

EVERY ONE HAS HIS FAULT;

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS;

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MANAGERS

FROM THE PROMPT BOOK.

WITH REMARKS

BY THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

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REMARKS.

There is at present an opinion prevailing, in regard to dramatic works, which, if just, is wholly contradictory to every proof of *cause and effect*, which has been applied to the rise and fall of other arts, and sciences.

It is said, that modern dramas are the worst that ever appeared on the English stage—yet it is well known, that the English theatres never flourished as they do at present.

When it is inquired, why painting, poetry, and sculpture, decline in England? “Want of encouragement,” is the sure reply—but this reply cannot be given to the question, “Why dramatic literature fails?” for never was there such high remuneration conferred upon every person, and every work, belonging to the drama.

A new play, which, from a reputed wit of former times, would not, with success, bring him a hundred pounds, a manager will now purchase, from a reputed blockhead, at the price of near a thousand; and sustain all risk whether it be condemned or not.

Great must be the attraction of modern plays, to repay such speculation.

It follows, then, if the stage be really sunk so low as it is said to be, that patronage and reward have ruined, instead of having advanced, genius. Or, is it not more likely, that public favour has incited the envious to rail; or, at best, raised up minute inquirers into the excellence of that amusement, which charms a whole nation; and criticism sees faults, as fear sees ghosts—whenever they are looked for.

It is a consolation to the dramatist of the present age, that, while his plays are more attractive than ever those of former writers were, those authors had their contemporary critics as well as he; though less acute and less severe, indeed, than the present race. As a testimony—they often had not satire sharp enough to avert that bitterest punishment to an ambitious author—neglect.

Of this play, “Every One has his Fault,” nothing, in modesty, can be said, beyond mere matter of fact. It has been productive both to the manager and the writer, having, on its first appearance, run, in the theatrical term, near thirty nights; during which, some of the audience were heard to laugh, and some were seen to weep—it may likewise with truth be added, that, whatever critics may please to say against the production, they cannot think more humbly of its worth, than

THE AUTHOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORD NORLAND	<i>Mr. Farren.</i>
SIR ROBERT RAMBLE	<i>Mr. Lewis.</i>
MR. SOLUS	<i>Mr. Quick.</i>
MR. HARMONY	<i>Mr. Munden.</i>
MR. PLACID	<i>Mr. Fawcett.</i>
MR. IRWIN	<i>Mr. Pope.</i>
HAMMOND	<i>Mr. Powell.</i>
PORTER	<i>Mr. Thompson.</i>
EDWARD	<i>Miss Grist.</i>

LADY ELEANOR IRWIN	<i>Mrs. Pope.</i>
MRS. PLACID	<i>Mrs. Mattocks.</i>
MISS SPINSTER	<i>Mrs. Webb.</i>
MISS WOOBURN	<i>Mrs. Esten.</i>

SERVANTS, &c.

SCENE—London.

EVERY ONE HAS HIS FAULT.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

An Apartment at Mr. PLACID'S.

Enter Mr. PLACID and Mr. SOLUS.

P_{LAC}. You are to blame.

SOL. I say the same by you.

P_{LAC}. And yet your singularity pleases me; for you are the first elderly bachelor I ever knew, who did not hug himself in the reflection, that he was not in the trammels of wedlock.

SOL. No; I am only the first elderly bachelor who has truth and courage enough, to confess his dissatisfaction.

P_{LAC}. And you really wish you were married?

SOL. I do. I wish still more, that I had been married thirty years ago. Oh! I wish that a wife and half a score children would now start up around me, and bring along with them all that affection, which we should have had for each other by being earlier acquainted. But as it is, in my present state, there is not a person in the world I care a straw for;—and the world is pretty even with me, for I don't believe there is a creature in it who cares a straw for me.

P_{LAC}. Pshaw! You have in your time been a man of gallantry; and, consequently, must have made many attachments.

SOL. Yes, such as men of gallantry usually make. I have been attached to women, who have purloined my fortune, and to men, who have partaken of the theft: I have been in as much fear of my mistress, as you are of your wife.

P_{LAC}. Is that possible?

SOL. Yes; and without having one of those tender, delicate, ties of a husband, an excuse for my apprehension.—I have maintained children——

P_{LAC}. Then why do you complain for the want of a family?

SOL. I did not say, I ever had any children; I said, I had maintained them; but I never believed they were mine; for I could have no dependence upon the principles of their mother—and never did I take one of those tender infants in my arms, that the forehead of my valet, the squint eye of my apothecary, or the double chin of my chaplain, did not stare me in the face, and damp all the fine feelings of the parent, which I had just called up.

P_{LAC}. But those are accidents, which may occur in the marriage state.

SOL. In that case, a man is pitied—in mine, he is only laughed at.

P_{LAC}. I wish to heaven I could exchange the pity which my friends bestow on me, for the merriment which your ill fate excites.

SOL. You want but courage to be envied.

P_{LAC}. Does any one doubt my courage?

SOL. No; if a prince were to offend you, you would challenge him——

P_{LAC}. But if my wife offend me, I am obliged to make an apology.—Was not that her voice? I hope she has not overheard our conversation.

SOL. If she have, she'll be in an ill humour.

P_{LAC}. That she will be, whether she have heard it or not.

SOL. Well, good day. I don't like to be driven from my fixed plan of wedlock; and, therefore, I won't be a spectator of your mutual discontent.

[*Going*.

P_{LAC}. But before you go, Mr. Solus, permit me to remind you of a certain concern, that, I think, would afford you much more delight, than all you can, at this time of life, propose to yourself in marriage. Make happy, by your beneficence, a near relation, whom the truest affection has drawn into that state, but who is denied the blessing of competency, to make the state supportable.

SOL. You mean my nephew, Irwin? But do not you acknowledge he has a wife and children? Did not he marry the woman he loved, and has he not, at this moment, a large family, by whom he is beloved? And is he not, therefore, with all his poverty, much happier than I am? He has often told me, when I have reproached him with his indiscreet marriage, “that in his wife he possessed kingdoms!” Do you suppose I will give any part of my fortune to a man who enjoys such extensive domains? No:—let him preserve his territories, and I will keep my little estate for my own use.

[*Exit*.

P_{LAC}. John! John!

Enter SERVANT.

Has your mistress been inquiring for me?

JOHN. Yes, sir;—My lady asked, just now, if I knew who was with you?

P_{LAC}. Did she seem angry?

JOHN. No, sir;—pretty well.

P_{LAC}. You scoundrel, what do you mean by “pretty well?”

[*In Anger.*]

JOHN. Much as usual, sir.

P_{LAC}. And do you call that “pretty well?” You scoundrel, I have a great mind

Enter M_{RS}. P_{LACID}, speaking very loud.

M_{RS}. P. What is the matter, Mr. Placid? What is all this noise about? You know I hate a noise. What is the matter?

P_{LAC}. My dear, I was only finding fault with that blockhead.

M_{RS}. P. Pray, Mr. Placid, do not find fault with any body in this house. But I have something which I must take *you* very severely to task about, sir.

P_{LAC}. No, my dear, not just now, pray.

M_{RS}. P. Why not now?

P_{LAC}. [*Looking at his Watch.*] Because dinner will be ready in a very few minutes. I am very hungry, and it will be cruel of you to spoil my appetite. John, is the dinner on table?

M_{RS}. P. No, John, don't let it be served yet—Mr. Placid, you shall first hear what I have to say.

[*Sitting down.—Exit SERVANT.*]

P_{LAC}. But then I know I shall not be able to eat a morsel.

M_{RS}. P. Sit down. [*P_{LACID} sits.*]—I believe, Mr. Placid, you are going to do a very silly thing. I am afraid you are going to lend some money?

P_{LAC}. Well, my dear, and suppose I am?

M_{RS}. P. Then, I don't approve of people lending their money.

P_{LAC}. But, my dear, I have known you approve of borrowing money: and, once in our lives, what should we have done, if every body had refused to lend.

MRS. P. That is nothing to the purpose.—And, now, I desire you will hear what I say, without speaking a word yourself.

P_{LAC.} Well, my dear.

MRS. P. Now, mind you don't speak, till I have done.—Our old acquaintance, Captain Irwin, and Lady Eleanor, his wife (with whom we lived upon very intimate terms, to be sure, while we were in America), are returned to London; and, I find, you have visited them very frequently.

P_{LAC.} Not above two or three times, upon my word; for it hurts me to see them in distress, and I forbear to go.

MRS. P. There! you own they are in distress; I expected as much. Now, own to me that they have asked you to lend them money.

P_{LAC.} I do own it—I do own it. Now, are you satisfied?

MRS. P. No: for I have no doubt but you have promised they shall have it.

P_{LAC.} No, upon my word I have not promised.

MRS. P. Then promise me they shall not.

P_{LAC.} Nay, my dear, you have no idea of their unhappy situation.

MRS. P. Yes, I have; and 'tis that which makes me suspicious.

P_{LAC.} His regiment is now broken; all her jewels, and little bawbles, are disposed of; and he is in such dread of his old creditors, that, in the lodging they have taken, he passes by the name of Middleton—They have three more children, my dear, than when we left them in New York; and they have, in vain, sent repeated supplications, both to his uncle, and her father, for the smallest bounty.

MRS. P. And is not her father, my Lord Norland, a remarkable wise man, and a good man? and ought you to do for them, what he has refused?

P_{LAC.} They have offended him, but they have never offended me.

MRS. P. I think, 'tis an offence, to ask a friend for money, when there is no certainty of returning it.

P_{LAC.} By no means: for, if there were a certainty, even an enemy might lend.

MRS. P. But I insist, Mr. Placid, that they shall not find a friend in you upon this occasion.—What do you say, sir?

P_{LAC.} [*After a Struggle.*] No, my dear, they shall not.

MRS. P. Positively shall not?

P_{LAC.} Positively shall not—since they have found an enemy in you.

Enter SERVANT.

SERV. Dinner is on table.

P_{LAC}. Ah! I am not hungry now.

M_{RS}. P. What do you mean by that, Mr. Placid? I insist on your being hungry.

P_{LAC}. Oh, yes! I have a very excellent appetite. I shall eat prodigiously.

M_{RS}. P. You had better.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment at Mr. HARMONY'S.

Enter Mr. HARMONY, *followed by* Miss SPINSTER.

M_{ISS} S. Cousin, cousin Harmony, I will not forgive you, for thus continually speaking in the behalf of every servant whom you find me offended with. Your philanthropy becomes insupportable; and, instead of being a virtue, degenerates into a vice.

H_{AR}. Dear madam, do not upbraid me for a constitutional fault.

M_{ISS} S. Very true; you had it from your infancy. I have heard your mother say, you were always foolishly tender hearted, and never showed one of those discriminating passions of envy, hatred, or revenge, to which all her other children were liable.

H_{AR}. No: since I can remember, I have felt the most unbounded affection for all my fellow creatures. I even protest to you, dear madam, that, as I walk along the streets of this large metropolis, so warm is my heart towards every person who passes me, that I long to say, "How do you do?" and, "I am glad to see you," to them all. Some men, I should like even to stop, and shake hands with;—and some women, I should like even to stop, and kiss.

M_{ISS} S. How can you be so ridiculous!

H_{AR}. Nay, 'tis truth: and I sincerely lament, that human beings should be such strangers to one another as we are! We live in the same street, without knowing one another's necessities; and oftentimes meet and part from each other at church, at coffeehouses, playhouses, and all public places,—without ever speaking a single word, or nodding "Good b'ye!" though 'tis a hundred chances to ten we never see one another again.

MISS S. Let me tell you, kinsman, all this pretended philanthropy renders you ridiculous. There is not a fraud, a theft, or hardly any vice committed, that you do not take the criminal's part, shake your head, and cry, "Provisions are so scarce!" And no longer ago than last Lord Mayor's Day, when you were told that Mr. Alderman Ravenous was ill with an indigestion, you endeavoured to soften the matter, by exclaiming, "Provisions are so scarce!"—But, above all, I condemn that false humanity, which induces you to say many things in conversation, which deserve to stigmatize you with the character of deceit.

HAR. This is a weakness, I confess. But though my honour sometimes reproaches me with it, my conscience never does: for it is by this very failing that I have frequently made the bitterest enemies friends—Just by saying a few harmless sentences, which, though a species of falsehood and deceit, yet, being soothing and acceptable to the person offended, I have immediately inspired him with lenity and forgiveness; and then, by only repeating the selfsame sentences to his opponent, I have known hearts cold and closed to each other, warmed and expanded, as every human creature's ought to be.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. Mr. Solus.

[Exit SERVANT.]

MISS S. I cannot think, Mr. Harmony, why you keep company with that old bachelor; he is a man, of all others on earth, I dislike; and so I am obliged to quit the room, though I have a thousand things more to say.

[Exit angrily.]

Enter SOLUS.

HAR. Mr. Solus, how do you do?

SOL. I am very lonely at home; will you come and dine with me?

HAR. Now you are here, you had better stay with me: we have no company; only my cousin Miss Spinster and myself.

SOL. No, I must go home: do come to my house.

HAR. Nay, pray stay: what objection can you have?

SOL. Why, to tell you the truth, your relation, Miss Spinster, is no great favourite of mine; and I don't like to dine with you, because I don't like her company.

HAR. That is, to me, surprising!

SOL. Why, old bachelors and old maids never agree: we are too much alike in our

habits: we know our own hearts so well, we are apt to discover every foible we would wish to forget, in the symptoms displayed by the other. Miss Spinster is peevish, fretful, and tiresome, and I am always in a fidget when I am in her company.

HAR. How different are her sentiments of you! for one of her greatest joys is to be in your company. [*SOLUS starts and smiles.*] Poor woman! she has, to be sure, an uneven temper—

SOL. No, perhaps I am mistaken.

HAR. But I will assure you, I never see her in half such good humour as when you are here: for I believe you are the greatest favourite she has.

SOL. I am very much obliged to her, and I certainly am mistaken about her temper—Some people, if they look ever so cross, are goodnatured in the main; and I dare say she is so. Besides, she never has had a husband to sooth and soften her disposition; and there should be some allowance made for that.

HAR. Will you dine with us?

SOL. I don't care if I do. Yes, I think I will. I must however step home first:—but I'll be back in a quarter of an hour.—My compliments to Miss Spinster, if you should see her before I return.

[*Exit.*

Enter SERVANT.

SERV. My lady begs to know, sir, if you have invited Mr. Solus to dine? because if you have, she shall go out.

[*Exit SERVANT.*

Enter MISS SPINSTER.

