

Love in Several Masques

Henry Fielding

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Henry Fielding

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Nec Veneris Pharetris macer est, nec Lampade fervet;
Inde faces ardent; veniunt a Dote Sagittæ.

Juv. Sat. 6.

TO THE Right Honourable the Lady *MARY WORTLEY MOUNTAGUE*.

Madam,

Your Ladyship's known Goodness gives my Presumption the Hopes of a Pardon, for prefixing to this slight Work the [Page]

Name of a Lady, whose accurate Judgment has long been the Glory of her own Sex, and the Wonder of ours: Especially, since it arose from a Vanity, to which your Indulgence, on the first Perusal of it, gave Birth.

I wou'd not insinuate to the World that this Play past free from your Censure; since I know it not free from Faults, not one of which escaped your immediate Penetration. Immediate indeed! for your Judgment keeps Pace with your Eye, and You comprehend almost faster than others overlook.

This is a Perfection very visible to all who are admitted to the Honour of your Conversation: [Page] Since, from those short Intervals You can be supposed to have had to yourself, amid the Importunities of all the polite Admirers and Professors of Wit and Learning, You are capable of instructing the Pedant, and are at once a living Confutation of those morose Schoolmen who wou'd confine Knowledge to the Male Part of the Species, and a shining Instance of all those Perfections and softer Graces which Nature has confin'd to the

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Female.

But I offend your Ladyship, whilst I please my self and the Reader; therefore I shall only beg your Leave to give a Sanction to this Comedy, by informing [Page] the World that its Representation was twice honoured with your Ladyship's Presence, and am, with the greatest Respect,

Madam, Your Ladyships most obedient most humble Servant, Henry Fielding.

PROLOGUE.

Occasioned by this Comedy's succeeding that of the Provok'd Husband.

Spoken by Mr. *MILLS*.

As when a Raphael's Master-Piece has been
By the astonish'd Judge, with Rapture seen,
Shou'd some young Artist next his Picture show,
He speaks his Colours faint, his Fancy low;
Though it some Beauties has, it still must fall,
Compar'd to that, which has excell'd in All.
So when, by an admiring, ravish'd Age,
A finish'd Piece is plauded on the Stage,
What Fate, alas! must a young Author share;
Who, deaf to all Entreaties, ventures there?
Yet, too too certain of his weaker Cause,
He claims nor equal Merit, nor Applause.
Compare 'em not: Shou'd Favour do its most,
He, owns by the Comparison, he's lost.
Light, Airy Scenes, his Comick Muse displays,
Far from the Buskin's higher Vein he strays,
By Humour only catching at the Bays:
Humour, still free from an indecent Flame,
Which, shou'd it raise your Mirth, must raise your Shame:
Indecency's the Bane to Ridicule,
And only charms the Libertine, or Fool:
Nought shall offend the Fair One's Ears to-day,
Which they might blush to hear, or blush to say.
No private Character these Scenes expose,
Our Bard, at Vice, not at the Vicious, throws.
If any by his pointed Arrows smart,
Why did he bear the Mark within his Heart?
Since innocently, thus, to please he aims,
Some Merit, surely, the Intention claims:
With Candor, Criticks, to his Cause attend;
Let Pity to his lighter Errors bend,
Forgive, at least; but, if you can, Commend.

SCENE *LONDON*.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

SCENE, the Piazza.

MERITAL, MALVIL.

Merital.

Mr. *Malvil*, good morrow; I thought the Spirit of Champagne wou'd have lengthen'd your Repose this Morning.

Malv.

No, Sir, the Spirit of something else disturbs my Mind too much: an unfortunate Lover and Repose are as opposite as any Lover and Sense.

Mer.

Malapert simile! What is there in Life? what Joys? what Transports which flow not from the Spring of Love? The Birth of Love is the Birth of Happiness, nay even of Life; to breathe without it, is to drag on a phlegmatick insipid Being, and struggle imperfect in the Womb of Nature.

Malv.

What in the name of Fustian's here?

Mer.

Did you not see the Lady *Matchless* last night? what Ecstasies did she impart even at a distance to her Beholders!

Malv.

A beautiful, rich, young Widow in a Front-box, makes as much Noise, as a Blazing-star in the Sky; draws as many Eyes on her, and is as much criticised on in the polite World, as the other in the Learned. With what envious Glances was she attacked by the whole circle of Belles! and what amorous ones by the Gentlemen Proprietors of the Toupet, Snuff-box, and Sword-knot!

Mer.

Nor cou'd all this elevate her to the least Pride or Haughtiness; but she carried it with an Air not conscious of the Envy and Adoration she contracted. That becoming Modesty in her Eyes! that lovely, easy Sweetness in her Smile! that Gracefulness in her Mein! that Nobleness, without Affectation in her Looks! in short, that one compleat Charm in her Person! Such a Woman as this does as much Mischief amongst the Men of Sense

Malv.

