prove ungrateful.

Sir Bash. Hush! hush!—I should like to see how she receives it—See, the door is conveniently open. [Goes on Tiptoe to the Door.] Yes, yes, I can see her—there she sits. [Peeping.

Love. Methinks, I should like to observe her too.

Sir Bash. Hush—no noise. [Aside.

Love. Now, my dear boy, Cupid, incline her heart. [Aside.

Sir Bash. She has got it! She has got it!—I am frightened out of my wits!

Love. Hold your tongue—She opens it.—My dear Venus, now or never! [Aside.

Sir Bash. She colours.

Love. I like that rising blush—A tender token.

Sir Bash. She turns pale!

Love. The natural working of the passions.

Sir Bash. And now she reddens again—in disorder too—Death and fury, she tears the letter!—I'm undone! [Walks away from the Door.

Love. She has flung it from her with indignation—I'm undone too! [Goes from the Door.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, you see what it's all come to!

Love. I am sorry to see it come to this, indeed.

Sir Bash. Did you ever see such an insolent scorn?

Love. I never was so disappointed in all my life.

Sir Bash. An absurd, ungrateful woman!

Love. Ungrateful indeed!—To make such a return to so kind a letter.

Sir Bash. Yes, to so kind a letter.

Love. So full of the tenderest protestations.

Sir Bash. You say right—the tenderest protestations!

Love. So generous, so unreserved a declaration of love!

Sir Bash. Made with the greatest openness of heart—throwing one's self at her feet.

Love. Very true; throwing one's self at her very feet.

Sir Bash. And then to be spurned, kicked, and treated like a puppy!

Love. Ay, there it stings—to be treated like a puppy!

Sir Bash. I can't bear this!—My dear Mr. Lovemore, do you know in nature a thing so mortifying to the pride of man, as to be rejected and despised by a fine woman?

Love. Oh, 'tis the damn'dest thing in the world—makes a man look so mean in his own eyes.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, I'm heartily obliged to you for taking this affair so much to heart.

Love. I take it more to heart than you are aware of, I assure you.

Sir Bash. You are very kind indeed—This is enough to make one ashamed all the rest of one's life.

[Both speak these broken Sentences in a Kind of Reverie.

Enter SIR BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Sir Bashful, Sir Bashful! I forgot to tell you the highest thing—Hey! what's the matter here?

Love. 'Sdeath! what brings him here again?

Sir Bril. You seem both out of humour. [Aside.

Sir Bash. The blockheads of servants to let him in!

[Aside.

Sir Brit. Upon my soul, but this is very odd!—Perhaps Lovemore is borrowing money of you, Sir Bashful, and you can't agree about the premium?

Sir Bash. Pressing business, Sir Brilliant.

Sir Bril. Po! po!—he's a very honest fellow; let him have the money——By the way, Lovemore, I have a crow to pluck with you.

Love. Well, well, another time.—He haunts me up and down like my evil genius! [Aside.]

Sir Bril. Well, but you both look very grave upon it.—As you will;—you have not the same reason to be in harmony with yourselves that I have——Here, here!—I came back on purpose to tell you—[Takes a Shagreen Case out of his Pocket.] See here, my boys! See what a present has been made me!—A magnificent pair of diamond buckles, by Jupiter!

Love. How!

Sir Bash. A pair of diamond buckles!

Sir Bril. A pair of diamond buckles, sir:—How such a thing should be sent to me, I can't conceive—but so it is—The consequence of having some tolerable phrase, a person, and being attentive to the service of the ladies.

Sir Bash. And this was sent you as a present?

Sir Bril. Ay, as a present.—Do you envy me?

Sir Bash. I can't say but I do——My buckles, Mr. Lovemore, by all that's false in woman.

[Aside to LOVEMORE.]

Love. Ay, he's the happy man, I see. [Aside.]

Sir Bril. Both burning with envy, by Jupiter!

[Aside.]

Sir Bash. But may not this be from some lady, that imagines you sent them to her, and so she chuses to reject your present?

Sir Bril. No, no,—no such thing!—Had I presented the buckles, they would never have been returned.—Ladies don't reject presents, my dear Sir

Bashful, from the man that is agreeable in their eyes,

Sir Bash. So I believe——What a jade it is!

[*Aside.*]

Love. She would not have torn a letter from him.

[*Aside.*]

Sir Bril. No, no, had I sent them to a lady, take my word for it, they would have been very acceptable.

Sir Bash. So I suppose——I make no doubt but she'll give him my three hundred pounds too!

[*Aside.*]

Love. That he should be my rival, and overtop me thus!

[*Aside.*]

Sir Bash. And pray now, Sir Brilliant—I suppose you expect to have this lady?

Sir Bril. This is the forerunner of it, I think.—Ha! ha! Sir Bashful!—Mr. Lovemore, this it is to be in luck!—Ha! ha! ha!

[*Laughs at both.*]

Sir Bash. { Ha! ha!

[*Forcing a Laugh.*]

Love. } { Ha! ha!