HAR. Yes, madam, I could not help inviting him; for, poor man, his own house is in such a state for want of proper management, he cannot give a comfortable dinner himself.

MISS S. And so he must spoil the comfort of mine.

HAR. Poor man! poor man! after all the praise he has been lavishing upon you!

MISS S. What praises?

HAR. I won't tell you: for you won't believe them.

MISS S. Yes, I shall.—Oh no—now I recollect, this is some of your invention.

HAR. Nay, I told him it was *his* invention; for he declared you looked better last night, than any other lady at the Opera.

MISS S. Well, this sounds like truth:—and, depend upon it, though I never liked the manners of Mr. Solus much, yet—

HAR. Nay, Solus has his faults.

MISS S. So we have all.

HAR. And will you leave him and me to dine by ourselves?

MISS S. Oh no, I cannot be guilty of such ill manners, though I talked of it. Besides, poor Mr. Solus does not come so often, and it would be wrong not to show him all the civility we can. For my part, I have no dislike to the man; and, if taking a bit of dinner with us now and then can oblige either you or him, I should be to blame to make any objection. Come, let us go into the drawing-room to receive him.

HAR. Ay! this is right: this is as it should be.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

A Room at the Lodgings of MR. IRWIN.

MR. IRWIN and LADY ELEANOR IRWIN discovered.

LADY E. My dear husband, my dear Irwin, I cannot bear to see you thus melancholy. Is this the joy of returning to our native country, after a nine years' banishment?

IRW. Yes: For I could bear my misfortunes, my wretched poverty, with patience, in a land where our sorrows were shared by those about us; but here, in London, where plenty and ease smile upon every face; where, by your birth you claim distinction, and I by services;—here to be in want,—to be obliged to take another name, through shame of our own,—to tremble at the voice of every stranger, for fear he should be a creditor,—to meet each old acquaintance with an averted eye, because we would not feel the pang of being shunned. To have no reward for all this, even in a comfortable home; but in this our habitation, to see our children looking up to me for that support I have not in my power to give—Can I,—can I love them and you, and not be miserable?

LADY E. Yet I am not so. And I am sure you will not doubt my love to you or them.

IRW. I met my uncle this morning, and was mean enough to repeat my request to

him:—he burst into a fit of laughter, and told me my distresses were the result of my ambition, in marrying the daughter of a nobleman, who himself was too ambitious ever to pardon us.

LADY E. Tell me no more of what he said.

IRW. This was a day of trials;—I saw your father too.

LADY E. My father! Lord Norland! Oh Heavens!

IRW. He passed me in his carriage.

LADY E. I envy you the blessing of seeing him! For, oh!—Excuse my tears—he is my father still.—How did he look?

IRW. As well as he did at the time I used to watch him from his house, to steal to you.—But I am sorry to acquaint you, that, to guard himself against all returning love for you, he has, I am informed, adopted a young lad, on whom he bestows every mark of that paternal affection, of which you lament the loss.

LADY E. May the young man deserve his tenderness better than I have done—May he never disobey him—May *he* be a comfort, and cherish his benefactor's declining years—And when his youthful passions teach him to love, may they not, like mine, teach him disobedience!

Enter a SERVANT, with a Letter.

What is that letter?

SERV. It comes from Mr. Placid, the servant, who brought it, said, and requires no answer.

[*Exit.*]

IRW. It's strange how I tremble at every letter I see, as if I dreaded the contents. How poverty has unmanned me! [*Aside.*] I must tell you, my dear, that finding myself left this morning without a guinea, I wrote to Mr. Placid, to borrow a small sum: This is his answer: [*Reading the Superscription.*] *To Mr. Middleton.*—That's right: he remembers the caution I gave him. I had forgot whether I had done so, for my memory is not so good as it was. I did not even now recollect this hand, though it is one I am so well acquainted with, and ought to give me joy rather than sorrow. [*Opens the Letter hastily, reads, and lets it drop.*] Now I have not a friend on earth.

LADY E. Yes, you have me. You forget me.

IRW. [*In a Transport of Grief.*] I would forget you—you—and all your children.

LADY E. I would not lose the remembrance of you or of them, for all my father's

fortune.

I_{RW}. What am I to do? I must leave you! I must go, I know not whither! I cannot stay to see you perish.

[*Takes his Hat, and is going.*]

LADY E. [*Holding him.*] Where would you go? 'tis evening—'tis dark—Whither would you go at this time?

I_{RW}. [*Distractedly.*] I must consider what's to be done—and in this room my thoughts seem too confined to reflect.

LADY E. And are London streets calculated for reflection?

I_{RW}. No; for action. To hurry the faint thought to resolution.

LADY E. You are not well—Your health has been lately impaired.—Your temper has undergone a change too;—I tremble lest any accident—

I_{RW}. What accident?

[*Wildly.*]

LADY E. I know your provocations from an ungrateful world: But despise it: as that despises you.

I_{RW}. But for your sake, I could.

LADY E. Then witness, Heaven, I am happy!—Though bred in all the delicacy, the luxury of wealth and splendour; yet I have never murmured at the change of fortune, while that change has made me wife to you, and mother of your children.

I_{RW}. We will be happy—if possible. But give me this evening to consider what plan to fix upon.—There is no time to lose: we are without friends—without money, —without credit.—Farewell for an hour.—I will see Mr. Placid, if I can; and though he have not the money to lend, he may perhaps, give me some advice.

LADY E. Suppose I call on her?—Women are sometimes more considerate than men, and—

I_{RW}. Do you for the best, and so will I.—Heavens bless you!

[*Exeunt separately.*]

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

A Coffee or Club Room at a Tavern.

Enter SIR ROBERT RAMBLE—MR. SOLUS *and* MR. PLACID *at the opposite Side.*

SOL. Sir Robert Ramble, how do you do?

SIR R. My dear Mr. Solus, I am glad to see you. I have been dining by myself, and now come into this public room, to meet with some good company.

SOL. Ay, Sir Robert, you are now reduced to the same necessity which I frequently am—I frequently am obliged to dine at taverns and coffeehouses, for want of company at home.

SIR R. I protest I am never happier than in a house like this, where a man may meet his friend without the inconvenience of form, either as a host or a visitor.

SOL. Sir Robert, give me leave to introduce to you Mr. Placid, he has been many years abroad; but I believe he now means to remain in his own country for the rest of his life. This, Mr. Placid, is Sir Robert Ramble.

SIR R. [*To* MR. PLACID.] Sir, I shall be happy in your acquaintance, and I assure you, if you will do me the honour to meet me now and then at this house, you will find every thing very pleasant. I verily believe that since I lost my wife, which is now about five months ago, I verily believe I have dined here three days out of the seven.

PLAC. Have you lost your wife, sir? And so lately?

SIR R. [*With great Indifference.*] Yes, sir; about five months ago—Is it not, Mr. Solus? You keep account of such things better than I do.

SOL. Oh! ask me no questions about your wife, Sir Robert; if she had been mine, I would have had her to this moment.

PLAC. What, wrested her from the gripe of death?

SIR R. No, sir; only from the gripe of the Scotch lawyers.

SOL. More shame for you. Shame to wish to be divorced from a virtuous wife.

PLAC. Was that the case? Divorced from a virtuous wife! I never heard of such a circumstance before. Pray, Sir Robert [*Very anxiously.*] will you indulge me, by letting me know in what manner you were able to bring about so great an event?

SIR R. It may appear strange to you, sir; but my wife and I did not live happy

together.

P_{LAC}. Not at all strange, sir: I can conceive—I can conceive very well.

SOL. Yes, he can conceive that part to perfection.

S_{IR} R. And so, I was determined on a divorce.

P_{LAC}. But then her character could not be unimpeached.

S_{IR} R. Yes, it was, sir. You must know, we were married in Scotland, and by the laws there, a wife can divorce her husband for breach of fidelity; and so, though my wife's character was unimpeached, mine was not—and she divorced me.

P_{LAC}. Is this the law in Scotland?

SOL. It is. Blessed, blessed, country! that will bind young people together before the years of discretion, and, as soon as they have discretion to repent, will unbind them again!

P_{LAC}. I wish I had been married in Scotland.

SOL. But, Sir Robert, with all this boasting, you must own that your divorce has greatly diminished your fortune.

S_{IR} R [*Taking SOLUS aside.*] Mr. Solus, you have frequently hinted at my fortune being impaired; but I do not approve of such notions being received abroad.

SOL. I beg your pardon: but every body knows that you have played very deep lately, and have been a great loser: and every body knows——

S_{IR} R. No, sir, every body does not know it, for I contradict the report wherever I go. A man of fashion does not like to be reckoned poor, no more than he likes to be reckoned unhappy. We none of us endeavour to be happy, sir, but merely to be thought so; and for my part, I had rather be in a state of misery, and envied for my supposed happiness, than in a state of happiness, and pitied for my supposed misery.

SOL. But, consider, these misfortunes, which I have just hinted at, are not of any serious nature, only such as a few years economy——

S_{IR} R. But, were my wife and her guardian to become acquainted with these little misfortunes, they would triumph in my embarrassments.

SOL. Lady Ramble triumph! [*They join* MR. PLACID.] She, who was so firmly attached to you, that I believe nothing but a compliance with your repeated request to be separated, caused her to take the step she did.

S_{IR} R. Yes, I believe she did it to oblige me, and I am very much obliged to her.

SOL. As good a woman, Mr. Placid——

S_{IR} R. Very good—but very ugly.

SOL. She is beautiful.

SIR R. [*To SOLUS.*] I tell you, sir, she is hideous. And then she was grown so insufferably peevish.

SOL. I never saw her out of temper.

SIR R. Mr. Solus, it is very uncivil of you to praise her before my face. Lady Ramble, at the time I parted with her, had every possible fault both of mind and person, and so I made love to other women in her presence; told her bluntly, that I was tired of her; that I was very sorry to make her uneasy, but that I could not love her any longer.—And was not that frank and open?

SOL. Oh that I had but such a wife as she was!

SIR R. I must own I loved her myself when she was young.

SOL. Do you call her old?

SIR R. In years I am certainly older than she, but the difference of sex makes her a great deal older than I am. For instance, Mr. Solus, you have often lamented not being married in your youth; but if you had, what would you have now done with an old wife, a woman of your own age?

SOL. Loved and cherished her.

SIR R. What, in spite of her loss of beauty?

SOL. When she had lost her beauty, most likely I should have lost my eyesight, and have been blind to the wane of her charms.

PLAC. [*Anxiously.*] But, Sir Robert, you were explaining to me—Mr. Solus, give me leave to speak to Sir Robert—I feel myself particularly interested on this subject.—And, sir, you were explaining to me——

SIR R. Very true: Where did I leave off? Oh! at my ill usage of my Lady Ramble. Yes, I did use her very ill, and yet she loved me. Many a time, when she has said to me,—“Sir Robert, I detest your principles, your manners, and even your person,”—often at that very instant, I have seen a little sparkle of a wish, peep out of the corner of one eye, that has called out to me, “Oh! Sir Robert, how I long to make it up with you!”

SOL. [*To MR. PLACID.*] Do not you wish that your wife had such a little sparkle at the corner of one of her eyes?

SIR R. [*To MR. PLACID.*] Sir, do you wish to be divorced?

PLAC. I have no such prospect. Mrs. Placid is faithful, and I was married in England.

SIR R. But if you have an unconquerable desire to part, a separate maintenance will answer nearly the same end—for if your lady and you will only lay down the plan of separation, and agree—

P.LAC. But, unfortunately, we never do agree!

SIR R. Then speak of parting, as a thing you dread worse than death; and make it your daily prayer to her, that she will never think of going from you—She will determine upon it directly.

P.LAC. I thank you; I am very much obliged to you: I thank you a thousand times.

SIR R. Yes, I have studied the art of teasing a wife; and there is nothing vexes her so much as laughing at her. Can you laugh, Mr. Placid?

P.LAC. I don't know whether I can; I have not laughed since I married.—But I thank you, sir, for your instructions—I sincerely thank you.

SOL. And now, Sir Robert, you have had the good-nature to teach this gentleman how to get rid of his wife, will you have the kindness to teach me how to procure one?

Enter MR. IRWIN.

SIR R. Hah! sure I know that gentleman's face?

SOL. My nephew! Let me escape his solicitations. [*Aside.*]—Here, waiter!

[*Exit.*

P.LAC. Irwin! [*Starting.*] Having sent him a denial, I am ashamed to see him. [*Aside.*] Here, Mr. Solus!——

[*Exit, following MR. SOLUS.*

IRW. [*Aside.*] More cool faces! My necessitous visage clears even a club-room.

SIR R. My dear Captain Irwin, is it you? Yes, 'faith it is—After a nine years' absence, I most sincerely rejoice to see you.

IRW. Sir Robert, you shake hands with a cordiality I have not experienced these many days, and I thank you.

SIR R. But what's the matter? You seem to droop—Where have you left your usual spirits? has absence from your country changed your manners?

IRW. No, sir; but I find some of my countrymen changed. I fancy them less warm, less friendly, than they were; and it is that which, perhaps, has this effect upon me.

SIR R. Am I changed?

IRW. You appear an exception.

SIR R And I assure you, that instead of being more gloomy, I am even more gay than I was seven years ago; for then, I was upon the point of matrimony—but now, I am just relieved from its cares.

IRW. I have heard so. But I hope you have not taken so great an aversion to the marriage state as never to marry again?

SIR R Perhaps not: But then it must be to some rich heiress.

IRW. You are right to pay respect to fortune. Money is a necessary article in the marriage contract.

SIR R As to that—that would be no great object at present. No, thank Heaven, my estates are pretty large; I have no children; I have a rich uncle, excellent health, admirable spirits;—and thus happy, it would be very strange if I did not meet my old friends with those smiles which never for a moment quit my countenance.

IRW. In the dispensation of the gifts of Providence, how few are blest like you!
[*Sighing.*]

SIR R And I assure you, my dear Mr. Irwin, it gives me the most serious reflections, and the most sincere concern, that the bulk of mankind are not.

IRW. I thank you, sir, most heartily: I thank you for mankind in general, and for myself in particular. For after this generous, unaffected declaration (with less scruple than I should to any one in the world) I will own to you—that I am at this very time in the utmost want of an act of friendship.

SIR R [*Aside.*] And so am I—Now must I confess myself a poor man; or pass for an unfeeling one; and I will chuse the latter. [*Bowing with great Ceremony and Coldness.*] Any thing that I can command, is at your service.