As some Beaus do amongst the Women of none. But, by your speaking so feelingly, I shou'd suspect some Mischief here.

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[Claps Merital's Breast.

Mer.

Why that Fort is not impregnable to the Batteries of a fair Eye; but there is a certain beautiful, rich, young Virgin who keeps guard there.

Malv.

Ha! she is a Blazing–star, indeed; where does she live? or rather, where is she worshipped? and in what Street is her Temple?

Mer.

I have described her, and sure my Picture is not so bad as to require its name under it.

Malv.

But it is so good, that I am afraid you hardly took Nature for a Pattern.

Mer.

Thou art always endeavouring to be satirical on the Ladies: pr'ythee, desist; for the name of an ill–natured Wit will slightly ballance the Loss of their Favour. Who wou'd not prefer a dear Smile from a pretty Face?

Malv.

To a Frown from an ugly one But have I never seen this Inestimable?

Mer.

No, Sir, nor the Sun has never seen her but by peeping through a Window; she is kept as close, as a jealous *Spaniard* keeps his Wife, or a City–Usurer his Treasure; and is now brought to Town to be married to that gay Knight, *Sir Apish Simple*.

Malv.

You have a Rival then, there's one Difficulty.

Mer.

Ay, and many Difficulties, which, in Love, are so many Charms, In the first Place, the young Lady's Guardian, *Sir Positive Trap* by Name, is an old, precise Knight, made up of Avarice, Folly, an ill–bred Surliness of Temper, and an odd, fantastick Pride built on the Antiquity of his Family, into which he enrolls most of the great Men he ever heard of. The next is his Lady, who is his absolute Empress; for tho' he be monstrously morose to the rest of the World, he is as foolishly easy, and credulous to his Wife.

Malv.

And she, I suppose, is as easy to the rest of the World, as imperious to him.

Mer.

Then my Mistress is made up of natural Spirit, Wit and Fire; all these she has improved by an intimate Conversation with Plays, Poems, Romances, and such gay Studies, by which she has acquired a perfect Knowledge of the Polite World without ever seeing it, and turned the Confinement of her Person into the Enlargement of her Mind. Lastly, my Rival, but his Character you know already. And these are my Obstacles.

Malv.

But what Objection does the old Knight make to your Pretensions?

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Mer.

Several. My Estate is too small, my Father was no Baronet, and I am no Fool.

Malv.

Those are weighty Objections, I must confess: To evade the first you must bribe his Lawyer, to conquer the second purchase a Title and utterly to remove the last, plead Lover.

Mer.

Kindly advised. But what Success are you like to reap from that Plea with *Vermilia*?

Malv.

Why faith! our Affair is grown dull as a Chancery–Suit; but, if it be much more prolix, my Stock of Love will be so far exhausted, that I shall be like a contested Heir who spends his Estate in the Pursuit of it, and, when his litigious Adversary is overthrown, finds his Possessions reduced to a long Lawyer's Bill for more than he is able to pay.

Mer.

But then your Fates will be different, the one condemned to starve in a Prison, and the other to surfeit in Matrimony–Tho', by what I see, you are in little danger of bringing Matters to that Issue.

Malv.

Hast Thou seen? Come, perhaps you have discovered what, indeed, her late Coldness gives me reason to fear.

Mer.

What?

Malv.

A Rival.

Mer.

Ha, ha, ha! you certainly are the most unfortunate in your Temper, and most an Enemy to yourself of any Man in the World. Be assured, *Jack*, that if after what has passed between you, so long a Service, and so many apparent Signs of the sincerest Passion on your side, and such a manifest Reception of it on hers, she yet jilts you; she has rid you of the greatest Pest in Nature.

Malv.

'Sdeath! cou'd I reason thus with myself, I might think so, but I love her above my Reason. I see my Folly, and despise it, and yet cannot shun it.

Mer.

Well, you are the first in the Class of Romantick Lovers. But, for my Part, I wou'd as soon turn Chymist and search for the Philosopher's Stone, as a Lover to run headlong after an *Ignis Fatuus*, that flies the faster the more it is pursued.

Malv.

These are the known Sentiments of you light, gay, fluttering Fellows; who, like the Weather–cock, never fix long to a Point, 'till you are good for nothing.

Mer.

And you Platonick Lovers, like the Compass, are ever pointing to the same Pole, but never touch it.

ACT I.

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Malv.

You are a sort of Sports—men who are always hunting in a Park of Coquettes, where your Sport is so plenty, that you start fresh Game before you have run down the old.

Mer.

And you are a sort of Anglers ever fishing for Prudes, who cautiously steal, and pamper up their Vanity with your Baits, but never swallow the Hook.

Malv.

But hast thou then discovered any Thing in *Vermilia's* Conduct, that ?

Mer.

That makes me confident you will never gain her, so I advise you to raise the Siege; for you must carry that Garrison by Storm, and, I know, you have not so much Bravery in Love Ha, Amazement! Is not that *Wisemore?*

SCENE II.