Sir Bash. Very well, my Lady Constant!—very well, madam—very well!

[*Aside.*]

Sir Bril. I swear you both are strangely piqued at my success—Sir Bashful, observe how uneasy Lovemore looks.

Love. You wrong me, sir:—I—I—I—I am not uneasy.

Sir Bash. He's a true friend—He's uneasy on my account.

[*Aside.*]

Sir Bril. Upon my soul, but you are uneasy!—and, my dear Sir Bashful, you repine at my success.

Sir Bash. Yes, sir, I do—I own it.

Sir Bril. Well, you're not disposed to be good company—I'll leave you.—Lovemore, where do you spend the evening?

Love. I can't say, sir;—I believe I shall stay here.

Sir Bril. Nay, nay, if you are so snappish—I am glad to hear that, I am engaged to his wife. [Aside.] Is it not a rare present, Sir Bashful? [Pulling him by the Sleeve.] Thou dear pledge of love, let me lay thee close to my heart.

[Exit SIR BRILLIANT, looking at the Case.]

Sir Bash. What think ye now, Lovemore?

Love. All unaccountable to me, sir.

Sir Bash. Unaccountable!—'Tis too plain—my wife's a jade—a prostitute—a courtezan!

Love. I'm glad she has tore my letter however.

[Aside.]

Sir Bash. By all that's false, I'm gulled, cheated, imposed upon, deceived, and dubbed—Ay, here her ladyship comes—And now she shall hear her own.

Love. 'Sdeath! let me fly the approaching storm—Sir Bashful, your humble servant, sir—I wish you a good night. [Going.]

Sir Bash. You must not go—you shan't leave me in this exigence—you shall be a witness of our separation.

Love. No, I can't bear the sight of her after what has pass'd—Good night—[SIR BASHFUL holds him.] Damnation! I must weather it! [Aside.]

Enter LADY CONSTANT.

Lady Con. I am surprised, Mr. Lovemore, that you will offer to stay a moment longer in this house.

Love. How the devil shall I give a turn to this affair? [Aside.]

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore is my friend, madam; and I desire he'll stay here as long as he pleases, madam.

Love. All must come out. [Aside.]

Lady Con. Your friend, Sir Bashful!—And do you authorize him to make sport of me, sir?—I wonder, Mr. Lovemore, you woud think of sending me

such a letter!—Do you presume, sir, upon my having admitted a trifling act of civility from you?—Do you come disguised, sir, under a mask of friendship to undo me?

Love. It's a coming!

[*Aside.*]

Sir Bash. A mask of friendship!—I know Mr. Lovemore too well, and I desired him to send that letter.

Love. Sir Bashful desired me, madam.

Sir Bash. I desired him, madam.

Love. He desired me, madam.

Lady Con. What, to affront me, sir?

Sir Bash. There was not one word of truth in it.

Love. Not one word of truth, madam.

Sir Bash. It was all done to try you, madam; merely to know you a little or so.

Love. Merely to know you! pure innocent mirth.

Lady Con. And am I to be treated thus, sir; to be ever tormented by you?—And could you, Mr. Lovemore, be so unmanly as to make yourself an accomplice in so mean an attempt to ensnare me?

Sir Bash. To ensnare me!—She calls it ensnaring—It is pretty plain from all that has pass'd between us that our tempers are not fit for one another; and I now tell you that I am ready to part as soon as you please. Nay I will part.

Lady Con. That is the only thing we can agree in, sir.

Sir Bash. Had that letter come from another quarter, I know it would have been highly acceptable.

Lady Con. I disdain the imputation?

Sir Bash. I will vent no more reproaches—This is the last of our conversing together—And take this with you, by the way, you are not to believe one word of that letter—And as to any passion, that any body declares for you, there was no such thing—was there, Lovemore?

[*Goes over to him.*]

Love. He states it all very right, madam.

Sir Bash. Let us laugh at her, Lovemore. Ha ! ha ! ha !

Love. Silly devil !—I can't help laughing at him.

[*Aside.*] Ha ! ha ! ha !

Sir Bash. Ha ! ha ! ha !—all a bam, madam !—ha ! ha ! nothing, else in the world !— all to make sport of you. Ha ! ha ! ha !

Lady Con. I cannot bear this usage any longer—Two such brutes !—Is my chair ready there ?—You may depend, sir, this is the last you will see of me in your house. [Exit LADY CONSTANT.

Sir Bash. A bargain, madam, with all my heart !—Ha ! ha ! Lovemore, this was well managed.

Love. Charmingly managed, indeed !—I did not think you had so much spirit in you.

Sir Bash. I have found her out—I know her at last.—But, Mr. Lovemore, never own the letter ; deny it to the last.

Love. You may depend upon me.

Sir Bash. I return you a thousand thanks.—A foolish woman, how she stands in her own light.

Love. Truly, I think she does.—Sir Bashful, I am mighty sorry I could not succeed better in this affair.

Sir Bash. And so am I.

Love. I have done my best, you see—and now I'll take my leave.