IRW. [*Confounded, and hesitating.*] Why, then, Sir Robert—I am almost ashamed to say it—but circumstances have been rather unfavourable.—My wife's father [*Affecting to smile.*] is not reconciled to us yet—My regiment is broke—My uncle will not part with a farthing.—Lady Eleanor, my wife, [*Wipes his Eyes.*] has been supported as yet, with some little degree of tenderness, elegance; and—in short, I owe a small sum, which I am afraid of being troubled for; I want a trifle also for our immediate use, and if you would lend me a hundred pounds—though, upon my honour, I am not in a situation to fix the exact time when I can pay it—

SIR R My dear sir, never trouble yourself about the time of paying it, because it happens not to be in my power to lend it you.

IRW. Not in your power! I beg your pardon; but have not you this moment been saying, you are rich?

SIR R. And is it not very common to be rich without money? Are not half the town rich! And yet half the town has no money. I speak for this end of the town, the west end. The Squares, for instance, part of Piccadilly, down St. James's Street, and so home by Pall Mall. We have all, estates, bonds, drafts, and notes of hand without number; but as for money, we have no such thing belonging to us.

IRW. I sincerely beg your pardon. And be assured, sir, nothing should have induced me to have taken the liberty I have done, but the misfortunes of my unhappy family, and having understood by your own words, that you were in affluence.

SIR R. I *am* in affluence, I am, I am; but not in so much, perhaps, as my hasty, inconsiderate account may have given you reason to believe. I forgot to mention several heavy incumbrances, which you will perceive are great drawbacks on my income.—As my wife sued for the divorce, I have her fortune to return; I have also two sisters to portion off—a circumstance I totally forgot. But, my good friend, though I am not in circumstances to do what you require, I will do something that shall be better. I'll wait upon your father-in-law, (Lord Norland) and entreat him to forgive his daughter: and I am sure he will if I ask him.

IRW. Impossible.

SIR R. And so it is, now I recollect: for he is the guardian of my late wife, and a request from me will be received worse than from any other person.—However, Mr. Irwin, depend upon it, that whenever I have an opportunity of serving you, I will. And whenever you shall do me the favour to call upon me, I shall be heartily glad to see you. If I am not at home, you can leave your card, which, you know, is all the same; and depend upon it, I shall be extremely glad to see you, or that, at any time.

[*Exit.*]

IRW. Is this my native country? Is this the hospitable land which we describe to strangers? No—We are savages to each other; nay, worse—The savage makes his fellow-savage welcome; divides with him his homely fare; gives him the best apartment his hut affords, and tries to hush those griefs that are confided to his bosom—While in this civilized city, among my own countrymen, even among my brother officers in the army, and many of my nearest relations, so very civilized they are, I could not take the liberty to enter under one roof, without a ceremonious invitation,—and that they will not give me. I may leave my card at their door, but as for me, or any one of mine, they would not give us a dinner; unless, indeed, it was in such a style, that we might behold with admiration their grandeur, and return still more depressed to our own poverty.—Can I bear this treatment longer? No, not even for you, my Eleanor. And this [*Takes out a Pistol.*] shall now be the only friend

to whom I will apply—And yet I want the courage to be a villain.

Enter MR. HARMONY, *speaking as he enters.*—IRWIN *conceals the Pistol instantly.*

HAR. Let me see half a dozen newspapers—every paper of the day.

Enter WAITER.

WAIT. That is about three dozen, sir.

HAR. Get a couple of porters, and bring them all.

[He sits down; they bring him Papers, and he reads—IRWIN starts, sits down, leans his Head on one of the Tables, and shows various Signs of Uneasiness; then comes forward.]

IRW. Am I a man, a soldier?—And a coward? Yes, I run away, I turn my back on life—I forsake the post, which my commander, Providence, has allotted me, and fly before a banditti of rude misfortunes. Rally me love, connubial and parental love, rally me back to the charge! No, those very affections sound the retreat.

[Sits down with the same Emotions of Distraction as before.]

HAR. That gentleman does not seem happy. I wish I had an opportunity of speaking to him.

[Aside.]

IRW. *[Coming forward, and speaking again.]* But Oh, my wife! what will be your sufferings, when I am brought home to your wretched abode!—And by my own hand!

HAR. I am afraid, sir, I engross all the news here.

[Holding up the Papers.]

IRW. *[Still apart.]* Poor soul, how her heart will be torn!

HAR. *[After looking stedfastly on him.]* Captain Irwin, till this moment I had not the pleasure of recollecting you!—It is Mr. Irwin, is it not?

IRW. *[His Mind deranged by his Misfortunes.]* Yes, sir: but what have you to say to him, more than to a stranger?

HAR. Nothing more, sir, than to apologize to you, for having addressed you just now in so familiar a manner, before I knew who you were; and to assure you, that although I have no other knowledge of you than from report, and having been once, I believe, in your company at this very house, before you left England; yet, any

services of mine, as far as my abilities can reach, you may freely command.

I_{RW}. Pray, sir, do you live at the west end of the town?

H_{AR}. I do.

I_{RW}. Then, sir, your services can be of no use to me.

H_{AR}. Here is the place where I live, here is my card.

[*Gives it to him.*]

I_{RW}. And here is mine. And now I presume we have exchanged every act of friendship, which the strict forms of etiquette, in this town, will admit of.

H_{AR}. By no means, sir. I assure you my professions never go beyond my intentions; and if there is any thing that I can serve you in——

I_{RW}. Have you no sisters to portion off? no lady's fortune to return? Or, perhaps, you will speak to my wife's father, and entreat him to forgive his child.

H_{AR}. On that subject, you may command me; for I have the honour to be intimately acquainted with Lord Norland.

I_{RW}. But is there no reason you may recollect, why you would be the most unfit person in the world to apply to him?

H_{AR}. None. I have been honoured with marks of his friendship for many years past: and I do not know any one who could, with less hazard of his resentment, venture to name his daughter to him.

I_{RW}. Well, sir, if you should see him two or three days hence—when I am set out on a journey I am going—if you will then say a kind word to him for my wife and children, I'll thank you.

H_{AR}. I will go to him instantly.

[*Going.*]

I_{RW}. No, do not see him yet; stay till I am gone. He will do nothing till I am gone.

H_{AR}. May I ask where you are going?

I_{RW}. No very tedious journey; but it is a country, to those who go without a proper passport, always fatal.

H_{AR}. I'll see Lord Norland to-night: perhaps I may persuade him to prevent your journey. I'll see him to-night, or early in the morning, depend upon it.—I am a man of my word, sir, though I must own I do live at the west end of the town.

[*Exit.*]

I_{RW}. 'Sdeath! am I become the ridicule of my fellow-creatures! or am I not in my senses?—I know this is London—this house a tavern—I know I have a wife—Oh!

'twere better to be mad than to remember her!—She has a father—he is rich and proud—that I will not forget. But I will pass his house, and send a malediction as I pass it. [*Furiously.*] No; breathe out my last sigh at his inhospitable door, and that sigh shall breathe—forgiveness.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

The Lodgings of Mr. IRWIN.

Enter Mrs. PLACID, followed by Lady ELEANOR IRWIN.

LADY E. I am ashamed of the trouble I have given you, Mrs. Placid. It had been sufficient to have sent me home in your carriage; to attend me yourself was ceremonious.

MRS. P. My dear Lady Eleanor, I was resolved to come home with you, as soon as Mr. Placid desired I would not.

LADY E. Was that the cause of your politeness? I am sorry it should.

MRS. P. Why sorry? It is not proper he should have his way in every thing.

LADY E. But I am afraid you seldom let him have it at all.

MRS. P. Yes, I do.—But where, my dear, is Mr. Irwin?

LADY E. [*Weeping.*] I cannot hear the name of Mr. Irwin, without shedding tears: his health has so declined of late, and his spirits been so bad—sometimes I even fear for a failure in his mind.

[*Weeps again.*]

MRS. P. Is not he at home?

LADY E. I hope he is. [*Goes to the Side of the Scenes.*] Tell your master, Mrs. Placid is here.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. My master is not come in yet, madam.

LADY E. Not yet? I am very sorry for it;—very sorry indeed.

MRS. P. Bless me, my dear, don't look thus pale. Come, sit down, and I'll stay with you till he returns.

[*Sits down herself.*]

LADY E. My dear, you forget, that Mr. Placid is in the carriage at the door all this

time.

MRS. P. No, I don't.—Come, let us sit and have half an hour's conversation.

LADY E. Nay, I insist upon your going to him, or desiring him to walk in.

MRS. P. Now I think of it, they may as well drive him home, and come back for me.

Enter MR. PLACID.

Why, surely, Mr. Placid, you were very impatient!—I think you might have waited a few minutes longer.

P.LAC. I would have waited, my dear, but the evening is so damp.

LADY E. Ah! 'tis this evening—that makes me alarmed for Mr. Irwin.

P.LAC. Lady Eleanor, you are one of the most tender, anxious, and affectionate wives, I ever knew.

MRS. P. There! Now he wishes he was your husband—he admires the conduct of every wife but his own, and envies every married man of his acquaintance. But it is very ungenerous in you.

P.LAC. So it is, my dear, and not at all consistent with the law of equity; for I am sure, there is not one of my acquaintance who envies me.

MRS. P. Mr. Placid, your behaviour throughout this whole day, has been so totally different from what it ever was before, that I am half resolved to live no longer with you.

P.LAC. [*Aside.*] It will do—It will do.

LADY E. Oh, my dear friends, do not talk of parting:—how can you, while every blessing smiles on your union? Even I, who have reason to regret mine, yet, while that load of grief, a separation from Mr. Irwin, is but averted, I will think every other affliction supportable. [*A loud Rapping at the Door.*] That is he!

MRS. P. Why, you seem in raptures at his return.

LADY E. I know no greater rapture.

Enter IRWIN, pale, trembling, and disordered.

My dear, you are not well, I see.

IRW. [*Aside to her in Anger.*] Why do you speak of it?

P.LAC. How do you do, Irwin?

IRW. I am glad to see you.

[Bows.

MRS. P. But I am sorry to see you look so ill.

IRW. I have only been taking a glass too much.

[LADY ELEANOR weeps.

P_{LAC}. Pshaw! Don't I know you never drink.

IRW. You are mistaken—I do, when my wife is not by. I am afraid of her.

P_{LAC}. Impossible.

IRW. What! to be afraid of one's wife?

P_{LAC}. No, I think that very possible.

MRS. P. But it does not look well when it is so; it makes a man appear contemptible, and a woman a termagant. Come, Mr. Placid, I cannot stay another moment. Good night. Heaven bless you! [To LADY ELEANOR.]—Good night, my dear Mr. Irwin;—and now, pray take my advice, and keep up your spirits.

IRW. I will, madam.—[*Shaking Hands with P_{LACID}.*] And do you keep up your spirits. [Exeunt MR. and MRS. P_{LACID}.—IRWIN *shuts the Door with Care after them, and looks round the Room, as if he feared to be seen or overheard.*] I am glad they are gone.—I spoke unkindly to you just now, did I not? My temper is altered lately; and yet I love you.

LADY E. I never doubted it, nor ever will.

IRW. If you did, you would wrong me; for there is no danger I would not risk for your sake: there is not an infamy I would not be branded with, to make you happy, nor a punishment I would not undergo, with joy, for your welfare.—But there's a bar to this; we are unfortunately so entwined together, so linked, so rivetted, so cruelly, painfully fettered, to each other, you could not be happy unless I shared the selfsame happiness with you.—But you will learn better—now you are in London, and amongst fashionable wives; you must learn better.

[Walks about, and smiles, with a ghastly Countenance.

LADY E. Do not talk, do not look thus wildly—Indeed, indeed, you make me very uneasy.

IRW. What! uneasy when I come to bring you comfort; and such comfort as you have not experienced for many a day? [*He pulls out a Pocketbook.*] Here is a friend in our necessity,—a friend, that brings a thousand friends; plenty and—no, not always—peace.

[He takes several Papers from the Book, and puts them into her Hands—She looks at them, then screams.]

LADY E. Ah! 'tis money! *[Trembling.]* These are bank notes!

IRW. Hush! for Heaven's sake, hush! We shall be discovered. *[Trembling, and in great Perturbation.]* What alarms you thus?

LADY E. What alarms you?

IRW. Do you say, I am frightened?

LADY E. A sight so new, has frightened me.

IRW. Nay, they are your own: by Heaven, they are! No one on earth has a better, or a fairer right to them than yourself. It was a laudable act, by which I obtained them.—The parent bird had forsook its young, and I but forced it back, to perform the rites of nature.

LADY E. You are insane, I fear. No, no, I do not fear—I hope you are.

[A loud Rapping at the Street Door—He starts, takes the Notes from her, and puts them hastily into his Pocket.]

IRW. Go to the door yourself; and if 'tis any one who asks for me, say, I am not come home yet.

[She goes out, then returns.]

LADY E. It is the person belonging to the house; no one to us.

IRW. My dear Eleanor, are you willing to quit London with me in about two hours time?

LADY E. Instantly.

IRW. Nay, not only London, but England.

LADY E. This world, if you desire it. To go in company with you, will make the journey pleasant; and all I loved on earth would still be with me.

IRW. You can, then, leave your father without regret, never, never, to see him more?

LADY E. Why should I think on him, who will not think on me?

[Weeps.]

IRW. But our children——

LADY E. We are not to leave them?

IRW. One of them we must: but do not let that give you uneasiness. You know he has never lived with us since his infancy, and cannot pine for the loss of parents,

whom he has never known.

LADY E. But I have known him. He was my first; and, sometimes, I think, more closely wound around my heart, than all the rest. The grief I felt on being forced to leave him, when we went abroad, and the constant anxiety I have since experienced, lest he should not be kindly treated, have augmented, I think, my tenderness.

I_{RW}. All my endeavours to-day, as well as every other day, have been in vain, to find into what part of the country his nurse has taken him.—Nay, be not thus overcome with tears; we will (in spite of all my haste to begone) stay one more miserable day here, in hopes to procure intelligence, so as to take him with us; and then—smile with contempt on all we leave behind.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

A Library at LORD NORLAND'S.

Enter LORD NORLAND, followed by MR. HARMONY.

LORD N. [*In Anger.*] I tell you, Mr. Harmony, that if an indifferent person, one on whom I had never bestowed a favour in my life, were to offend me, it is in my nature never to forgive. Can I then forgive my own daughter, my only child, on whom I heaped continual marks of the most affectionate fondness? Shall she dare to offend me in the tenderest point, and you dare to suppose I will pardon her?

HAR. Your child, consider.