WISEMORE, MERITAL, MALVIL.

Wisem.

Mr. *Merital*, Mr. *Malvil*, your humble Servant; I am fortunate, indeed, at my first Arrival to embrace my Friends.

Malv.

Dear *Wisemore*, a thousand Welcomes; what propitious Wind has drove thee to Town?

Wisem.

No Wind propitious to my Inclination, I assure ye, Gentlemen; I had taken leave of this Place long ago, its Vanities, Hurries, and superficial, empty, ill—digested Pleasures.

Mer.

But you have seen your Error, and, like a relenting Nun who had too rashly taken Leave of the World, art returned to enjoy thy Pleasures again.

Wisem.

No, 'tis Business, Business, Gentlemen, that drags me hither; my Pleasures lie another Way, a Way little known to you Gentlemen of the Town.

Malv.

Not so little known as you imagine, *Ned*, nor have you been supposed alone these three years in the Country. 'Tis no Secret that you have had the Conversation of

Wisem.

The Wise, the Learned, the Virtuous. Books, Sir, have been mostly my Companions, a Society preferable to that of this Age. Who wou'd converse with Fools and Fops, whilst they might enjoy a *Cicero* or an *Epicetus*, a *Plato* or an *Aristotle*? Who wou'd waste his Afternoons in a Coffee—House, or at a Tea—Table, to be entertained with Scandal, Lies, Balls, Operas, Intrigues, Fashions, Flattery, Nonsense, and that Swarm of Impertinences which compose the common—place Chat of the World? Who would bear all this, did he know

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the Sweets of Retirement?

Mer.

Let me survey thee a little, that I may be certain you are my old Friend metamorphosed, and no Apparition.

Wisem.

Look ye, Sirs, of all Places in the World, my Spirit wou'd never haunt this. *London* is to me, what the Country is to a gay, giddy Girl, pampered up with the Love of Admiration; or a young Heir just leapt into his Estate and Chariot. It is a Mistress, whose Imperfections I have discovered, and cast off. I know it; I have been a Spectator of all its Scenes. I have seen Hypocrisy pass for Religion, Madness for Sense, Noise and Scurrility for Wit, and Riches for the whole Train of Virtues. Then I have seen Folly beloved for its Youth and Beauty, and revered for its Age. I have discovered Knavery in more Forms then ever *Proteus* had, and traced him through them all, 'till I have lodged him behind a Counter, with the Statute of Bankruptcy in his Hand, and a Pair of gilded Horns in his Pocket.

Mer., Malv.

Ha, ha, ha!

Wisem.

I know the Folly, Foppery, and Childishness of your Diversions I know your Vices too.

Malv.

And hast practised them, to my Knowledge.

Wisem.

So much the more have they contracted my Hate. Oons! If I do not get out of this vile Town in three Days, I shall get out of the World in four.

Mer.

But what earnest Business has drove thee hither now, so much against thy Will?

Malv.

He is married, his Wife has drawn him hither, and he is jealous.

Mer.

Or are you in Law, and have been rid down this Morning by a fat Serjeant or Sollicitor?

Malv.

He has been writing Philosophy, and is come to Town to publish it.

Wisem.

I have been studying Folly, and am come to Town to publish it. I know that Title will sell any Productions, or some of your modern Poets, who hardly merit that Name by their Works, wou'd merit it by starving.

Mer.

But they deal not so openly with the World, for they promise much tho' they perform little. Nay, I've sometimes seen. Treatises where the Author has put all his Wit in the Title-Page.

Wisem.

Why, faith, and politick enough; for few Readers now look farther than the Title-Page.

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Mer.

But pr'ythee what is this Errand of Folly, as you are pleased to term it?

Wisem.

O beyond Conception; I shudder with the Apprehension of its being known. But why do I fear it? Folly or Vice must be of a prodigious Height to over-top the Crowd; but if it did, the tall, over-grown Monster would be admired, and, like other Monsters, enrich the Possessor. I see your Women have gone through with the Transformation and Dress like us, nay, they frequent Coffee-Houses too; I was frightened from one just now by two Girls in Paduasuy Coats, and Breeches.

Malv.

Ha, ha, ha! those were two Beaus, *Ned*.

Wisem.

So much the greater Transformation, for they had, apparently, more of the Woman than the Man about them. But, perhaps, by Them this amphibious Dress may be a significant Calculation, for I have known a Beau with every thing of a Woman but the Sex, and nothing of a Man besides it.

Malv.

They will esteem you for that Assertion.

Wisem.

Why ay, it may recommend them to the Tea-Tables. For the natural Perfections of our Sex, and the unnatural Acquisitions of her own, must be a rare Compound to make a Woman's Idol.

Mer.

Sure, never was Man so altered! Do not affect Singularity this way, for in Town, we look on none to be so great a Fool as a Philosopher, and there is no Fool so out of Fashion.

Wisem.