Sir Bash. Nay, stay a little longer.

Love. Had your lady proved tractable, I should not care how long I staid—but as things are situated, your humble servant, Sir Bashful.—Well off this bout—well off ! [*Aside.*

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, your servant ; a good night to you.—But harkye, Mr. Lovemore ; if I can serve you with your lady—

Love. I thank you as much as if you did.

Sir Bash. Be sure you deny every thing.—Fare you well.— [Exit LOVEMORE.] Sideboard, see the gentleman out.—He is a true friend indeed ! I should have been undone but for him.—My Lady Constant ! My Lady Constant !—Let me drive her from my thoughts.—Can I do it ?—Rage, fury, love,—think no more of love—I never will own a tittle of that letter.—Odso ! yonder it lies in fragments upon the ground—I'll pick them up this moment—keep them safe in my own custody—And, as to Sir Brilliant, I shall know how to proceed with madam in regard to him—I'll watch them both—if I can but get ocular demonstration of her guilt—If I can but get the means in my power, to prove to the whole world that she is vile enough to cuckold me, I shall be happy.

[Exit.]

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

An Apartment at MR. LOVEMORE'S.

Enter MRS. LOVEMORE, elegantly dressed MUSLIN; following her.

Mus. Why to be sure, ma'am ; it is so for certain, and you are very much in the right of it.

Mrs. Love. I fancy I am : I see the folly of my for-

mer conduct, and I am determined never to let my spirits sink into a melancholy state again.

Mus. Why, that's the very thing, ma'am ; the very thing I have been always preaching up to you. Did not I always say, see company ; Ma'am, take your share of pleasure, and never break your heart for any man. This is what I always said.

Mrs. Love. It's very well, you need not say any more now.

Mus. I always said so. And what did the world say ? Heavens bless her for a sweet woman ! and a plague go with him for an inhuman, barbarous, bloody murdering brute.

Mrs. Love. No more of these liberties, I desire.

Mus. Nay, don't be angry : they did say so indeed. But dear heart, how every body will be overjoy'd, when they find you have pluck'd up a little ! As for me, it gives me new life, to have so much company in the house, and such a racketing at the door with coaches and chairs, enough to hurry a body out of one's wits.—Lard, this is another thing, and you look quite like another thing, ma'am, and that dress quite becomes you,—I suppose, ma'am, you will never wear your negligée again. It is not fit for you, indeed, ma'am.—It might pass very well with some folks, ma'am, but the like of you—

Mrs. Love. Pr'ythee truce with your tongue, and see who is coming up stairs.

Enter MRS. BELLMOUR.

Mrs. Bellmour, I revive at the sight of you. Muslin, do you step down stairs, and do as I have ordered you.

Mus. What the deuce can she be at now ? [Exit.

Mrs. Bell. You see I am punctual to my time.—Well, I admire your dress of all things. It's mighty pretty.

Mrs. Love. I am glad you like it. But, under all

this appearance of gaiety, I have at the bottom but an aching heart.

Mrs. Bell. Be ruled by me, have courage, courage, and I'll answer for the event. Why, really, now you look just as you should do.—Why should you neglect so fine a figure?

Mrs. Love. You are so civil, Mrs. Bellmour!

Mrs. Bell. And so true too—What was beautiful before, is now heightened by the additional ornaments of dress; and if you will but animate and inspire the whole by those graces of the mind, which I am sure you possess, the impression cannot fail of being effectual upon all beholders, and even upon the depraved mind of Mr. Lovemore.—You have not seen him since, have you?

Mrs. Love. No—not a glimpse of him.

Mrs. Bell. If he does but come home time enough, depend upon it my plot will take. Well, and have you got together a good deal of company?

Mrs. Love. Pretty well.

Mrs. Bell. That's right: show him that you will consult your own pleasure.—Is Sir Brilliant of the party?

Mrs. Love. Apropos, as soon as I came home I received a letter from him; He there urges his addresses with great warmth, begs to see me again, and has something particular to tell me—you shall see it.—O lud, I have not it about me!—I left it in my dressing-room I believe; you shall see it by and by: I took your advice, and sent him word he might come. That lure brought him hither immediately: he makes no doubt of his success with me.

Mrs. Bell. Well! two such friends as Sir Brilliant and Mr. Lovemore, I believe, never existed!

Mrs. Love. Their falsehood to each other is unparalleled. I left Sir Brilliant at the whist table: as soon as the rubber is out, he'll certainly quit his company

in pursuit of me. Apropos—my Lady Constant is here.

Mrs. Bell. Is she?

Mrs. Love. She is, and has been making the strangest discovery: Mr. Lovemore has had a design there too!

Mrs. Bell. Lud a mercy! what would have become of the poor man, if he had succeeded with us all.

Mrs. Love. [A Rap at the Door.] As I live and breathe, I believe this is Mr. Lovemore.

Mrs. Bell. If it is, every thing goes on swimmingly within.

Mrs. Love. I hear his voice; it is he! How my heart beats!