LORD N. The weakest argument you can use. As my child, was she not most bound to obey me? As my child, ought she not to have sacrificed her own happiness to mine? Instead of which, mine has been yielded up for a whim, a fancy, a fancy to marry a beggar; and, as such is her choice, let her beg with him.

HAR. She does, by me;—pleads hard for your forgiveness.

LORD N. If I thought she dared to send a message to me, though dictated on her knees, she should find, that she had not yet felt the full force of my resentment.

HAR. What could you do more?

LORD N. I have done nothing yet. At present, I have only abandoned her;—but I can persecute.

HAR. I have no doubt of it: and, that I may not be the means of aggravating your displeasure, I assure you, that what I have now said has been entirely from myself, without any desire of hers; and, at the same time, I give you my promise, I will never presume to introduce the subject again.

LORD N. On this condition (but on no other) I forgive you now.

HAR. And now, then, my lord, let us pass from those who have forfeited your love, to those who possess it.—I heard, sometime ago, but I never felt myself disposed to mention it to you, that you had adopted a young man as your son.

LORD N. A young man! Pshaw! No; a boy—a mere child, who fell in my way by accident.

HAR. A chance child!—Ho! ho! I understand you.

LORD N. Do not jest with me, sir. Do I look——

HAR. Yes, you look as if you would be ashamed to own it, if you had one.

LORD N. But this boy I am not ashamed of: he is a favourite—rather a favourite. I did not like him so well at first;—but custom,—and having a poor creature entirely at one's mercy, one begins to love it merely from the idea of——What would be its fate if one did not?

HAR. Is he an orphan, then?

LORD N. No.

HAR. You have a friendship for his parents?

LORD N. I never saw the father: his mother I had a friendship for once.

[*Sighing.*]

HAR. Ay, while the husband was away?

LORD N. I tell you, no. [*Violently.*]—But ask no more questions. Who his parents are, is a secret, which neither he, nor any one (that is now living) knows, except myself; nor ever shall.

HAR. Well, my lord, since 'tis your pleasure to consider him as your child, I sincerely wish you may experience more duty from him, than you have done from your daughter.

LORD N. Thank Heaven, his disposition is not in the least like hers—No: [*Very much impassioned.*] I have the joy to say, that never child was so unlike its mother.

HAR. [*Starting.*] How! his mother!

LORD N. Confusion!—what have I said?—I am ashamed——

HAR. No,—be proud.

LORD N. Of what?

HAR. That you have a lawful heir to all your riches; proud, that you have a grandson.

LORD N. I would have concealed it from all the world; I wished it even unknown to myself. And, let me tell you, sir, (as not by my design, but through my inadvertency, you are become acquainted with this secret) that, if ever you breathe it to a single creature, the boy shall answer for it; for, were he known to be hers, though he were dearer to me than ever she was, I would turn him from my house, and cast him from my heart, as I have done her.

HAR. I believe you;—and, in compassion to the child, give you my solemn promise, never to reveal who he is. I have heard that those unfortunate parents left an infant behind when they went abroad, and that they now lament him as lost. Will

you satisfy my curiosity, in what manner you sought and found him out?

LORD N. Do you suppose I searched for him? No;—he was forced upon me. A woman followed me, about eight years ago, in the fields adjoining to my country seat, with a half-starved boy in her hand, and asked my charity for my grandchild: the impression of the word made me turn round involuntarily; and, casting my eyes upon him, I was rejoiced not to find a feature of his mother's in all his face; and I began to feel something like pity for him. In short, he caught such fast hold by one of my fingers, that I asked him, carelessly, "if he would go home and live with me?" On which, he answered me so willingly, "Yes," I took him at his word.

HAR. And did never your regard for him, plead in his mother's behalf?

LORD N. Never:—for, by Heaven, I would as soon forgive the robber, who met me last night at my own door, and, holding a pistol to my breast, took from me a sum to a considerable amount, as I would pardon her.

HAR. Did such an accident happen to you?

LORD N. Have you not heard of it?

HAR. No.

LORD N. It is amazing we cannot put a stop to such depredations.

HAR. Provisions are so scarce!

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. Miss Wooburn, my lord, if you are not engaged, will come and sit an hour with you.

LORD N. I have no company but such as she is perfectly acquainted with, and I shall be glad of her visit.

[Exit SERVANT.]

HAR. You forget I am a stranger, and my presence may not be welcome.

LORD N. A stranger! What, to my ward? to Lady Ramble? for that is the name which custom would authorize her to keep; but such courtesy she disdains, in contempt of the unworthy giver of the title.

HAR. I am intimate with Sir Robert, my lord: and, though I acknowledge that both you and his late wife have cause for complaint,—yet Sir Robert has still many virtues.

LORD N. Not one. He is the most vile, the most detestable of characters. He not only contradicted my will in the whole of his conduct, but he seldom met me that he did not give me some personal affront.

HAR. It is, however, generally held better to be uncivil in a person's presence, than in his absence.

LORD N. He was uncivil to me in every respect.

HAR. That I will deny; for I have heard Sir Robert, in your absence, say such things in your favour!——

LORD N. Indeed!

HAR. Most assuredly.

LORD N. I wish he had sometimes done me the honour to have spoken politely to my face.

HAR. That is not Sir Robert's way;—he is no flatterer. But then, no sooner has your back been turned, than I have heard him lavish in your praise.

LORD N. I must own, Mr. Harmony, that I never looked upon Sir Robert as incorrigible. I could always discern a ray of understanding, and a beam of virtue, through all his foibles; nor would I have urged the divorce, but that I found his wife's sensibility could not bear his neglect; and, even now, notwithstanding her endeavour to conceal it, she pines in secret, and laments her hard fortune. All my hopes of restoring her health rest on one prospect—that of finding a man worthy my recommendation for her second husband, and, by thus creating a second passion, expel the first.—Mr. Harmony, you and I have been long acquainted—I have known your disposition from your infancy—Now, if such a man as you were to offer——

HAR. You flatter me.

LORD N. I do not—would you venture to become her husband?

HAR. I cannot say, I have any particular desire;—but if it will oblige either you or her,—for my part, I think the short time we live in this world, we should do all we can to oblige each other.

LORD N. I should rejoice at such an union myself, and, I think, I can answer for her.—You permit me, then, to make overtures to her in your name?

HAR. [*Considering.*] This is rather a serious business—However, I never did make a difficulty, when I wished to oblige a friend.—But there is one proviso, my lord; I must first mention it to Sir Robert.

LORD N. Why so?

HAR. Because he and I have always been very intimate friends: and to marry his wife without even telling him of it, will appear very uncivil!

LORD N. Do you mean, then, to ask his consent?

HAR. Not absolutely his consent; but I will insinuate the subject to him, and obtain his approbation in a manner suitable to my own satisfaction.

LORD N. You will oblige me, then, if you will see him as early as possible; for it is reported he is going abroad.

HAR. I will go to him immediately;—and, my lord, I will do all in my power to oblige you. Sir Robert, and the lady—[*Aside.*] but as to obliging myself, that was never one of my considerations.

[*Exit.*]

Enter MISS WOOBURN.

LORD N. I am sorry to see you thus; you have been weeping! Will you still lament your separation from a cruel husband, as if you had followed a kind one to the grave?

MISS W. By no means, my lord. Tears from our sex are not always the result of grief; they are frequently no more than little sympathetic tributes, which we pay to our fellow beings, while the mind and the heart are steeled against the weakness, which our eyes indicate.

LORD N. Can you say, your mind and heart are so steeled?

MISS W. I can: My mind is as firmly fixed against Sir Robert Ramble, as, at our first acquaintance, it was fixed upon him. And I solemnly protest——

LORD N. To a man of my age and observation, protestations are vain.—Give me a proof, that you have rooted him from your heart.

MISS W. Any proof you require, I will give you without a moment's hesitation.

LORD N. I take you at your word; and desire you to accept a gentleman, whom I shall recommend for your second husband. [*MISS WOOBURN starts.*]—You said, you would not hesitate a moment.

MISS W. I thought I should not;—but this is something so unexpected——

LORD N. You break your word, then; and still give cause for this ungrateful man to ridicule your fondness for him.

MISS W. No, I will put an end to that humiliation; and whoever the gentleman is whom you mean to propose—Yet, do not name him at present—but give me the satisfaction of keeping the promise I have made to you (at least for a little time) without exactly knowing how far it extends; for, in return I have a promise to ask from you, before I acquaint you with the nature of your engagement.

LORD N. I give my promise. Now name your request.

MISS W. Then, my lord—[*Hesitating, and confused.*]*—*the law gave me back, upon my divorce from Sir Robert, the very large fortune which I brought to him.—I am afraid, that, in his present circumstances, to enforce the strict payment of this debt would very much embarrass him.

LORD N. What if it did?

MISS W. It is my entreaty to you (in whose hands is invested the power to demand this right of law) to lay my claim aside for the present. [LORD NORLAND *offers to speak.*] I know, my lord, what you are going to say; I know Sir Robert is not now, but I can never forget that he has been, my husband.

LORD N. To show my gratitude for your compliance with the request I have just made you, [*Goes to a Table in the Library.*] here is the bond by which I am empowered to seize on the greatest part of his estates in right of you: take the bond into your own possession, till your next husband demands it of you; and, by the time you have called him husband for a few weeks, this tenderness, or delicacy, to Sir Robert, will be worn away.

Enter HARMONY, hastily.

HAR. My lord, I beg pardon; but I forgot to mention——

MISS W. Oh, Mr. Harmony, I have not seen you before, I know not when: I am particularly happy at your calling just now, for I have—[*Hesitating.*]*—*a little favour to ask of you.

HAR. If it were a great favour, madam, you might command me.

MISS W. But—my lord, I beg your pardon—the favour I have to ask of Mr. Harmony must be told to him in private.

LORD N. Oh! I am sure I have not the least objection to you and Mr. Harmony having a private conference. I'll leave you together. [HARMONY *appears embarrassed.*] You do not derange my business—I'll be back in a short time.

[*Exit.*]

MISS W. Mr. Harmony, you are the very man on earth whom I most wanted to see. [HARMONY *bows.*] I know the kindness of your heart, the liberality of your sentiments, and I wish to repose a charge to your trust, very near to me indeed—but you must be secret.

HAR. When a lady reposes a trust in me, I shouldn't be a man if I were not.

MISS W. I must first inform you, that Lord Norland has just drawn from me a promise, that I will once more enter into the marriage state: and without knowing to

whom he intends to give me, I will keep my promise. But it is in vain to say, that though I mean all duty and fidelity to my second husband, I shall not experience moments when my thoughts—will wander on my first.

HAR. [*Starting.*] Hem!—Hem!—[*To her.*]—Indeed!

MISS W. I must always rejoice in Sir Robert's successes, and lament over his misfortunes.

HAR. If that is all—

MISS W. No, I would go one step further: [*HARMONY starts again.*] I would secure him from those distresses, which to hear of, will disturb my peace of mind. I know his fortune has suffered very much, and I cannot, will not, place it in the power of the man, whom my Lord Norland may point out for my next marriage, to harass him farther—This is the writing, by which that gentleman may claim the part of my fortune from Sir Robert Ramble, which is in landed property; carry it, my dear Mr. Harmony, to Sir Robert instantly; and tell him—that, in separating from him, I meant only to give him liberty, not make him the debtor, perhaps the prisoner, of my future husband.

HAR. Madam, I will most undoubtedly take this bond to my friend; but will you give me leave to suggest to you,—that the person on whom you bestow your hand may be a little surprised to find, that while he is in possession of you, Sir Robert is in the possession of your fortune.

MISS W. Do not imagine, sir, that I shall marry any man, without first declaring what I have done—I only wish at present it should be concealed from Lord Norland—When this paper is given, as I have required, it cannot be recalled: and when that is past, I shall divulge my conduct to whom I please: and first of all, to him, who shall offer me his addresses.

HAR. And if he is a man of my feelings, his addresses will be doubly importunate for this proof of liberality to your former husband.—But are you sure, that, in the return of this bond, there is no secret affection, no latent spark of love?

MISS W. None, I know my heart; and if there was, I could not ask you, Mr. Harmony (nor any one like you), to be the messenger of an imprudent passion. Sir Robert's vanity, I know, may cause him to judge otherwise; but undeceive him; let him know, this is a sacrifice to the golden principles of duty, and not an offering to the tinselled shrine of love.

Enter LORD NORLAND.

MISS W. Put up the bond.—

[HARMONY *conceals it.*

LORD N. Well, my dear, have you made your request?

MISS W. Yes, my lord.

LORD N. And has he granted it?

HAR. Yes, my lord. I am going to grant it.

LORD N. I sincerely wish you both joy of this good understanding between you. But, Mr. Harmony, [*In a Whisper.*] are not you going to Sir Robert?

HAR. Yes, my lord, I am going this moment.

LORD N. Make haste, then, and do not forget your errand.

HAR. No, my lord, I sha'n't forget my errand: it won't slip my memory—Good morning, my lord:—good morning, madam.

[*Exit.*

LORD N. Now, my dear, as you and Mr. Harmony seem to be on such excellent terms, I think I may venture to tell you (if he has not yet told you himself), that he is the man, who is to be your husband.

MISS W. He! Mr. Harmony!—No, my lord, he has not told me; and I am confident he never will.

LORD N. What makes you think so?

MISS W. Because—because—he must be sensible he would not be the man I should chuse.

LORD N. And where is the woman who marries the man she would chuse? you are reversing the order of society; men only have the right of choice in marriage. Were women permitted theirs, we should have handsome beggars allied to our noblest families, and no such object in our whole island as an old maid.

MISS W. But being denied that choice, why am I forbid to remain as I am?

LORD N. What are you now? Neither a widow, a maid, nor a wife. If I could fix a term to your present state, I should not be thus anxious to place you in another.

MISS W. I am perfectly acquainted with your friendly motives, and feel the full force of your advice.—I therefore renew my promise—and although Mr. Harmony (in respect to the marriage state) is as little to my wishes as any man on earth, I will nevertheless endeavour—whatever struggles it may cost me—to be to him, if he prefers his suit, a dutiful, an obedient—but, for a loving wife, that I can never be again.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.

An Apartment at SIR ROBERT RAMBLE'S.

Enter SIR ROBERT, *and* MR. HARMONY.

SIR R I thank you for this visit. I was undetermined what to do with myself. Your company has determined me to stay at home.

HAR. I was with a gentleman just now, Sir Robert, and you were the subject of our conversation.

SIR R Had it been a lady, I should be anxious to know what she said.