A certain Sign Fools are in Fashion. Philosophy, is a true Glass, which shews the Imperfections of the Mind as plain as the other of the Body; and, no more than a true Glass, can be agreeable to a Town-Constitution.

Mer.

So, here comes one who will hit your Taste

SCENE III.

To them, RATTLE.

Rattle.

Merital, Malvil, a Buss dear Boys. Ha! hum! what Figure is that?

Mer.

Mr. *Rattle*, pray know my Friend, Mr. *Wisemore*?

Rattle.

That I will gladly. Sir, I am your most obedient, humble Servant, Sir.

Wisem.

SCENE III.

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Sir, I am very much yours.

Rattle.

Well, I know you will be witty upon me, but since the Town will blab, I will put on the Armour of Assurance, and declare boldly, that I am very, very deeply in Love.

Malv.

A bold Declaration, indeed! And what may require some Assurance to maintain, since it is ten to four, Thou hast never spoke to this new Mistress, nay, perhaps, never seen more of her than her Picture.

Rattle.

Her Picture! ha, ha, ha; who can draw the Sun in its Meridian Glories? Neither Painting, Poetry, nor Imagination can form her Image. She is young and blooming as the Spring, gay and teeming as the Summer, ripe and rich as the Autumn.

Malv.

Thy Chymistry has from that one Virtue extracted all the rest, I very modestly suppose.

Mer.

You know, *Harry, Malvil* allows the Sex no Virtues.

Rattle.

That's because they allow him no Favours. But to express my Mistress's Worth, in a Word, and prove it too She is the Lady *Matchless*.

Wisem.

Ha!

[Aside.

Mer.

But what Hopes can you have of succeeding against the Multitudes which swarm in her Drawing-room?

Rattle.

Pugh! *Tom*, you know I have succeeded against greater Multitudes before now and she is a Woman of excellent Sense.

Wisem.

You fix your hopes on a very sound Foundation, Sir; for a Woman of Sense will, undoubtedly, set a just Value on a laced Coat, which Qualification is undeniably yours.

Rattle.

Sir, as I take it, there are other Qualifications appertaining to

Wisem.

But none preferable in the Eyes of some Women, and the Persons of some Men, Sir.

Rattle.

I believe she will find some preferable in the Person of your humble Servant, Sir.

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Wisem.

Say you so! Then know, Sir, I am your Rival there.

Rattle.

Rival, Sir! and do you think to supplant me, Sir?

Wisem.

I think to maintain my Ground, Sir.

Mer.

And is this the Folly you are come to Town to publish? For a Philosopher to go a Widow-hunting is a Folly with a Vengeance.

Wisem. [Aside.]

Am I become a Jest? I deserve it. Why did I come hither, but to be laughed at by all the World! My Friends will deride me out of Love, my Enemies out of Revenge, wise Men from their Scorn, and Fools from their Triumph to see me become as great a Fool as themselves. *[To them.]* I see, by your Mirth, Gentlemen, my Company grows tedious, so I'm your humble Servant.

SCENE IV.

MERITAL, MALVIL, RATTLE.

Mer.

Nay, dear *Ned*.

Rattle.

What queer Bundle of Rusticity is that?

Mer.

A Man of admirable Sense, I assure you. Your Hopes in the Widow now are not worth much.

Rattle.

Pugh! there's a Rival, indeed! Besides, I am sensible that I am the happy He whom she has chosen out of our whole Sex. She is stark mad in Love, poor Soul! and let me alone when I have made an Impression. I tell yee, Sirs, I have had Opportunities, I have had Encouragements, I have had Kisses and Embraces, Lads; but, mum. Now, if you tell one Word, Devil take me, if ever I trust you with a Secret again.

Malv.

You will pardon me, *Harry*; but if I believe one Word of it, may I never know Secret again.

Rattle.

I am glad of that; my Joy makes me blab, but it may be for the Lady's Honour not to have it believ'd.

Malv.

Ay, faith, and for the Honour of her Sense too.

Rattle.

I pumped Sir *Apish*, as you desired; it seems, all Matters are agreed on with the old Folks, he has nothing now but to get his Mistress's own Consent.

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Malv.

That's only a Form; Miss says Yes now after her Father as readily as after the Parson.

Rattle.

Well, well, I thank Fate my Mistress is at her own Disposal.

Mer.

And you did not tell Sir *Apish* I was his Rival? you can keep a Secret?

Rattle.

O inviolably to serve a Friend, and provided there be an Intrigue in the Case. I love Intrigues so well I almost think myself the Son of one.

Malv.

And to publish them so well, that had you been so and known it, your supposed Father wou'd have known his Blessing, and the World his Title.

Rattle.

But why shou'd you think I can't keep a Secret? Now, upon Honour, I never publish any one's Intrigues but my own.

Malv.

And your Character is so publick that you hurt no-body's Name but your own.

Rattle.

Nay, curse take me, if I am ashamed of being publickly known to have an Affair with a Lady, at all.