Mrs. Bell. Courage, and the day's your own. Where must I run?

Mrs. Love. In there, ma'am. Make haste; I hear his step on the stair-head.

Mrs. Bell. Success attend you. I am gone.

[Exit.]

Mrs. Love. I am frightened out of my senses. What the event may be I fear to think; but I must go through with it.

Enter LOVEMORE.

Mr. Lovemore, you are welcome home.

Love. Mrs. Lovemore, your servant.

[Without looking at her.]

Mrs. Love. It is somewhat rare to see you at home so early.

Love. I said I wou'd come home, did not I? I always like to be as good as my word.—What could she mean by this usage? to make an appointment, and break it thus abruptly!*

[Aside.]

Mrs. Love. He seems to muse upon it. [Aside.]

Love. She does not mean to do so infamous a thing

as to jilt me? [Aside.] O, lord ! I am wonderfully tired. [Yawns, and sinks into an arm Chair.]

Mrs. Love. You an't indisposed, I hope, my dear?

Love. No, my dear; I thank you, I am very well; —a little fatigued only, with jolting over the stones all the way from the city. I drank coffee with the old banker. I have been there ever since I saw you.—Confoundedly tired.—Where's William?

Mrs. Love. Do you want any thing?

Love. Only my slippers. I am not in spirits, I think. [Yawns.]

Mrs. Love. You never are in spirits at home, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. I beg your pardon: I never am any where more cheerful. [Stretching his Arms.] I wish I may die if I an't very happy at home,—very [Yawns.] very happy!

Mrs. Love. I can hear otherwise. I am informed, that Mr. Lovemore is the inspirer of mirth and good humour wherever he goes.

Love. O ! you overrate me; upon my soul you do.

Mrs. Love. I can hear, sir, that no person's company is so acceptable to the ladies; that 'tis your wit that inspirits every thing: that you have your compliment for one, your smile for another, a whisper for a third, and so on, sir: you divide your favours, and are every where, but at home, all whim, vivacity, and spirit.

Love. No ! no ! [Laughing.] how can you talk so ? I swear I can't help laughing at the fancy. All whim, vivacity, and spirit ! How can you banter so?—I divide my favours too!—O, Heavens ! I can't stand this raillery: such a description of me!—I that am rather saturnine, of a serious cast, and inclined to be pensive ! I can't help laughing at the oddity of the conceit.—O lord ! O lord ! [Laughs]

Mrs. Love. Just as you please, sir. I see that I am ever to be treated with indifference.

[Walks across the Stage.

Love. [Rises, and walks the contrary Way.] I can't put this Widow Bellmour out of my head. [Aside.

Mrs. Love. If I had done any thing to provoke this usage, this cold insolent contempt— [Walking.

Love. I wish I had done with that business entirely; but my desires are kindled, and must be satisfied. [Aside.

[They walk for some Time silently by each other.

Mrs. Love. What part of my conduct gives you offence, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. Still harping upon that ungrateful string?—but pr'ythee don't set me a laughing again.—Offence!—nothing gives me offence, child!—you know I am very fond—[Yawns and walks.]—I like you of all things, and think you a most admirable wife;—prudent, managing,—careless of your own person, and very attentive to mine;—not much addicted to pleasure,—grave, retired, and domestic; govern your house, pay the tradesmen's bills, [Yawns.] scold the servants, and love your husband:—upon my soul, a very good wife!—as good a sort of a wife [Yawns.] as a body might wish to have.—Where's William?—I must go to bed.

Mrs. Love. To bed so early! Had not you better join the company?

Love. I shan't go out to-night.

Mrs. Love. But I mean the company in the drawing-room.

Love. What company? [Stares at her.

Mrs. Love. That I invited to a rout.

Love. A rout in my house!—and you dressed out too!—What is all this?

Mrs. Love. You have no objection, I hope.

Love. Objection!—No, I like company, you know,

of all things; I'll go and join them: who are they all?

Mrs. Love. You know them all; and there's your friend, Sir Brilliant there.

Love. Is he there? I'm glad of it. But, pray now, how comes this about?

Mrs. Love. I intend to do it often.

Love. Do you?

Mrs. Love. Ay, and not look tamely on, while you revel luxuriously in a course of pleasure. I shall pursue my own plan of diversion.

Love. Do so, do so, ma'am: the change in your temper will be very pleasing.

Mrs. Love. I shall, indeed, sir. I'm in earnest.

Love. By all means follow your own inclinations.

Mrs. Love. And so I shall, sir, I assure you.

[*Sings.*]

Love. What the devil is the matter with her? And what in the name of wonder does all this mean?

Mrs. Love. Mean, sir!—It means—it means—it means—it means—how can you ask me what it means?—Well, to be sure, the sobriety of that question!—Do you think a woman of spirit can have leisure to tell her meaning, when she is all air, alertness, pleasure, and enjoyment.

Love. She is mad!—Stark mad!