HAR. I have been with a lady, likewise: and she made you the subject of her discourse.

SIR R But was she handsome?

HAR. Very handsome.

SIR R My dear fellow, what is her name? What did she say, and where may I meet with her?

HAR. Her name is Wooburn.

SIR R That is the name of my late wife.

HAR. It is her I mean.

SIR R Zounds, you had just put my spirits into a flame, and now you throw cold water all over me.

HAR. I am sorry to hear you say so, for I came from her this moment;—and what do you think is the present she has given me to deliver to you?

SIR R Pshaw! I want no presents. Some of my old love-letters returned, I suppose, to remind me of my inconstancy.

HAR. Do not undervalue her generosity; this is her present:—this bond, which has power to take from you three thousand a year, her right.

SIR R Ah! this is a present, indeed! Are you certain you speak truth? Let me look at it;—Sure my eyes deceive me!—No, by Heaven it is true! [*Reads.*] The very thing I wanted, and will make me perfectly happy. Now I'll be generous again; my bills shall be paid, my gaming debts cancelled, poor Irwin shall find a friend; and I'll send Miss Wooburn as pretty a copy of verses as ever I wrote in my life.

HAR. Take care how you treat with levity a woman of her elevated mind. She charged me to assure you, that love had no share whatever in this act, which is mere

compassion to the embarrassed state of your affairs.

SIR R Sir, I would have you to know, I am no object of compassion. However, a lady's favour one cannot return; and so I'll keep this thing.

[Puts the Bond in his Pocket.]

HAR. Nay, if your circumstances are different from what she imagines, give it me back, and I will restore it to her.

SIR R No, poor thing! it would break her heart to send it back—No, I'll keep it—She would never forgive me, were I to send it back. I'll keep it. And she is welcome to attribute her concern for me to what she pleases. But surely you can see—you can understand—But Heaven bless her for her love! and I would love her in return—if I could.

HAR. You would not talk thus, if you had seen the firm dignity with which she gave me that paper—"Assure him," said she, "no remaining affection comes along with it, but merely a duty which I owe him, to protect him from the humiliation of being a debtor to the man, whom I am going to marry."

SIR R *[With the utmost Emotion.]* Why, she is not going to be married again!

HAR. I believe so.

SIR R But are you sure of it, sir? Are you sure of it?

HAR. Both she and her guardian told me so.

SIR R That guardian, my Lord Norland, is one of the basest, vilest of men.—I tell you what, sir, I'll resent this usage.

HAR. Wherefore?—As to his being the means of bringing about your separation, in that he obliged you.

SIR R Yes, sir, he did, he certainly did;—but though I am not in the least offended with him on that account (for at that I rejoice), yet I will resent his disposing of her a second time.

HAR. And wherefore?

SIR R Because, little regard as I have for her myself, yet no other man shall dare to treat her so ill as I have done.

HAR. Do not fear it—Her next husband will be a man, who, I can safely say, will never insult, or even offend her; but sooth, indulge, and make her happy.

SIR R And do you dare to tell me, that her next husband shall make her happy? Now that is worse than the other—No, sir, no man shall ever have it to say, he has made her either happy or miserable, but myself.

HAR. I know of but one way to prevent it.

SIR R. And what is that?

HAR. Pay your addresses to her, and marry her again yourself.

SIR R. And I would, rather than she should be happy with any body else.

HAR. To show that I am wholly disinterested in this affair, I will carry her a letter from you, if you like, and say all I can in your behalf.

SIR R. Ha! ha! ha! Now, my dear Harmony, you carry your goodnatured simplicity too far. However, I thank you—I sincerely thank you—But do you imagine I should be such a blockhead, as to make love to the same woman I made love to seven years ago, and who for the last six years I totally neglected?

HAR. Yes; for if you have neglected her six years, she will now be a novelty.

SIR R. Egad, and so she will. You are right.

HAR. But being in possession of her fortune, you can be very happy without her.

SIR R. Take her fortune back, sir. [*Taking the Bond from his Pocket, and offering it to HARMONY.*] I would starve, I would perish, die in poverty, and infamy, rather than owe an obligation to a vile, perfidious, inconstant woman.

HAR. Consider, Sir Robert, if you insist on my taking this bond back, it may fall into the husband's hands.

SIR R. Take it back—I insist upon it. [*Gives it him, and HARMONY puts it up.*] But, Mr. Harmony, depend on it, Lord Norland shall hear from me, in the most serious manner, for his interference—I repeat, he is the vilest, the most villanous of men.

HAR. How can you speak with such rancour of a nobleman, who speaks of you in the highest terms?

SIR R. Does he, 'faith?

HAR. He owns you have some faults.

SIR R. I know I have.

HAR. But he thinks your good qualities are numberless.

SIR R. Now, dam' me if ever I thought so ill of him as I have appeared to do!—But who is the intended husband, my dear friend? Tell me, that I may laugh at him, and make you laugh at him.

HAR. No, I am not inclined to laugh at him.

SIR R. Is it old Solus?

HAR. No.

SIR R. But I will bet you a wager it is somebody equally ridiculous.

HAR. I never bet.

SIR R. Solus is mad for a wife, and has been praising mine up to the heavens,—you need say no more—I know it is he.

HAR. Upon my honour, it is not. However, I cannot disclose to you at present the person's name; I must first obtain Lord Norland's permission.

SIR R. I shall ask you no more. I'll write to her, she will tell me;—or I'll pay her a visit, and ask her boldly myself.—Do you think [*Anxiously.*]—do you think she would see me!

HAR. You can but try.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. Mr. Solus.

SIR R. Now I will find out the secret immediately.—I'll charge him with being the intended husband.

HAR. I won't stay to hear you.

Enter SOLUS.

Mr. Solus, how do you do? I am extremely sorry that my engagements take me away as soon as you enter.

[*Exit HARMONY, running, to avoid an Explanation.*]

SOL. Sir Robert, what is the matter? Has any thing ruffled you? Why, I never saw you look more out of temper, even while you were married.

SIR R. Ah! that I had never married! never known what marriage was! for, even at this moment, I feel its torments in my heart.

SOL. I have often heard of the torments of matrimony; but I conceive, that at the worst, they are nothing more than a kind of violent tickling, which will force the tears into your eyes, though at the same time you are bursting your sides with laughter.

SIR R. You have defined marriage too favourably; there is no laughter in the state; all is melancholy, all gloom.

SOL. Now I think marriage is an excellent remedy for the spleen. I have known a gentleman at a feast receive an affront, disguise his rage, step home, vent it all upon his wife, return to his companions, and be as good company as if nothing had

happened.

SIR R But even the necessary expenses of a wife should alarm you.

SOL. I can then retrench some of my own. Oh! my dear sir, a married man has so many delightful privileges to what a bachelor has;—An old lady will introduce her daughters to you in a dishabille—“It does not signify, my dears, it’s a married man”—One lady will suffer you to draw on her glove—“Never mind, it’s a married man”—Another will permit you to pull on her slipper; a third will even take you into her bedchamber—“Pshaw, it’s *nothing* but a married man.”

SIR R But the weight of your fetters will overbalance all these joys.

SOL. And I cannot say, notwithstanding you are relieved from those fetters, that I see much joy or content here.

SIR R I am not very well at present; I have the head ache; and, if ever a wife can be of comfort to her husband, it must be when he is indisposed. A wife, then, binds up your head, mixes your powders, bathes your temples, and hovers about you, in a way that is most endearing.

SOL. Don’t speak of it; I long to have one hover about me. But I will—I am determined I will, before I am a week older. Don’t speak, don’t attempt to persuade me not. Your description has renewed my eagerness—I will be married.

SIR R And without pretending not to know whom you mean to make your choice, I tell you plainly, it is Miss Wooburn, it is my late wife.—I know you have made overtures to my Lord Norland, and that he has given his consent.

SOL. You tell me a great piece of news—I’ll go ask my lord if it be true; and if he says it is, I shall be very glad to find it so.

SIR R That is right, sir; marry her, marry her;—I give you joy,—that’s all.—Ha! ha! ha! I think I should know her temper.—But if you will venture to marry her, I sincerely wish you happy.

SOL. And if we are not, you know we can be divorced.

SIR R Not always. Take my advice, and live as you are.

SOL. You almost stagger my resolution.—I had painted such bright prospects in marriage:—Good day to you. [*Going, returns.*]—You think I had better not marry?

SIR R You are undone if you do.

SOL. [*Sighing.*] You ought to know from experience.

SIR R From that I speak.

SOL. [*Going to the Door, and returning once or twice, as undetermined in his*

Resolution.] But then, what a poor, disconsolate object shall I live, without a wife to hover about me; to bind up my head, and bathe my temples! Oh! I am impatient for all the chartered rights, privileges, and immunities of a married man.

[*Exit.*

SIR R. Furies! racks! torments!—I cannot bear what I feel, and yet I am ashamed to own I feel any thing!

Enter MR. PLACID.

P.LAC. My dear Sir Robert, give me joy! Mrs. Placid and I are come to the very point you advised: matters are in the fairest way for a separation.

SIR R. I do give you joy, and most sincerely.—You are right; you will soon be as happy as I am. [*Sighing.*] But, would you suppose it? that deluded woman, my wife, is going to be married again! I thought she had experienced enough from me.

P.LAC. You are hurt, I see, lest the world should say, she has forgot you.

SIR R. She cannot forget me; I defy her to forget me.

P.LAC. Who is her intended husband?

SIR R. Solus, Solus. An old man—an ugly man. He left me this moment, and owned it—owned it! Go after him, will you, and persuade him not to have her.

P.LAC. My advice will have no effect, for you know he is determined upon matrimony.

SIR R. Then could not you, my dear sir (as you are going to be separated,) could not you recommend him to marry your wife?—It will be all the same to him, and I shall like it much better.

P.LAC. Ours will not be a divorce, consider, but merely a separate maintenance. But were it otherwise, I wish no man so ill, as to wish him married to Mrs. Placid.

SIR R. That is my case exactly—I wish no man so ill, as to wish him married to my Lady Ramble; and poor old Solus in particular, poor old man! a very good sort of man—I have a great friendship for Solus.—I can't stay a moment in the house—I must go somewhere—I'll go to Solus—No, I'll go to Lord Norland—No, I'll go to Harmony; and then I'll call on you, and we'll take a bottle together; and when you are become free [*Takes his Hand.*] we'll both join, from that moment we'll join, to laugh at, to contemn, to despise, all those who boast of the joys of conjugal love.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

An Apartment at Mr. HARMONY'S.

Enter Mr. HARMONY.

HAR. And now for one of the most painful tasks that brotherly love ever draws upon me; to tell another the suit, of which I gave him hope, has failed.—Yet, if I can but overcome Captain Irwin's delicacy so far, as to prevail on him to accept one proof more of my good wishes towards him;—but to a man of his nice sense of obligations, the offer must be made with caution.

Enter Lord NORLAND.

LORD N. Mr. Harmony, I beg your pardon: I come in thus abruptly, from the anxiety I feel concerning what passed between us this morning in respect to Miss Wooburn. You have not changed your mind, I hope?

HAR. Indeed, my lord, I am very sorry that it will not be in my power to oblige you.

LORD N. [*In Anger.*] How, sir? Did not you give me your word?

HAR. Only conditionally, my lord.

LORD N. And what were the conditions?

HAR. Have you forgot them? Her former husband—

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. Sir Robert Ramble is in his carriage at the door, and, if you are at leisure, will come in.

HAR. Desire him to walk up. I have your leave, I suppose, my lord?

[*Exit SERVANT.*]

LORD N. Yes; but let me get out of the house without meeting him. [*Going to the opposite Door.*] Can I go this way?

HAR. Why should you shun him?

LORD N. Because he used his wife ill.

HAR. He did. But I believe he is very sorry for it.—And as for you,—he said to me only a few hours ago—but no matter.

LORD N. What did he say? I insist upon knowing.

HAR. Why, then, he said, that if he had a sacred trust to repose in any one, you should be the man on earth, to whom he would confide it.

LORD N. Well, I am in no hurry; I can stay a few minutes.

Enter SIR ROBERT RAMBLE.

SIR R. Oh! Harmony! I am in such a distracted state of mind—

[Seeing LORD NORLAND, he starts, and bows with the most humble Respect.

LORD N. Sir Robert, how do you do?

SIR R. My lord, I am pretty well.—I hope I have the happiness of seeing your lordship in perfect health.

LORD N. Very well, sir, I thank you.

SIR R. Indeed, my lord, I think I never saw you look better.

LORD N. Mr. Harmony, you and Sir Robert may have some business—I wish you a good morning.

HAR. No, my lord, I fancy Sir Robert has nothing particular.

SIR R. Nothing, nothing, I assure you, my lord.

LORD N. However, I have business myself in another place, and so you will excuse me.

[Going.

SIR R. *[Following him.]* My lord—Lord Norland,—I trust you will excuse my inquiries.—I hope, my lord, all your family are well?

LORD N. All very well.

SIR R. Your little élève,—Master Edward,—the young gentleman you have adopted—I hope he is well—*[Hesitating and Confused.]* And—your ward,—Miss Wooburn—I hope, my lord, she is well?

LORD N. Yes, Sir Robert, Miss Wooburn is tolerably well.

SIR R. Only tolerably, my lord? I am sorry for that.

HAR. I hope, my lord, you will excuse my mentioning the subject; but I was telling Sir Robert just now of your intentions respecting a second marriage for that lady; but Sir Robert does not appear to approve of the design.

LORD N. What objection can he have?

SIR R. My lord, there are such a number of bad husbands;—there are such a number of dissipated, unthinking, unprincipled men!—And—I should be extremely sorry to see any lady with whom I have had the honour of being so closely allied, united to a man, who would undervalue her worth.

LORD N. Pray, Sir Robert, were you not then extremely sorry for her, while she was united to you?

SIR R. Very sorry for her, indeed, my lord. But, at that time, my mind was so much taken up with other cares, I own I did not feel the compassion which was her due; but, now that I am single, I shall have leisure to pay her more attention; and should I find her unhappy, it must, inevitably, make me so.

LORD N. Depend upon it, that, on the present occasion, I shall take infinite care in the choice of her husband.

SIR R. If your lordship would permit me to have an interview with Miss Wooburn, I think I should be able at least—

LORD N. You would not sure insult her by your presence?

SIR R. I think I should be able at least to point out an object worthy of her taste—I know that which she will like better than any one in the world.

LORD N. Her request has been, that I may point her out a husband the reverse of you.