Malv.

No? but you shou'd be asham'd of boasting of Affairs with Ladies whom it is known you never spoke to.

Mer.

There you are too hard on him, for *Rattle* has Affairs.

Rattle.

And with Women of Rank.

Malv.

Of very high Rank, if their Quality be as high as their Lodgings are.

Rattle.

Pr'ythee, *Malvil*, leave this satirical, ill-natur'd way, or, upon my Word, we pretty Fellows shall not care to be seen in your Company.

Mer.

You must excuse him, he is only envious of your Success, and as the Smiles of a Mistress raise your Gayety, so the Frowns of a Mistress cause his Spleen.

Rattle.

Do they? But you and I, *Tom*, know better: for, curse me, if it be in the Power of the Frowns of the whole Sex to give me an uneasy Moment. Neither do I value their Smiles at a Pinch of Snuff. And yet, I believe, I have

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as few of the first, and as many of the last, as

Mer.

How! how! not value the Widow's Smiles?

Rattle.

Humph! they are Golden ones.

Malv.

Here's a Rogue wou'd persuade us he is in Love, and all the Charms he can find in his Mistress are in her Pocket.

Rattle.

Agad, and that Opinion is not singular. I have known a fine Gentleman marry a rich Heiress with a vast deal of Passion, and bury her at the Month's End with a perfect Resignation.

Malv.

Then his Resignation seems to me much more apparent than his Passion.

Rattle.

You fix his Passion on the wrong Object; it was her Fortune he was so violently enamour'd with, and had that been demanded of him, agad, he wou'd have had no more Resignation than a Lawyer to refund his Fee.

Mer.

I am of *Rattle's* Opinion; for if this was not the general Notion, how wou'd some celebrated Toasts maintain their *Eclat*, who, considered out of the Light of their Fortune, have no more Charms, than Beau *Grin* out of his Embroidery.

Rattle.

Or my Lady *Wrinkle* out of her Paint.

Mer.

And again, others be neglected who have every Charm but Wealth. In short, Beauty is now considered as a Qualification only for a Mistress, and Fortune for a Wife.

Malv.

The Ladies are pretty even with us, for they have learnt to value good Qualities only in a Gallant, and to look for nothing but an Estate in a Husband.

Rattle.

These are rare Sentiments in a Platonick Lover.

Mer.

Well put. How can a Man love, who has so ill an Opinion of the Sex?

Malv.

Merital, you are always touching the Wounds of your Friend, which are too tender to endure it.

Mer.

Well, Gentlemen, are you for the *Mall* this Morning?

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Rattle.

With all my Heart.

Malv.

I have Business, but will meet you there.

Rattle.

Gad, that's well thought on, I must call on some Ladies, but they lie in our Way.

Malv.

Ay, your Ladies commonly lie in every Body's Way.

Mer.

You will find me in the *Mall*, or at *St. James's*.

SCENE V.

MERITAL, Lord FORMAL.

Mer.

Ha! here's a Fool coming, and he is unavoidable. My Lord, your humble Servant; to see you at this End of the Town is a Miracle, and at so early an Hour.

L. Form.

Why, positively, Mr. *Merital*, this is an Hour wherein I seldom make any Excursions farther than my Drawing-Room. But, being a Day of Business, I have rid down two Brace of Chairmen this Morning. I have been, Sir, at three Milliners, two Perfumers, my Bookseller's, and a Fan-shop.

Mer.

Ha, ha, ha! a very tiresome Circuit.

L. Form.

It has exagitated my Complexion to that Exorbitancy of *Vermeille*, that I shall hardly reduce it to any tolerable Consistency under a Fortnight's Course of Acids.

Mer.

I think, my Lord, it is hardly worth while to be concerned about Natural Colours, now we are arrived at such a Perfection in Artificial.

L. Form.

Pardon me. We have, indeed, made some Progress in red, but for your pale Colours, they must be acquired naturally, your white Washes will not subdue Cherry-Cheeks.

Mer.

O if that be the Malady, I wou'd prescribe to the Gentlemen a Course of Rakery, and to the Ladies a Course of Vapours.

L. Form.

Well, positively, going into a Bookseller's Shop is to me the last of Fatigues, and yet it is a necessary one: for since the Ladies have divided their Time between Cards and Reading, a Man, to be agreeable to them, must

Love in Several Masques

understand something of Books, as well as Quadrille.

Mer.

I am afraid, if this Humour continue, it will be as necessary in the Education of a pretty Gentleman to learn to read, as to learn to dance.

L. Form.

Why, I'll tell you how I do. By going to a Bookseller's Shop once a Month, I know the Titles and Authors of all the new Books: So when I name one in Company, it is, you know, of consequence supposed I have read it; immediately some Lady pronounces Sentence, either favourable, or not, according as the Fame of the Author and her Ladyship's Cards run high or low, then good Manners enrolls me in her Opinion.

Mer.