Mrs. Love. You're mistaken, sir,—not mad, but in spirits, that's all. No offence, I hope—Am I too slighty for you?—Perhaps I am: you are of a saturnine disposition, inclined to think a little or so. Well, don't let me interrupt you; don't let me be of any inconvenience. That would be the unpolitest thing; for a married couple to interfere and encroach on each other's pleasures! O hideous! it would be gothic to the last degree. Ha! ha! ha!

Love. [Forcing a Laugh.] Ha! ha!—Ma'am, you—ha! ha! you are perfectly right.

Mrs. Love. Nay, but I don't like that laugh now

I positively don't like it. Can't you laugh out as you were used to do? For my part, I'm determined to do nothing else all the rest of my life.

Love. This is the most astonishing thing! Ma'am, I don't rightly comprehend—

Mrs. Love. Oh lud! oh lud!—with that important face! Well, but come, now; what don't you comprehend?

Love. There is something in this treatment that I don't so well—

Mrs. Love. Oh are you there, sir! How quickly they, who have no sensibility for the peace and happiness of others, can feel for themselves, Mr. Lovemore!—But that's a grave reflection, and I hate reflection.

Love. What has she got into her head? This sudden change, Mrs. Lovemore, let me tell you, is a little alarming, and—

Mrs. Love. Nay, don't be frightened; there is no harm in innocent mirth, I hope? Never look so grave upon it. I assure you, sir, that though, on your part you seem determined to offer constant indignities to your wife, and though the laws of retaliation would in some sort exculpate her, if, when provoked to the utmost, exasperated beyond all enduring, she should in her turn, make him know what it is to receive an injury in the tenderest point—

Love. Madam!

[*Angrily.*

Mrs. Love. Well, well, don't be frightened. I say, I sha'n't retaliate: my own honour will secure you there, you may depend upon it.—You won't come and play a game at cards? Well, do as you like; well, you won't come? No, no, I see you won't—What say you to a bit of supper with us?—Nor that neither?—Follow your inclinations: it is not material where a body eats:—the company expects me; Your servant, Mr. Lovemore, yours, yours.

[*Exit—singing.*

Love. This is a frolic I never saw her in before!—

Laugh all the rest of my life!—laws of retaliation!—an injury in the tenderest point!—the company expects me,—Your servant, my dear!—yours, yours! [Mimicking her.] What the devil is all this? Some of her female friends have been tampering with her. Zounds, I must begin to look a little sharp after the lady. I'll go this moment into the card room, and watch whom she whispers with, whom she ogles with, and every circumstance that can lead to— [Going.]

Enter MUSLIN in a Hurry.

Mus. Madam, madam,—here's your letter; I would not for all the world that my master——

Love. What, is she mad too? What's the matter, woman?

Mus. Nothing, sir,—nothing: I wanted a word with my lady, that's all, sir.

Love. You would not for the world that your master—What was you going to say?—what paper's that!

Mus. Paper, sir!

Love. Paper, sir! Let me see it.

Mus. Lard, sir! how can you ask a body for such a thing? It's a letter to me, sir, a letter from the country—a letter from my sister, sir. She bids me to buy her a *shiver de size* cap, and a sixteenth in the lottery; and tells me of a number she dreamt of that's all, sir: I'll put it up.

Love. Let me look at it. Give it me this moment. [Reads.] *To Mrs. Lovemore!—Brilliant Fashion.*

This is a letter from the country, is it?

Mus. That, sir—that is—no, sir,—no;—that's not sister's letter.—If you will give me that back, sir, I'll show you the right one.

Love. Where did you get this?

Mus. Sir?

Love. Where did you get it?—Tell me truth—

Mus. Dear heart, you fright a body so—in the parlour, sir—I found it there.

Love. Very well!—leave the room.

Mus. The devil fetch it, I was never so out in my politics in all my days. [Exit.]

Love. A pretty epistle truly this seems to be—Let me read it.

[Reads.] *Permit, me dear madam, to throw myself on my knees, for on my knees I must address you, and in that humble posture, to implore your compassion.—Compassion with a vengeance on him—Think you see me now with tender, melting, supplicating eyes, languishing at your feet.—Very well, sir.—Can you find it in your heart to persist in cruelty?—Grant me but access to you once more, and in addition to what I already said this morning I will urge such motives—Urge motives, will ye?—as will suggest to you, that you should no longer hesitate in gratitude to reward him, who still on his knees, here makes a vow to you of eternal constancy and love.*

BRILLIANT FASHION.

So! so! so! your very humble servant, Sir Brilliant Fashion!—This is your friendship for me, is it?—You are mighty kind, indeed, sir,—but I thank you as much, as if you had really done me the favour: and Mrs. Lovemore, I'm your humble servant too. She intends to laugh all the rest of her life! This letter will change her note. Yonder she comes along the gallery, and Sir Brilliant in full chase of her. They come this way. Could I but detect them both now! I'll step aside; and who knows but the devil may tempt them to their undoing. At least I'll try. A polite husband I am: there's the coast clear for you, madam. [Exit.]