SIR R. Then, upon my honour, my lord, she won't like him.

LORD N. Have not you liked women the reverse of her?

SIR R. Yes, my lord, perhaps I have, and perhaps I still do. I do not pretend to love her; I did not say, I did; nay, I positively protest I do not; but this indifference I acknowledge as one of my faults; and, notwithstanding all my faults, give me leave to acknowledge my gratitude that your lordship has nevertheless been pleased to declare—you think my virtues are numberless.

[*LORD NORLAND shows Surprise.*

HAR. [*Aside to SIR ROBERT.*] Hush, hush!—Don't talk of your virtues now.

LORD N. Sir Robert, to all your incoherent language, this is my answer, this is my will: the lady, to whom I have had the honour to be guardian, shall never (while she calls me friend) see you more.

[*SIR ROBERT, at this Sentence, stands silent for some Time, then, suddenly recollecting himself.*

SIR R. Lord Norland, I am too well acquainted with the truth of your word, and

the firmness of your temper, to press my suit one sentence farther.

LORD N. I commend your discernment.

SIR R. My lord, I feel myself a little embarrassed.—I am afraid I have made myself a little ridiculous upon this occasion—Will your lordship do me the favour to forget it?

LORD N. I will forget whatever you please.

HAR. [*Following him, whispers.*] I am sorry to see you going away in despair.

SIR R. I never did despair in my life, sir; and while a woman is the object of my wishes, I never will.

[*Exit.*]

LORD N. What did he say?

HAR. That he thought your conduct, that of a just and an upright man.

LORD N. To say the truth, he has gone away with better manners than I could have imagined, considering his jealousy is provoked.

HAR. Ah! I always knew he loved his wife, notwithstanding his behaviour to her; for, if you remember—he always spoke well of her behind her back.

LORD N. No, I do not remember it.

HAR. Yes, he did; and that is the only criterion of a man's love, or of his friendship.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. A young gentleman is at the door, sir, inquiring for Lord Norland.

LORD N. Who can it be?

HAR. Your young gentleman from home, I dare say. Desire him to walk in. Bring him here.

[*Exit SERVANT.*]

LORD N. What business can he have to follow me?

Enter EDWARD.

EDW. Oh, my lord, I beg your pardon for coming hither, but I come to tell you something you will be glad to hear.

HAR. Good Heaven, how like his mother!

LORD N. [*Taking him by the Hand.*] I begin to think he is—But he was not so when I first took him. No, no, if he had, he would not have been thus near me now;

—but to turn him away because his countenance is a little changed, I think would not be right.

EDW. [*To HARMONY.*] Pray, sir, did you know my mother?

HAR. I have seen her.

EDW. Did you ever see her, my lord?

LORD N. I thought, you had orders never to inquire about your parents?—Have you forgot those orders?

EDW. No, my lord;—but when this gentleman said, I was like my mother—it put me in mind of her.

HAR. You do not remember your mother, do you?

EDW. Sometimes I think I do. I think sometimes I remember her kissing me, when she and my father went on board of a ship; and so hard she pressed me—I think I feel it now.

HAR. Perhaps she was the only lady that ever saluted you?

EDW. No, sir, not by many.

LORD N. But, pray, young man, (to have done with this subject,) what brought you here? You seem to have forgot your errand?

EDW. And so I had, upon my word. Speaking of my mother, put it quite out of my mind.—But, my lord, I came to let you know, the robber, who stopped you last night, is taken.

LORD N. I am glad to hear it.

EDW. I knew you would, and therefore I begged to be the first to tell you.

HAR. [*To LORD NORLAND.*] Should you know the person again?

LORD N. I cannot say, I should; his face seemed so much distorted.

HAR. Ay, wretched man! I suppose, with terror.

LORD N. No; it appeared a different passion from fear.

HAR. Perhaps, my lord, it was your fear, that made you think so.

LORD N. No, sir, I was not frightened.

EDW. Then, why did you give him your money?

LORD N. It was surprise, caused me to do that.

EDW. I wondered what it was! You said it was not fear, and I was sure it could not be love.

HAR. How has he been taken?

EDW. A person came to our steward, and informed against him——and, Oh! my lord, his poor wife told the officers, who took him, they had met with misfortunes, which she feared had caused a fever in her husband's head: and, indeed, they found him too ill to be removed; and so, she hoped, she said, that, as a man not in his perfect mind, you would be merciful to him.

LORD N. I will be just.

EDW. And that is being merciful, is it not, my lord?

LORD N. Not always.

EDW. I thought it had been.—It is not just to be unmerciful, is it?

LORD N. Certainly not.

EDW. Then it must be just, to have mercy.

LORD N. You draw a false conclusion.—Great as the virtue of mercy is, justice is greater still.—Justice holds its place among those cardinal virtues, which include all the lesser.—Come, Mr. Harmony, will you go home with me? And, before I attend to this business, let me persuade you to forget there is such a person in the world as Sir Robert Ramble, and suffer me to introduce you to Miss Wooburn, as the man who——

HAR. I beg to be excused—Besides the consideration of Sir Robert, I have another reason why I cannot go with you.—The melancholy tale, which this young gentleman has been telling, has cast a gloom on my spirits, which renders me unfit for the society of a lady.

LORD N. Now I should not be surprised, were you to go in search of this culprit and his family, and come to me to intreat me to forego the prosecution; but, before you ask me, I tell you it is in vain—I will not.

HAR. Lord Norland, I have lately been so unsuccessful in my petitions to you, I shall never presume to interpose between your rigour and a weak sufferer more.

LORD N. Plead the cause of the good, and I will listen; but you find none but the wicked for your compassion.

HAR. The good, in all states, even in the very grasp of death, are objects of envy; it is the bad who are the only sufferers. There, where no internal consolation cheers, who can refuse a little external comfort?—And, let me tell you, my lord, that, amidst all your authority, your state, your grandeur, I often pity you.

[Speaking with unaffected Compassion.]

LORD N. Good day, Mr. Harmony; and when you have apologized for what you have said, we may be friends again.

[Exit, leading off EDWARD.

HAR. Nay, hear my apology now. I cannot—no, it is not in my nature, to live in resentment, nor under the resentment of any creature in the world.

[Exit, following LORD NORLAND.

SCENE II.

An Apartment at LORD NORLAND'S.

Enter SIR ROBERT RAMBLE, followed by a SERVANT.

SIR R Do not say who it is—but say, a gentleman, who has some particular business with her.

SERV. Yes, sir.

[Going.

SIR R Pray,—[SERVANT returns.] You have but lately come into this service, I believe?

SERV. Only a few days, sir.

SIR R You don't know me, then?

SERV. No, sir.

SIR R I am very glad of it. So much the better.—Go to Miss Wooburn, with a stranger's compliments, who is waiting, and who begs to speak with her, upon an affair of importance.

SERV. Yes, sir.

[Exit.

SIR R I wish I may die, if I don't feel very unaccountably! How different are our sensations towards our wives, and all other women! This is the very first time she has given me a palpitation since the honeymoon.

Enter MISS WOOBURN, who starts on seeing SIR ROBERT;—he bows in great Confusion.

MISS W. Support me Heaven!

[Aside.

SIR R [Bows repeatedly, and does not speak till after many Efforts.] Was ever man in such confusion before his wife!

[Aside.

MISS W. Sir Robert, having recovered, in some measure, from the surprise into which this intrusion first threw me, I have only to say,—that, whatever pretence may have induced you to offer me this insult, there is not any that can oblige me to bear with it.

[*Going.*]

SIR R. Lady Ramb—[*Recalling himself.*] *MISS WOO*—[*She turns.*] Lady Ramble—[*Recalling himself again.*] *MISS WOOBURN*—Madam—You wrong me—There was a time when I insulted you, I confess; but it is impossible that time should ever return.

MISS W. While I stay with you, I incur the danger.

[*Going.*]

SIR R. [*Holding her.*] Nay, listen to me, as a friend, whom you have so often heard as an enemy.—You offered me a favour by the hands of Mr. Harmony—

MISS W. And is this the motive of your visit—this the return—

SIR R. No, madam, that obligation was not the motive which drew me hither—The real cause of this seeming intrusion is—you are going to be married once more, and I come to warn you of your danger.

MISS W. That you did sufficiently in the marriage state.

SIR R. But now I come to offer you advice, that may be of the most material consequence, should you really be determined to yield yourself again into the power of a husband.

MISS W. Which I most assuredly am.

SIR R. Happy, happy man! How much is he the object of my envy! None so well as I, know how to envy him, because none so well as I, know how to value you. [*She offers to go.*] Nay, by Heaven, you shall not go, till you have heard all that I came to say!

MISS W. Speak it then, instantly.

SIR R. No, it would take whole ages to speak; and should we live together, as long as we have lived together, still I should not find time to tell you—how much I love you.

[*A loud Rapping at the Street Door.*]

MISS W. That, I hope, is Lord Norland.

SIR R. And what has Lord Norland to do with souls free as ours? Let us go to Scotland again: and again bid defiance to his stern commands.

MISS W. Be assured, that through him only, will I ever listen to a syllable you have to utter.

SIR R. One syllable only, and I am gone that instant.

MISS W. Well, sir?

[He hesitates, trembles, seems to struggle with himself; then approaching her slowly, timidly, and, as if ashamed of his Humiliation, kneels to her—She turns away.]

SIR R. *[Kneeling.]* Maria, Maria, look at me!—Look at me in this humble state—Could you have suspected this, Maria?

MISS W. No: nor can I conceive what this mockery means.

SIR R. It means, that, now you are no longer my wife, you are my goddess; and thus I offer you my supplication, that, (if you are resolved not to live single) amongst the numerous train who present their suit,—you will once more select me.

MISS W. You!—You, who have treated me with cruelty; who made no secret of your love for others; but gloried, boasted of your gallantries.

SIR R. I did, I did—But here I swear, only trust me again—do but once more trust me, and I swear by all I hold most sacred, that I will, for the future, carefully conceal all my gallantries from your knowledge—though they were ten times more frequent than before.

Enter EDWARD.

EDW. Oh, my dear Miss Wooburn—What! Sir Robert here too! *[Goes to SIR ROBERT, and shakes Hands.]* How do you do, Sir Robert? Who would have thought of seeing you here? I am glad to see you, though, with all my heart; and so, I dare say, is Miss Wooburn, though she may not like to say so.

MISS W. You are impertinent, sir.

EDW. What, for coming in? I will go away then.

SIR R. Do, do—there's a good boy—do.

EDW. *[Going, returns.]* I cannot help laughing, though, to see you two together!—for you know you never were together when you lived in the same house.

SIR R. Leave the room instantly, sir, or I shall call Lord Norland.

EDW. Oh, don't take that trouble; I will call him myself. *[Runs to the Door.]* My lord! my lord! pray come hither this moment—As I am alive, here is Sir Robert Ramble along with Lady Ramble!

Enter LORD NORLAND.

[SIR ROBERT *looks confounded*—LORD NORLAND *points to* EDWARD *to leave the Room*.

[*Exit* EDWARD.

LORD N. Sir Robert, on what pretence do you come hither?

SIR R. On the same pretence as when I was, for the first time, admitted into your house; to solicit this lady's hand: and, after having had it once, no force shall compel me to take a refusal.

LORD N. I will try, however—Madam, quit the room instantly.

SIR R. My lord, she shall not quit it.

LORD N. I command her to go.

SIR R. And I command her to stay.

LORD N. Which of us will you obey?

MISS W. My inclination, my lord, disposes me to obey you;—but I have so lately been accustomed to obey him; that custom inclines me to obey him still.

SIR R. There! there! there, my lord! Now I hope you will understand better for the future, and not attempt to interfere between a man and his wife?

LORD N. [*To* MISS WOOBURN.] Be explicit in your answer to this question—Will you consent to be his wife?

MISS W. No, never.

SIR R. Zounds, my lord! now you are hurrying matters.—You should do it by gentle means;—let me ask her gently.—[*With a most soft Voice*.] Maria, Maria, will you be my wife once again?

MISS W. Never.

SIR R. So you said seven years ago, when I asked you, and yet you consented.

LORD N. And now, Sir Robert, you have had your answer; leave my house.

[*Going up to him*.

SIR R. Yes, sir; but not without my other half.

LORD N. Your other half?

SIR R. Yes; the wife of my bosom—the wife, whom I swore at the altar “to love and to cherish, and, forsaking all others, cleave only to her, as long as we both should live.”

LORD N. You broke your oath, and made the contract void.

SIR R But I am ready to take another oath, and another after that, and another after that—And, Oh! my dear Maria, be propitious to my vows, and give me hopes you will again be mine.

[He goes to her, and kneels in the most supplicating Attitude.]

Enter EDWARD, showing in MR. SOLUS and MR. PLACID; EDWARD points to SIR ROBERT (who has his Back to them) and goes off.

SIR R [*Still on his Knees, and not perceiving their Entrance.*] I cannot live without you.—Receive your penitent husband, thus humbly acknowledging his faults, and imploring you to accept him once again.

SOL. [*Going up to SIR ROBERT.*] Now, is it wonderful that I should want a wife?

PLAC. And is it to be wondered at, if I should hesitate about parting with mine?

SIR R [*Starts up in great Confusion.*] Mr. Solus, Mr. Placid, I am highly displeased that my private actions should be thus inspected.

SOL. No one shall persuade me now, to live a day without a wife.

PLAC. And no one shall persuade me now, not to be content with my own.

SOL. I will procure a special licence, and marry the first woman I meet.

SIR R Mr. Solus, you are, I believe, interested in a peculiar manner, about the marriage of this lady.

SOL. And, poor man, you are sick, and want somebody to bathe your temples, and to hover about you.

MISS W. You come in most opportunely, my dear Mr. Solus, to be a witness——

SIR R My dear Mr. Solus!

SOL. To be a witness, madam, that a man is miserable without a wife. I have been a fatal instance of that, for some time.

MISS W. Come to me, then, and receive a lesson.

SIR R No, madam, he shall not come to you; nor shall he receive a lesson. No one shall receive a lesson from you, but myself.

LORD N. Sir Robert, one would suppose, by this extraordinary behaviour, you were jealous.

SIR R And so I am, my lord; I have cause to be so.

LORD N. No cause to be jealous of Mr. Solus—he is not Miss Wooburn's lover, I assure you.

SIR R. Then, my lord, I verily believe it is yourself. Yes, I can see it is; I can see it in her eyes, and by every feature in your face.

MISS W. Oh! my good friend, Mr. Placid, only listen to him.