A very equitable Court of Justice truly

L. Form.

Reading, Sir, is the worst Thing in the World for the Eyes; I once gave into it, and had in a very few Months gone through almost a dozen Pages in *Cassandra*. But I found it vastly impaired the Lustre of my Eyes. I had, Sir, in that short Time perfectly lost the direct Ogle But I lose Time for I'm going to make a Visit just by a I presume, you hear that I intend shortly to quarter my Coat of Arms?

Mer.

The World, my Lord, is rather amazed how my Lord *Formal* has so long withstood such Temptations.

L. Form.

Why truly I have had as many Temptations as any Man. But I have ever laid it down as a Maxim that a Wife shou'd be very rich. Men who do not know the World will talk of Virtue and Beauty. Now, in my Opinion, Virtue is so scarce, it is not worth the looking after; and Beauty so common, it is not worth the keeping.

Mer.

Do you think a fine Woman so trifling a Possession, my Lord?

L. Form.

Why a fine Woman is a very fine Thing and so is a fine House, I mean to entertain your Friends with: for they, commonly, enjoy both, with the additional Pleasure of Novelty, whilst they pall on your own Taste.

Mer.

This from you, my Lord, is surprizing. Sure, you will allow some Women to be virtuous.

L. Form.

O yes. I will allow an ugly Woman to be as virtuous as she pleases, just as I will a poor Man to be covetous. But Beauty in the Hands of a virtuous Woman, like Gold in those of a Miser, prevents the Circulation of Trade.

Mer.

It is rather like Riches in the Possession of the Prudent. A virtuous Woman bestows her Favours on the Deserving, and makes them a real Blessing to the Man who enjoys her; whilst the vicious one, like a squandering Prodigal, scatters them away; and, like a Prodigal, is often most despised by those to whom she has been most kind.

Love in Several Masques

L. Form.

This from the gay Mr. *Merital* is, really, very surprizing.

Mer.

Yes, my Lord, the gay Mr. *Merital* now stands Candidate for a Husband. So you cannot wonder that I wou'd persuade the Ladies of my good Principles, which may engage some or other to chuse me.

L. Form.

It will as soon engage a Country Borough to chuse you Parliament–Man. But I must take an abrupt Leave.

For

he Sweetness of your Conversation has perfumed my Senses to the Forgetfulness of an Affair, which being of a consequential Essence, obliges me to assure you that I am your humble Servant.

SCENE VI.

MERITAL alone.

Prince of Coxcombs! 'sDeath! 'tis in the Mouths of such Fellows as these, that the Reputations of Women suffer; for Women are like Books. Malice and Envy will easily lead you to the Detection of their Faults; but their Beauties good Judgment only can discover, and Good–nature relish. And Woman, that noble Volume of our greatest Happiness,

Which to the Wise affords a rich Repast,
Fools only censure from their Want of Taste.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

SCENE Lady Matchless's House.

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA.

Lady Matchless.

Upon my Word, *Vermilia*, you wrong me, if you think Noise, Equipage or Flattery give me any real Pleasure; it is, indeed, a pleasing Triumph for a Prisoner eloped, to reflect on her past Confinement, and present Freedom; freed from that Torment, an injurious Husband: One who but he is gone, and, I hope, to Heaven.

Verm.

That's a generous Wish, my Dear; and yet I believe it is the Wish of many whose Husbands deserve a worse Place.

La. Match.

You mean, during the Life of a bad Husband; but those Prayers, then, flow more from Self–interest than Generosity; for who wou'd not wish her Spouse in Heaven, when it was the only way to deliver herself out of a Hell?

Love in Several Masques

Verm.

True, indeed. But yours are the Efforts of pure Good–nature, you pray for the Happiness of your Tyrant now you are delivered out of his Power.

La. Match.

Ah! poor Man! Since I can say nothing to his Advantage, let him sleep in Peace; my Revenge shall not be on his Memory, but his Sex; that Part of it which I know wou'd follow his Example, were they but in his Place.

Verm.

You have Opportunities enough of Revenge, and Objects enough to execute it upon; for, I think, you have as many Slaves in your Assemblies, as the *French King* in his Galleys.

La. Match.

Why, really, I sometimes look on my Drawing–Room as a little Parliament of Fools, to which every different Body sends its Representatives. Beaus of all sorts. The courtly Lord, who addresses me with a formal, well–bred Dissimulation. The airy Sir *Plume*, who always walks in the Minuet–Step, and converses in *Recitativo*.

Verm.

And is a *Narcissus* in every thing but Beauty.

La. Match.

Then the robust Warrior, who proceeds by way of Storm or Siege. The Lawyer, who attacks me, as he wou'd a Jury, with a Cringe, and a Lie at the Tip of his Tongue. The Cit, who wou'd cheat me by way of Bargain and Sale. And your settling Country Esquire, who wou'd put my Life into half his Estate, provided I wou'd put his whole Family's into all mine.

Verm.