Enter MRS. LOVEMORE and SIR BRILLIANT.

Mrs. Love. I tell you, Sir Brilliant, your civility is odious; your compliments fulsome, and your solicitations impertinent, sir.—I must make use of harsh language, sir: you provoke it, and I can't refrain.

Sir Bril. Not retiring to solitude and discontent again, I hope, madam ! Have a care, my dear Mrs. Lovemore, of a relapse.

Mrs. Love. No danger of that, sir : don't be so solicitous about me. Why would you leave the company ! Let me entreat you to return, sir.

Sir Bril. By Heaven, there is more rapture in being one moment *vis-a-vis* with you, than in the company of a whole drawing-room of beauties. Round you are melting pleasures, tender transports, youthful loves, and blooming graces, all unselt, neglected, and despised, by a tasteless, cold, languid, unimpassioned husband, while they might be all so much better employed to the purposes of ecstacy and bliss.

Mrs. Love. I desire, Sir Brilliant, you will desist from this unequalled insolence. I am not to be treated in this manner ;—and I assure you, sir, that were I not afraid of the ill consequences that might follow, I should not hesitate a moment to acquaint Mr. Lovemore with your whole behaviour.

Sir Bril. She won't tell her husband then !—A charming creature, and blessings on her for so convenient a hint. She yields, by all that's wicked; what shall I say to overwhelm her senses in a flood of nonsense ?

[*Aside.*]

Go, my heart's envoys, tender sighs, make haste,—
Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,—
Raptures and paradise—
Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be press'd.

[*Forcing her all this Time.*]

Enter MR. LOVEMORE.

Love. Zoons, this is too much.

Sir Bril. [Kneels down to buckle his Shoe.] This confounded buckle is always plaguing me. My dear boy, Lovemore ! I rejoice to see thee.

[*They stand looking at each other.*]

Love. And have you the confidence to look me in the face?

Sir Bril. I was telling your lady, here, of the most whimsical adventure—

Love. Don't add the meanness of falsehood to the black attempt of invading the happiness of your friend. I did imagine, sir, from the long intercourse that has subsisted between us, that you might have had delicacy enough, feeling enough, honour enough, sir, not to meditate an injury like this.

Sir Bril. Ay, it's all over, I am detected! [Aside.] Mr. Lovemore, if begging your pardon for this rashness will any ways atone—

Love. No, sir, nothing can atone. The provocation you have given me would justify my drawing upon you this instant, did not that lady and this roof protect you.

Sir Bril. But, Mr. Lovemore—

Love. But, sir,—

Sir Bril. I only beg—

Love. Pray, sir,—Sir I insist; I won't hear a word.

Sir Bril. I declare, upon my honour—

Love. Honour! for shame, Sir Brilliant, don't mention the word.

Sir Bril. If begging pardon of that lady—

Love. That lady!—I desire you will never speak to that lady.

Sir Bril. Nay, but pr'ythee, Lovemore—

Love. Po! Po! don't tell me, sir—

[Walks about in Anger.]

Enter SIR BASHFUL.

Sir Bash. Did not I hear loud words among you? I certainly did. What are you quarrelling about?

Love. Read that, Sir Bashful. [Gives him SIR BRILLIANT'S LETTER.] Read that, and judge if I have not cause— [SIR BASHFUL reads to himself.]

Sir Bril. Hear but what I have to say—

Love. No, sir, no ; I have done with you for the present.—As for you, madam, I am satisfied with your conduct—I was indeed a little alarmed, but I have been a witness of your behaviour, and I am above harbouring low suspicions.

Sir Bash. Upon my word, Mr. Lovemore, this is carrying the jest too far.

Love. Sir!—It is the basest action a gentleman can be guilty of!

Sir Bash. Why so I think. Sir Brilliant, [Aside.] here, take this letter, and read it to him ; his own letter to my wife.

Sir Bril. Let me have it. [Takes the Letter.]

Sir Bash. 'Tis indeed, as you say, the worst thing a gentleman can be guilty of.

Love. 'Tis an unparalleled breach of friendship.

Sir Bril. Well, I can't see any thing unparalleled in it : I believe it will not be found to be without a precedent—as for example— [Reads.]

To my LADY CONSTANT——

Why should I conceal, my dear madam, that your charms have touched my heart ?

Love. Zoons ! my letter—

[Aside.]

Sir Bril. [Reading.] I long have loved you, long adored. Could I but flatter myself—

Sir Bash. The basest thing a man can be guilty of Mr. Lovemore !

Love. All a forgery, sir : all a forgery.

[Snatches the Letter.]

Sir Bash. That I deny ; it is the very identical letter my lady threw away with such indignation.— My lady Constant, how have I wronged you !—That was the cause of your taking it so much to heart, Mr. Lovemore, was it ?

Love. A mere contrivance to palliate his guilt. Po ! Po ! I won't stay a moment longer among ye. I'll go into another room to avoid ye all. [Opens the Door.] Hell and destruction !—what fiend is conjured up

here? Zoons! let me make my escape out of the house.