SIR R. And why, my good friend, Mr. Placid?—[*To PLACID.*] By Heavens, sir, I believe that you only wished to get rid of your own wife, in order to marry mine.

PLAC. I do not wish to part with my own wife, Sir Robert, since what I have just seen.

SIR R. [*Going up to SOLUS and LORD NORLAND.*] Then, pray, gentlemen, be so good as to tell me, which of you two is the happy man, that I may know how to conduct myself towards him?

MISS W. Ha! ha! ha!

SIR R. Do you insult me, Maria?—Oh! have pity on my sufferings.

SOL. If you have a mind to kneel down again, we will go out of the room.

PLAC. Just as I was comforting myself with the prospect of a divorce, I find my instructor and director pleading on his knees to be remarried.

Enter MRS. PLACID, who steals upon MR. PLACID unperceived.

MRS. P. What were you saying about a divorce?

SIR R. Now, down on your knees, and beg pardon.

MISS W. My dear Mrs. Placid, if this visit is to me, I take it very kind.

MRS. P. Not absolutely to you, my dear. I saw Mr. Placid's carriage at the door, and so I stepped in to desire him to go home directly.

PLAC. Presently, my dear; I will go presently.

MRS. P. Presently won't do: I say, directly. There is a lady at my house in the greatest possible distress—[*Whispers him.*]—Lady Eleanor—I never saw a creature in such distraction; [*Raising her Voice.*] therefore go home this moment; you shan't stay an instant longer.

SOL. Egad, I don't know whether I will marry or no.

MRS. P. Why don't you go, Mr. Placid, when I bid you?

SOL. No;—I think I won't marry.

PLAC. But, my dear, will not you go home with me?

MRS. P. Did not I tell you to go by yourself?

[*PLACID bows, and goes off.*]

SOL. No;—I am sure I won't marry.

LORD N. And now, Mr. Solus and Sir Robert, these ladies may have some private conversation. Do me the favour to leave them alone.

MISS W. My lord, with your leave, we will retire. [*Turns when she gets to the Door.*] Sir Robert, I have remained in your company, and compelled myself to the painful task of hearing all you have had to say, merely for the satisfaction of exposing your love; and then enjoying the triumph, of bidding you farewell for ever.

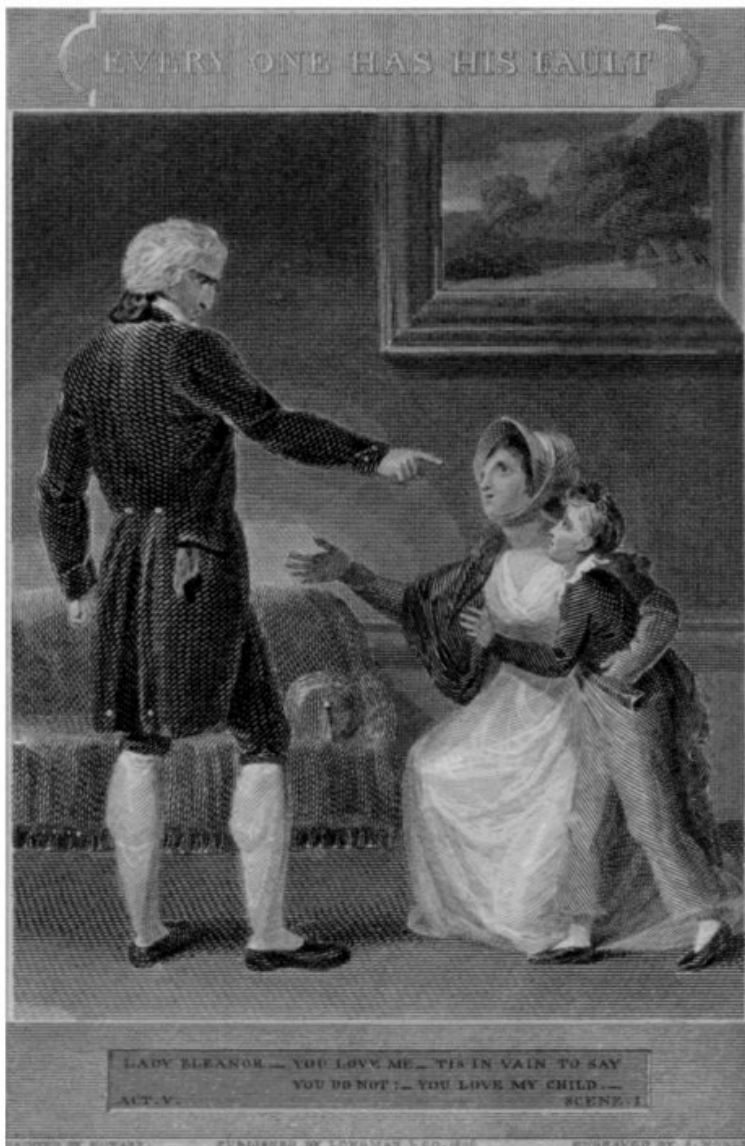
[*Exit with MRS. PLACID.*]

SOL. [*Looking stedfastly at SIR ROBERT.*] He turns pale at the thoughts of losing her. Yes, I think I'll marry.

LORD N. Come, Sir Robert, it is in vain to loiter; your doom is fixed.

SIR R. [*In a melancholy, musing Tone.*] Shall I then never again know what it is to have a heart like hers, to repose my troubles on.

SOL. Yes, I am pretty sure I'll marry.



LADY ELEANOR—YOU LOVE ME—'TIS IN VAIN TO SAY
 YOU DO NOT:—YOU LOVE MY CHILD.—
 ACT V. SCENE I

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SIR R —A friend in all my anxieties, a companion in all my pleasures, a physician
 in all my sicknesses——

SOL. Yes, I will marry.

LORD N. Come, come, Sir Robert, do not let you and I have any dispute.

[Leading him towards the Door.

SIR R. Senseless man, not to value those blessings—Not to know how to estimate them, till they were lost.

[LORD NORLAND leads him off.

SOL. *[Following.]* Yes,—I am determined;—nothing shall prevent me—I will be married.

[Exit.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

An Apartment at LORD NORLAND'S.

Enter HAMMOND, followed by LADY ELEANOR.

HAM. My lord is busily engaged, madam; I do not suppose he would see any one, much less a stranger.

LADY E. I am no stranger.

HAM. Your name then, madam?

LADY E. That I cannot send in. But tell him, sir, I am the afflicted wife of a man, who, for some weeks past, has given many fatal proofs of a disordered mind. In one of those fits of phrensy, he held an instrument of death, meant for his own destruction, to the breast of your lord (who by accident that moment passed,) and took from him, what he vainly hoped might preserve his own life, and relieve the wants of his family. But, his paroxysm over, he shrunk from what he had done, and gave the whole he had thus unwarrantably taken, into a servant's hands, to be returned to its lawful owner. The man, admitted to this confidence, betrayed his trust, and instead of giving up what was thus sacredly delivered to him, secreted it; and, to obtain the promised reward, came to this house, but to inform against the wretched offender; who now, only resting on your lord's clemency, can escape the direful fate he has incurred.

HAM. Madam, the account you give, makes me interested in your behalf, and you may depend, I will repeat it all with the greatest exactness.

[*Exit HAMMOND.*]

LADY E. [*Looking round.*] This is my father's house! It is only through two rooms and one short passage, and there he is sitting in his study. Oh! in that study, where I (even in the midst of all his business) have been so often welcome; where I have urged the suit of many an unhappy person, nor ever urged in vain. Now I am not permitted to speak for myself, nor have one friendly voice to do that office for me, which I have so often undertaken for others.

Enter HAMMOND, EDWARD following.

HAM. My lord says, that any petition concerning the person you come about, is of no use. His respect for the laws of his country demands an example such as he

means to make.

LADY E. Am I, am I to despair then? [*To HAMMOND.*] Dear sir, would you go once more to him, and humbly represent——

HAM. I should be happy to oblige you, but I dare not take any more messages to my lord; he has given me my answer.—If you will give me leave, madam, I'll see you to the door.

[Crosses to the other Side, and goes off.]

LADY E. Misery—Distraction!—Oh, Mr. Placid! Oh, Mr. Harmony! Are these the hopes you gave me, could I have the boldness to enter this house? But you would neither of you undertake to bring me here!—neither of you undertake to speak for me!

[She is following the SERVANT; EDWARD walks softly after her, till she gets near the Door; he then takes hold of her Gown, and gently pulls it; she turns and looks at him.]

EDW. Shall I speak for you, madam?

LADY E. Who are you, pray, young gentleman?—Is it you, whom Lord Norland has adopted for his son?

EDW. I believe he has, madam; but he has never told me so yet.

LADY E. I am obliged to you for your offer; but my suit is of too much consequence for you to undertake.

EDW. I know what your suit is, madam, because I was with my lord when Hammond brought in your message; and I was so sorry for you, I came out on purpose to see you—and, without speaking to my lord, I could do you a great kindness—if I durst.

LADY E. What kindness?

EDW. But I durst not—No, do not ask me.

LADY E. I do not. But you have increased my anxiety, and in a mind so distracted as mine, it is cruel to excite one additional pain.

EDW. I am sure I would not add to your grief for the world.—But then, pray do not speak of what I am going to say.—I heard my lord's lawyer tell him just now, that, as he said he should not know the person again, who committed the offence about which you came, and as the man who informed against him is gone off, there could be no evidence that he did the action, but from a book, a particular pocketbook, of my lord's, which he forgot to deliver to his servant with the notes

and money he returned, and which was found upon him at your house: and this Lord Norland will affirm to be his.—Now, if I did not think I was doing wrong, this is the very book—[*Takes a Pocketbook from his Pocket.*] I took it from my lord's table;—but it would be doing wrong, or I am sure I wish you had it.

[*Looking wishfully at her.*]

LADY E. It will save my life, my husband's, and my children's.

EDW. [*Trembling.*] But what is to become of me?

LADY E. That Providence who never punishes the deed, unless the will be an accomplice, shall protect you, for saving one, who has only erred in a moment of distraction.

EDW. I never did any thing to offend my lord in my life;—and I am in such fear of him, I did not think I ever should.—Yet I cannot refuse you;—take it.—[*Gives her the Book.*] But pity me, when my lord shall know of it.

LADY E. Oh! should he discard you for what you have done, it will embitter every moment of my remaining life.

EDW. Do not frighten yourself about that.—I think he loves me too well to discard me quite.

LADY E. Does he indeed?

EDW. I think he does!—for often, when we are alone, he presses me to his bosom so fondly, you would not suppose.—And, when my poor nurse died, she called me to her bedside, and told me (but pray keep it a secret)—she told me I was—his grandchild.

LADY E. You are—you are his grandchild—I see,—I feel you are;—for I feel that I am your mother. [*Embraces him.*] Oh! take this evidence back. [*Returning the Book.*]—I cannot receive it from thee, my child;—no, let us all perish, rather than my boy, my only boy, should do an act to stain his conscience, or to lose his grandfather's love.

EDW. What do you mean?

LADY E. The name of the person with whom you lived in your infancy, was Heyland?

EDW. It was.

LADY E. I am your mother; Lord Norland's only child, [EDWARD *kneels.*] who, for one act of disobedience, have been driven to another part of the globe in poverty, and forced to leave you, my life, behind. [*She embraces and raises him.*] Your father, in his struggles to support us all, has fallen a victim;—but Heaven, which has

preserved my son, will save my husband, restore his senses, and once more——

EDW. [*Starting.*] I hear my lord's step,—he is coming this way:—Begone, mother, or we are all undone.

LADY E. No, let him come—for though his frown should kill me, yet must I thank him, for his care of thee.

[She advances towards the Door, to meet him.]

Enter LORD NORLAND.

[LADY E. falls on her Knees.] You love me,—'tis in vain to say you do not. You love my child; and with whatever hardship you have dealt, or still mean to deal by me, I will never cease to think you love me, nor ever cease my gratitude for your goodness.

LORD N. Where are my servants? Who let this woman in?

[She rises, and retreats from him, alarmed and confused.]

EDW. Oh, my lord, pity her.—Do not let me see her hardly treated—Indeed I cannot bear it.

Enter HAMMOND.

LORD N. [*To* LADY ELEANOR.] What was your errand here? If to see your child, take him away with you.

LADY E. I came to see my father;—I have a house too full of such as he already.

LORD N. How did she gain admittance?

HAM. With a petition, which I repeated to your lordship.

[Exit HAMMOND.

LORD N. Her husband, then, it was, who—[*To* LADY ELEANOR.] But let him know, for this boy's sake, I will no longer pursue him.

LADY E. For that boy's sake you will not pursue his father; but for whose sake are you so tender of that boy? 'Tis for mine, for my sake; and by that I conjure you

[Offers to kneel.]

LORD N. Your prayers are vain—[*To* EDWARD.] Go, take leave of your mother for ever, and instantly follow me;—or shake hands with me for the last time, and instantly begone with her.

EDW. [*Stands between them in doubt for some little Time; looks alternately at each with Emotions of Affection; at last goes to his Grandfather, and takes*

hold of his Hand.] Farewell, my lord,—it almost breaks my heart to part from you;—but if I have my choice, I must go with my mother.

[Exit LORD NORLAND instantly.—LADY ELEANOR and her Son go off on the opposite Side.

SCENE II.

Another Apartment at LORD NORLAND'S.

Enter MISS WOOBURN and MRS. PLACID.

MRS. P. Well, my dear, farewell.—I have stayed a great while longer than I intended—I certainly forgot to tell Mr. Placid to come back after he had spoken with Lady Eleanor, or he would not have taken the liberty not to have come.

MISS W. How often have I lamented the fate of Lord Norland's daughter! But, luckily, I have no personal acquaintance with her, or I should probably feel a great deal more on her account than I do at present.—She had quitted her father's house before I came to it.

Enter MR. HARMONY.

HAR. My whole life is passed in endeavouring to make people happy, and yet they won't let me do it.—I flattered myself, that after I had resigned all pretensions to you, Miss Wooburn, in order to accommodate Sir Robert—that, after I had told both my lord and him, in what high estimation they stood in each other's opinion, they would of course have been friends; or, at least not have come to any desperate quarrel:—instead of which, what have they done, but, within this hour, had a duel!—and poor Sir Robert—

MISS W. For Heaven's sake, tell me of Sir Robert——

HAR. You were the only person he mentioned after he received his wound; and such encomiums as he uttered——

MISS W. Good Heaven! If he is in danger, it will be vain to endeavour to conceal what I shall suffer.

[Retires a few Paces, to hide her Emotions.