There is a more dangerous, tho' a more ridiculous Fool than any of these, and that is a fine Gentleman, who becomes the Disguise of a Lover worse than any you have named.

La. Match.

O, ay; a Man of Sense acts a Lover, just as a *Dutchman* wou'd a *Harlequin*. He stumbles at every Straw we throw in his way, which a Fop wou'd skip over with Ease.

Verm.

But pray, my Dear, what Design have you in View from all these Lovers?

La. Match.

The very Design Nature had when she formed them, to make Fools of them.

Verm.

But you will not be surprized, if I admire that you give the least Encouragement to the finest Gentlemen.

La. Match.

Indeed, I approve your Remark. Why, it proceeds from this Reason; that of Love, like other Fevers, is only dangerous to a rich Constitution, and therefore I am cautious of giving a Distemper which I do not intend to cure for I have no absolute Intention ever to marry again.

Verm.

Nor absolute Resolution against it, I dare swear.

SCENE VI.

Love in Several Masques

La. Match.

To say the Truth, I cannot positively affirm I have: nor, if I had, am I confident I shou'd be able to keep it. For when Sir *William* died, I made a secret Resolution never to run a second Hazard: but a at the Year's End, I don't know how a I had like to have fallen into the Snare again.

Verm.

Well, and by what lucky Chance delivered?

La. Match.

The very Night before our intended Marriage, I flew away to *London*, and left my poor disappointed Swain to vent his Passion to the Wind.

Verm.

O what a Profusion was there of Sighs, Vows, Prayers, Oaths, Tears and Curses! And so you are fled to *London* as a Place of Security against Love–Debts? I know not why it is, but certainly a Woman is the least liable to play the Fool here; perhaps, the Hurry of Diversions and Company keep the Mind in too perpetual a Motion to let it fix on one Object. Whereas in the Country, our Ideas are more fixed and more Romantick. Courts and Cities have few Heroes or Heroines in Love.

La. Match.

Ah! *Vermilia*, let the jealous Husband learn from Me, there is more Danger in Woods and purling Streams, than in an Assembly or a Play–House. When a beauteous Grove is your Theatre, a murmuring Cascade your Musick, Nature's flowry Landskips your Scene, Heaven only the Spectator, and a pretty Fellow the Actor the Lord knows what the Play will be.

Verm.

But I hope this five Months Absence has restored you to a perfect *Statu quo*.

La. Match.

Had he pursued his Conquest then, I am afraid I shou'd have fallen before him; but he has given Resolution Time to rally, and I am now so fortified against him that all his Attacks wou'd prove in vain.

Verm.

Be not too confident, for I have heard Military Men say, that a Garrison, to be secure, shou'd have its Works well mann'd as well as strong.

SCENE II.

To them CATCHIT.

Catch.

Madam, your Ladyship's Coach is at the Door.

La. Match.

Come, my Dear, by this, I believe, the Park begins to fill.

Verm.

I am ready to wait on you, my Dear. *Catchit*, if Mr. *Malvil* comes you may tell him where I'm gone.

Catch.

SCENE II.

Yes, Madam.

SCENE III.

CATCHIT alone.

Well, sure Nature has not a more ridiculous Creature than a jealous Lover. Never did a Lady in my Profession get more by forging Smiles and favourable Expressions from a Mistress, than I, by making Mr. *Malvil* believe mine values him less than she does. He has promised me a Diamond Ring to discover his Rival. Ay, but how shall I discover his Rival, when he has none? Hum! Suppose I make him one! Ay, but that may make Mischief; well, but that must make for me. Well then. But who shall this Rival be? Ha! Mr. *Merital* is a Favourite of my Lady, and is often here. There is an Appointment too between him and *Helena* to meet here at five my Lady will be at Home too. Now if I cou'd but persuade *Malvil* that that Assignation was meant with him!

[Stands considering.]

SCENE IV.

MALVIL, CATCHIT.

Malv.

Your Servant, pretty Mrs. *Catchit*. What is that pretty Head of yours meditating on?

Catch.

Whatever it be, Sir, it is for your Service; you will be the Death of me, you will. I am always contriving, and plotting, and studying, and lying, and swearing, for you.

Malv.

And you shall see no End of my Gratitude.

Catch.

Nor no Beginning either, I am afraid: you are in my Debt at least five hundred Pound at the Rate of a Guinea a Perjury: if I had carried them to *Westminster-Hall* I had made a better Bargain.

Mal.

Let me enjoy that dear cold Mistress of thine, and thou shalt be paid.

Catch.

I fear that's an uncertain Condition.

Malv.

Ha! what say you?

Catch.

Why, Sir, I say that I say, Sir, that you have the prettiest Ring on your Finger there.

Love in Several Masques

Malv.

'Sdeath! do not torture me.

Catch.

It sparkles so sweetly.

Malv.

Come, you have discovered something. I have a Rival then. *Vermilia* is a Jilt.

Catch.

Yes, marry, have you.

Malv.