[Runs to the opposite Door.

Mrs. Love. I'll secure this door; you must not go, my dear.

Love. 'Sdeath, madam, let me pass!

Mrs. Love. Nay, you shall stay: I want to introduce an acquaintance of mine to you.

Love. I desire, madam—

Enter MRS. BELLMOUR.

Mrs. Bell. My lord, my Lord Etheridge; I am heartily glad to see your lordship.

[Taking hold of him.

Mrs. Love. Do, my dear, let me introduce this lady to you. [Turning him to her.

Love. Here's the devil and all to do! [Aside.

Mrs. Bell. My lord, this is the most fortunate encounter—

Love. I wish I was fifty miles off. [Aside.

Mrs. Love. Mrs. Bellmour, give me leave to introduce Mr. Lovemore to you. [Turning him to her.

Mrs. Bell. No, my dear ma'am, let me introduce Lord Etheridge to you. [Pulling him.] My lord—

Sir Bril. In the name of wonder, what is all this?

Sir Bash. Wounds! is this another of his intrigues blown up?

Mrs. Love. My dear ma'am, you are mistaken: this is my husband.

Mrs. Bell. Pardon me, ma'am, 'tis my Lord Etheridge.

Mrs. Love. My dear, how can you be so ill-bred in your own house?—Mrs. Bellmour,—this is Mr. Lovemore.

Love. Are you going to toss me in a blanket, madam?—call up the rest of your people, if you are.

Mrs. Bell. Pshaw! pr'ythee now, my lord, leave off your humours. Mrs. Lovemore, this is my Lord Etheridge, a lover of mine, who has made proposals

of marriage to me. Come, come, you shall have a wife; I will take compassion on you.

Love. Damnation! I can't stand it. [Aside.]

Mrs. Bell. Come, cheer up, my lord; what the deuce, your dress is altered! what's become of the star and ribband? And so the gay, the florid, the magnifique Lord Etheridge dwindles down into plain Mr. Lovemore, the married man! Mr. Lovemore, your most obedient, very humble servant, sir.

Love. I can't bear to feel myself in so ridiculous a circumstance. [Aside.]

Sir Bash. He has been passing himself for a lord, has he?

Mrs. Bell. I beg my compliments to your friend Mrs. Loveit: I am much obliged to you both for your very honourable designs. [Courtesying to him.]

Love. I was never so ashamed in all my life!

Sir Bril. So, so, so, all his pains were to hide the star from me. This discovery is a perfect cordial to my dejected spirits.

Mrs. Bell. Mrs. Lovemore, I cannot sufficiently acknowledge the providence that directed you to pay me a visit, and I shall henceforth consider you as my deliverer.

Love. Zoons! It was she that fainted away in the closet, and be damn'd to her jealousy. [Aside.]

Sir Bril. My lord, [Advances to him.] My lord, my Lord Etheridge, as the man says in the play, "Your lordship's right welcome back to Denmark."

Love. Now he comes upon me.—O! I'm in a fine situation! [Aside.]

Sir Bril. My lord, I hope that ugly pain in your lordship's side is abated.

Love. Absurd, and ridiculous. [Aside.]

Sir Bril. There is nothing forming there, I hope, my lord.

Love. Damnation! I can't bear all this—I won't stay to be teased by any of you—I'll go to the com-

pany in the card room. [Goes to the Door in the back Scene.]—Here is another fiend ! I am beset with them.

Enter LADY CONSTANT.

No way for an escape?—

[Attempts both Stage Doors, and is prevented.

Lady Con. I have lost every rubber I play'd for—quite broke ; so, Mr. Lovemore, lend me another hundred.

Love. I would give a hundred you were all in Nova Scotia.

Lady Con. Mrs. Lovemore, let me tell you, you are married to the falsest man ; he has deceived me strangely.

Mrs. Love. I begin to feel for him, and to pity his uneasiness.

Mrs. Bell. Never talk of pity ; let him be probed to the quick.

Sir Bash. The case is pretty plain, I think, now, Sir Brilliant.

Sir Bril. Pretty plain, upon my soul ! Ha ! ha !

Love. I'll turn the tables upon Sir Bashful, for all this—[Takes SIR BASHFUL'S Letter out of his Pocket.]—where is the mighty harm now in this letter ?

Sir Bash. Where's the harm ?—Ha ! ha ! ha !

Love. [Reads.] *I cannot, my dearest life, any longer behold*—

Sir Bash. Shame and confusion ! I am undone.

[Aside.]

Love. Hear this, Sir Bashful—I cannot, my dearest life, any longer behold the manifold vexations, of which, through a false prejudice, I am myself the occasion.

Sir Bash. 'Sdeath ! I'll bear no more of it.

[Snatches at the Letter.]

Love. No, sir ; I resign it here, where it was directed.

Lady Con. For Heaven's sake let us see—it is his hand, sure enough.

Love. Yes, madam, and those are his sentiments.

Sir Bash. I can't look any body in the face.