MRS. P. Was my husband there?

HAR. He was one of the seconds.

MRS. P. Then he shall not stir out of his house this month, for it.

HAR. He is not likely; for he is hurt too.

MRS. P. A great deal hurt?

HAR. Don't alarm yourself.

MRS. P. I don't.

HAR. Nay, if you had heard what he said!

MRS. P. What did he say?

HAR. How tenderly he spoke of you to all his friends——

MRS. P. But what did he say?

HAR. He said, you had imperfections.

MRS. P. Then he told a falsehood.

HAR. But he acknowledged they were such as only evinced a superior understanding to the rest of your sex;—and that your heart——

MRS. P. [*Bursting into Tears.*] I am sure I am very sorry that any misfortune has happened to him, poor, silly man! But I don't suppose [*Drying up her Tears at once.*] he'll die.

HAR. If you will behave kindly to him, I should suppose not.

MRS. P. Mr. Harmony, if Mr. Placid is either dying or dead, I shall behave with very great tenderness; but if I find him alive, and likely to live, I will lead him such a life as he has not led a long time.

HAR. Then you mean to be kind?—But, my dear Miss Wooburn, [*Going to her.*] why this seeming grief? Sir Robert is still living; and should he die of his wounds, you may at least console yourself, that it was not your cruelty which killed him.

MISS W. Rather than have such a weight on my conscience, I would comply with the most extravagant of his desires, and suffer his cruelty to be the death of me.

HAR. If those are your sentiments, it is my advice that you pay him a visit in his affliction.

MISS W. Oh no, Mr. Harmony, I would not for the universe. Mrs. Placid, do you think it would be proper?

MRS. P. No, I think it would not—Consider, my dear, you are no longer a wife, but a single woman, and would you run into the clutches of a man?

HAR. He has no clutches, madam; he is ill in bed, and totally helpless.—But, upon recollection, it would, perhaps, be needless to go; for he may be too ill to admit you.

MISS W. If that is the case, all respect to my situation, my character, sinks before

the strong desire of seeing him once more. Oh! were I married to another, I feel, that, in spite of all my private declarations, or public vows, I should fly from him, to pay my duty where it was first plighted.

HAR. My coach is at the door; shall I take you to his house? Come, Mrs. Placid, wave all ceremonious motives, on the present melancholy occasion, and go along with Miss Wooburn and me.

MISS W. But, Mrs. Placid, perhaps poor Mr. Placid is in want of your attendance at home.

HAR. No, they were both carried in the same carriage to Sir Robert's.

MISS W. [*As HARMONY leads her to the Door.*] Oh! how I long to see my dear husband, that I may console him!

MRS. P. Oh! how I long to see my dear husband, that I may quarrel with him!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

The Hall at SIR ROBERT RAMBLE'S.

The PORTER discovered asleep.

Enter a FOOTMAN.

FOOT. Porter, porter, how can you sleep at this time of the day?—It is only eight o'clock.

PORTER. What did you want, Mr. William?

FOOT. To tell you, my master must not be disturbed, and so you must not let in a single creature.

PORTER. Mr. William, this is no less than the third time I have received those orders within this half hour;—First from the butler, then from the valet, and now from the footman.—Do you all suppose I am stupid?

FOOT. I was bid to tell you. I have only done what I was desired; and mind you do the same.

[*Exit.*]

PORTER. I'll do my duty, I warrant you. I'll do my duty. [*A loud Rapping at the Door.*] And there's a summons, to put my duty to the trial.

[*Opens the Door.*]

Enter HARMONY, MISS WOOBURN, and MRS. PLACID.

HAR. These ladies come on a visit to Sir Robert. Desire one of the servants to conduct them to him instantly.

PORTER. Indeed, sir, that is impossible—My master is not——

HAR. We know he is at home, and therefore we can take no denial.

PORTER. I own he is at home, sir; but, indeed, he is not in a situation——

MISS W. We know his situation.

PORTER. Then, madam, you must suppose he is not to be disturbed. I have strict orders not to let in a single soul.

HAR. This lady, you must be certain, is an exception.

PORTER. No lady can be an exception in my master's present state; for I believe, sir, but—perhaps, I should not speak of it—I believe my master is nearly gone.

MISS W. Oh! support me, Heaven!

MRS. P. But has he his senses?

PORTER. Not very clearly, I believe.

MISS W. Oh, Mr. Harmony, let me see him, before they are quite lost.

PORTER. It is as much as my place is worth, to let a creature farther than this hall; for my master is but in the next room.

MRS. P. That is a dining room. Is not he in bed?

HAR. [*Aside to the Ladies.*] In cases of wounds, the patient is oftentimes propped up in his chair.

MISS W. Does he talk at all?

PORTER. Yes, madam, I heard him just now very loud.

MISS W. [*Listening.*] I think I hear him rave.

HAR. No, that murmuring is the voice of other persons.

MRS. P. The physicians in consultation, I apprehend.—Has he taken any thing?

PORTER. A great deal, I believe, madam.

MRS. P. No amputation, I hope;

PORTER. What, madam?

HAR. He does not understand you. [*To MISS WOOBURN.*]—Come, will you go back?

PORTER. Do, my lady, and call in the morning.

MISS W. By that time he may be totally insensible, and die without knowing how much I am attached to him.

MRS. P. And my husband may die without knowing how angry I am with him!—Mr. Harmony, never mind this foolish man, but force your way into the next room.

PORTER. Indeed, sir, you must not. Pray, Mr. Harmony, pray, ladies, go away.

MISS W. Yes, I must go from my husband's house for ever, never to see that, or him again!

[Faints on MR. HARMONY.

MRS. P. She is fainting—open the windows—give her air.

PORTER. Pray go away:—There is plenty of air in the streets, ma'am.

HAR. Scoundrel! Your impertinence is insupportable. Open these doors; I insist on their being opened.

[He thrusts at a Door in the Centre of the Stage; it opens, and discovers SIR ROBERT and MR. PLACID at a Table, surrounded by a Company of Gentlemen.

SIR R. A song—a song—another song——[MISS WOOBURN, all astonishment, is supported by MR. HARMONY and MRS. PLACID.—The PORTER runs off.] Ah, what do I see!—Women!—Ladies!—Celestial beings we were talking of.—Can this be real? [SIR ROBERT and MR. PLACID come forward—SIR ROBERT, perceiving it is MISS WOOBURN, turns himself to the Company.] Gentlemen, gentlemen, married men and single men, hear me thus publicly renounce every woman on earth but this; and swear henceforward to be devoted to none but my own wife.

[Goes to her in Raptures.

PLAC. [Looking at MRS. PLACID, then turning to the Company.] Gentlemen, gentlemen, married men and single men, hear me thus publicly declare, I will henceforth be master; and from this time forward, will be obeyed by my wife.

[SIR ROBERT waves his Hand, and the Door is closed on the Company of Gentlemen.

MRS. P. Mr. Placid—Mr. Placid, are you not afraid?

PLAC. No, madam, I have consulted my friends, I have drank two bottles of wine, and I never intend to be afraid again.

MISS W. [To SIR ROBERT.] Can it be, that I see you without a wound?

SIR R. No, my life, that you do not; For I have a wound through my heart, which none but you can cure. But, in despair of your aid, I have flown to wine, to give me a temporary relief by the loss of reflection.

MRS. P. Mr. Placid, you will be sober in the morning.

P.LAC. Yes, my dear; and I will take care that you shall be dutiful in the morning.

HAR. For shame! how can you treat Mrs. Placid thus; you would not, if you knew what kind things she has been saying of you; and how anxious she was, when I told her you were wounded in a duel.

MRS. P. Was not I, Mr. Harmony?

[*Bursting into Tears.*]

P.LAC. [*Aside to HARMONY and SIR ROBERT.*] I did not know she could cry;—I never saw it before, and it has made me sober in an instant.

MISS W. Mr. Placid, I rely on you to conduct me immediately from this house.

SIR R. That I protest against: and will use even violent measures to prevent him.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. Lord Norland.

Enter LORD NORLAND.

MISS W. He will protect me.

SIR R. Who shall protect you in my house but I? My lord, she is under my protection; and if you offer to take her from me, I'll exert the authority of a husband, and lock her up.

LORD N. [*To MISS WOOBURN.*] Have you been deluded hither, and wish to leave the place with me? Tell me instantly, that I may know how to act.

MISS W. My lord, I am ready to go with you, but——

HAR. But you find she is inclined to stay;—and do have some compassion upon two people, that are so fond of you.

Enter MR. SOLUS, dressed in a Suit of white Clothes.

SOL. I am married!—I am married!—Wish me joy! I am married!

SIR R. I cannot give you joy, for envy.

SOL. Nay, I do not know whether you will envy me much when you see my spouse—I cannot say she was exactly my choice. However, she is my wife now; and that is a name so endearing, that I think I love her better since the ceremony has been performed.

MRS. P. And pray when did it take place?

SOL. This moment. We are now returning from a friend's house, where we have

been joined by a special licence; and I felt myself so happy, I could not pass Sir Robert's door without calling to tell him of my good fortune. And, as I see your lady here, Sir Robert, I guess you are just married too; and so I'll hand my wife out of the carriage, and introduce the two brides to each other.

[Exit SOLUS.]

SIR R. You see, my lord, what construction Mr. Solus has put on Miss Wooburn's visit to me; and, by Heaven, if you take her away, it will be said, that she came and offered herself to me, and that I rejected her!

MISS W. Such a report would kill me.

Enter SOLUS, leading on MISS SPINSTER.

SOL. Mistress Solus.

[Introducing her.]

HAR. [Starting.] My relation! Dear madam, by what strange turn of fortune do I see you become a wife?

MRS. S. Mr. Harmony, it is a weakness, I acknowledge: but you can never want an excuse for me, when you call to mind the scarcity of provisions.

SOL. Mr. Harmony, I have loved her ever since you told me, she spoke so well of me behind my back.

Enter SERVANT, and whispers MR. HARMONY, who follows him off.

LORD N. I agree with you, Mr. Solus, that this is a most excellent proof of a person's disposition; and in consideration, Sir Robert, that throughout all our many disagreements, you have still preserved a respect for my character in my absence, I do at last say to that lady, she has my consent to trust you again.

SIR R. And she *will* trust me: I see it in her smiles. Oh! unexpected ecstasy!

Enter MR. HARMONY.

HAR. [Holding a Letter in his Hand.] Amidst the bright prospects of joy, which this company are contemplating, I come to announce an event that ought to cloud the splendour of the horizon—A worthy, but an ill-fated, man, whom you are all acquainted with, has just breathed his last.

LORD N. Do you mean the husband of my daughter?

SOL. Do you mean my nephew?

PLAC. Is it my friend?

SIR R. And my old acquaintance?

HAR. Did Mr. Irwin possess all those titles you have given him, gentlemen? Was he your son? [*To LORD NORLAND.*] Your nephew? [*To SOLUS.*] Your friend? [*To MR. PLACID.*] And your old acquaintance? [*To SIR ROBERT.*] How strange, he did not know it!

P_{LAC.} He did know it.

HAR. Still more strange, that he should die for want, and not apply to any of you?

SOL. What! Die for want in London! Starve in the midst of plenty!

HAR. No; but he seized that plenty, where law, where honour, where every social and religious tie forbade the trespass; and, in punishment of the guilt, has become his own executioner.

LORD N. Then my daughter is wretched, and her boy involved in his father's infamy.

SOL. The fear of his ghost haunting me, will disturb the joys of my married life.

P_{LAC.} Mrs. Placid, Mrs. Placid, my complying with your injunctions, in respect of Mr. Irwin, will make me miserable for ever.

MISS W. I wish he had applied to me.

SIR R. And, as I refused him his request, I would give half my estate, that he had not applied to me.

HAR. And a man who always spoke so well of you all behind your backs!—I dare say that, in his dying moments, there was not one of you whom he did not praise for some virtue.

SOL. No, no—when he was dying, he would be more careful of what he said.

LORD N. Sir Robert, good day. Settle your marriage as you and your lady shall approve; you have my good wishes. But my spirits have received too great a shock, to be capable of any other impression at present.

MISS W. [*Holding him.*] Nay, stay, my lord.

SOL. And, Mrs. Solus, let me hand you into your carriage, to your company; but excuse my going home with you. My spirits have received too great a shock, to be capable of any other impression at present.

HAR. [*Stopping SOLUS.*] Now, so loth am I to see any of you, only for a moment, in grief, while I have the power to relieve you, that I cannot help—Yes, my philanthropy will get the better of my justice.

[*Goes to the Door, and leads in* LADY ELEANOR, IRWIN, *and* EDWARD.

LORD N. [*Runs to IRWIN, and embraces him.*] My son! [*IRWIN falls on his Knees.*] I take a share in all your offences—The worst of accomplices, while I impelled you to them.

IRW. [*On his Knees.*] I come to offer my returning reason; to offer my vows, that, while that reason continues, so long will I be penitent for the phrensy which put your life in danger.

LADY E. [*Moving timidly to her Father, leading EDWARD by the Hand.*] I come to offer you this child, this affectionate child; who, in the midst of our caresses, droops his head, and pines for your forgiveness.

LORD N. Ah! there is a corner of my heart left to receive him.

[*Embraces him.*]

EDW. Then, pray, my lord, suffer the corner to be large enough to hold my mother too.

LORD N. My heart is softened, and receives you all. [*Embraces LADY ELEANOR, who falls on her Knees; he then turns to HARMONY.*] Mr. Harmony, I thank you, I most sincerely thank you, for this, the most joyful moment of my life. I not only experience release from misery, but return to happiness.

HAR. [*Goes hastily to SOLUS, and leads him to IRWIN; then turns to MR. and MRS. PLACID.*] And now, that I see all you reconciled, I can say—there are not two enemies, in the whole circle of my acquaintance, that I have not, within these three days, made friends.

SIR R. Very true, Harmony: for we should never have known half how well we all love one another, if you had not told us.

HAR. And yet, my good friends, notwithstanding the merit you may attribute to me, I have one most tremendous fault; and it weighs so heavy on my conscience, I would confess what it is, but that you might hereafter call my veracity in question.

SIR R. My dear Harmony, without a fault, you would not be a proper companion for any of us.

LORD N. And whilst a man like you, may have (among so many virtues) some faults; let us hope there may be found in each of us (among all our faults) some virtues.

HAR. Yes, my lord,—and, notwithstanding our numerous faults, it is my sincere wish, that the world may speak well of us all—behind our backs.

THE END.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Every one has his Fault* by Elizabeth Inchbald]