All. Ha! ha! —

Sir Brit. So, so, so! he has been in love with his wife all this time, has he! Sir Bashful, will you go and see the new comedy with me? Lovemore, pray now don't you think it a base thing to invade the happiness of a friend? or to do him a clandestine wrong? or to injure him with the woman he loves?

Love. To cut the matter short with you, sir, we are both villains.

Sir Brit. Villains!

Love. Ay, both! we are pretty fellows indeed!

Mrs. Bell. I am glad to find you are awakened to a sense of your error.

Love. I am, madam, and am frank enough to own it. I am above attempting to disguise my feelings, when I am conscious they are on the side of truth and honour. With sincere remorse I ask your pardon.— I should ask pardon of my Lady Constant too, but the truth is, Sir Bashful threw the whole affair in my way; and, when a husband will be ashamed of loving a valuable woman, he must not be surprised, if other people take her case into consideration, and love her for him.

Sir Brit. Why, faith, that does in some sort apologize for him.

Sir Bash. Sir Bashful! Sir Bashful! thou art ruined!

{*Aside.*

Mrs. Bell. Well, sir, upon certain terms, I don't know but I may sign and seal your pardon.

Love. Terms! — what terms?

Mrs. Bell. That you make due expiation of your guilt to that lady. [Pointing to Mrs. LOVEMORE.

Love. That lady, ma'am! — That lady has no reason to complain.

Mrs. Love. No reason to complain, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. No, madam, none; for whatever may have been my imprudences, they have had their scourge in your conduct.

Mrs. Love. In my conduct, sir!

Love. In your conduct:—I here declare before this company, and I am above palliating the matter; I here declare, that no man in England could be better inclined to domestic happiness, if you, madam, on your part, had been willing to make home agreeable.

Mrs. Love. There, I confess, he touches me.

[*Aside.*]

Love. You could take pains enough before marriage; you could put forth all your charms; practise all your arts; for ever changing; running an eternal round of variety, to win my affections: but when you had won them, you did not think them worth your keeping; never dressed, pensive, silent, melancholy; and the only entertainment in my house was the dear pleasure of a dull conjugal tete-a-tete; and all this insipidity, because you think the sole merit of a wife consists in her virtue: a fine way of amusing a husband, truly!

Sir Bril. Upon my soul, and so it is— [Laughing.]

Mrs. Love. Sir, I must own there is too much truth in what you say. This lady has opened my eyes, and convinced me there was a mistake in my former conduct.

Love. Come, come, you need say no more. I forgive you; I forgive.

Mrs. Love. Forgive! I like that air of confidence, when you know, that, on my side, it is, at worst, an error in judgment; whereas, on yours—

Mrs. Bell. Po! po! never stand disputing: you know each other's faults and virtues: you have nothing to do but to mend the former, and enjoy the

latter. There, there, kiss and be friends. There, Mrs. Lovemore, take your reclaimed libertine to your arms.

Love. 'Tis in your power, madam, to make a reclaimed libertine of me indeed.

Mrs. Love. From this moment it shall be our mutual study to please each other.

Love. A match with all my heart, I shall hereafter be ashamed only of my follies, but never shall be ashamed of owning, that I sincerely love you.

Sir Bash. Shan't you be ashamed?

Love. Never, sir.

Sir Bash. And will you keep me in countenance?

Love. I will.

Sir Bash. Give me your hand. I now forgive you all, from the bottom of my heart. My Lady Constant, I own the letter, I own the sentiments of it; [Embraces her.] and from this moment I take you to my heart.—Lovemore, zookers! you have made a man of me!

Sir Bril. And now, Mr. Lovemore, may I presume to hope for pardon at that lady's hands?

[*Points to Mrs. LOVEMORE.*]

Love. My dear confederate in vice, your pardon is granted. Two sad dogs we have been. But come, give us your hand: we have used each other damnably—for the future we will endeavour to make each other amends.

Sir Bril. And so we will.

Love. And now I heartily congratulate the whole company that this business has had so happy a tendency to convince each of us of our folly.

Mrs. Bell. Pray, sir, don't draw me into a share of your folly.

Love. Come, come, my dear ma'am, you are not without your share of it. This will teach you, for the future, to be content with one lover at a time, without listening to a fellow, you know nothing of, because he assumes a title, and reports well of himself.

Mrs. Bell. The reproof is just, I grant it.

Love. Come, let us join the company cheerfully, keep our own secrets, and not make ourselves the town talk.

Sir Bash. Ay, ay, let us keep the secret.

Love. What, returning to your fears again?

Sir Bash. I have done.

Love. Though, faith, if this business were known in the world, it might prove a very useful lesson: the men would see how their passions may carry them into the danger of wounding the bosom of a friend: the ladies would learn, that, after the marriage rites, they should not suffer their powers of pleasing to languish away, but should still remember to sacrifice to the Graces.

To win a man, when all your pains succeed,
THE WAY TO KEEP HIM is a task indeed.

[*Exeunt.*

THE END.

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