Be quick, dear Tormenter.

Catch.

Well, it is the prettiest Ring I ever saw.

Malv.

Here, take it, take any thing, tell me but all thou knowest.

Catch.

O your Servant, Sir; well, you are a charming Man, and one can deny you nothing. I have made such a Discovery.

Malv.

O dear, dear Rogue!

Catch.

This very Morning, has my Lady been praising a certain Gentleman with such Raptures; running him over from Head to Foot with so much Admiration and Fondness! Then every now and then, *Catchit*, (says she) don't you think him an Angel? Hum! a very dark one (says I.) Did you ever see such Eyes, such Teeth, such a Mouth? (says she.) In my Opinion, they are all very poor (says I.) Then such a Shape! such an Air (says she.) Why, ay, the Man wou'd do for a Dancing-Master (says I.) Lud! Madam, (says I) wou'd you wou'd think of poor Mr. *Malvil*. (And, to be sure, the Tears stood in my Eyes when I said it.) O no (says she) I will think of none but *Merital*. Then (says I)

Malv.

Torments and Furies! *Merital*!

Catch.

My Mistress doats on him, and has appointed to meet him.

Malv.

How? where? when?

Catch.

Here, at five.

Malv.

'Sdeath! 'tis impossible.

SCENE III.

Love in Several Masques

Catch.

It may be impossible, perhaps; but it is true.

Malv.

Merital a Villain! *Vermilia* a Jilt! Then the whole World's an Illusion.

[Walks and speaks disorderly.]

D'ye hear; do not disclose a Word of this to any one.

Catch.

You may depend on me, Sir.

Malv.

But where's *Vermilia*?

Catch.

Gone to the Park with Lady *Matchless*.

Mal.

Be secret, and be diligent, you shall not repent your Pains.

Catch.

Not whilst you have Jealousie in your Head, and Money in your Pocket, Signior. Well, how this Affair will end I know not; but, I am sure, the Beginning has been good.

[Kisses the Ring.]

SCENE V.

Scene Sir Positive Trap's House.

Lady TRAP, HELENA.

Hel.

To be sold! to be put up at Auction! to be disposed of, as a piece of Goods, by way of Bargain and Sale!

La. Trap.

Neice, Neice, you are dealt with, as a piece of rich Goods; you are to be disposed of at a high Price; Sir *Positive* understands the World, and will make good Conditions for you. You will have a young Gentleman, and a pretty Gentleman.

Hel.

Yes; if a good Estate can make a pretty Gentleman.

La. Trap.

Sooner than a pretty Gentleman can make a good Estate. The pretty Gentlemen of our Age know better how to spend, than to get one.

Love in Several Masques

Hel.

Well, well, Madam, my own Fortune is sufficient to make the Man I love happy. And he shall be one whose Merit is his only Riches, not whose Riches are his only Merit.

La. Trap.

The Man you love! O Impudence! I wou'd be ashamed, was I a young Woman, to be even thought to have an indecent Passion for a particular young Fellow.

Hel.

I would, indeed, be ashamed, was I an old Woman, to be known to have an indecent Passion for all Fellows in general.

La. Trap.

Audacious! dare you reflect on Me! on Me for Fellows! who am notorious for my Abhorrence of that beastly Sex. The young Women of our Age, really, are enough to put one out of Countenance.

Hel.

Youth, Madam, always will put Age out of Countenance in Beauty, as Age will Youth in Wisdom: therefore pray, Aunt, don't you pretend to the one, and I'll resign all Pretensions to the other. *La. Trap* .

Do you think you have so much Beauty then, Miss?

Hel.

I think I have enough to do so small an Execution; and, I am sure, I have enough to please my self, and him I desire to please; let the rest of the World think what they will, 'tis not worth my care; I have no Ambition to be toasted in every Company of Men, and roasted in every Assembly of Women: for the Envy of the Women is a necessary Consequence of the Admiration of the Men.

SCENE VI.

To them, Sir POSITIVE TRAP.

Sir Pos.

What Lie are you telling? ha! *La. Trap.*

Justifie me, Deary, justifie me; your Neice says I have an indecent Passion for your whole Sex.

Sir Pos.

That I will, by the Family of the *Traps*. So far from that, Hussy, she hates our whole Sex; she has hardly a decent Passion for her own Husband, because he's a Man.

Hel.

You have hit the Nail on the Head, my dear Uncle.

Sir Pos.

Hussy, Hussy, you are a Disgrace to the Family of the *Traps* . I can hardly believe Sir *Nicodemus Trap* to have been your Grand-father, Sir *Gregory* your Father, and Sir *Positive* your Uncle.

Love in Several Masques

Hel.

Surfeiting Genealogy! ha, ha, ha.

Sir Pos.

Do you ridicule your Ancestors, the illustrious Race of *Traps* ?

Hel.

No, Sir, I honour them so far, that I am resolved not to take a Fool into the Family.

Sir Pos.

Do you mean Sir *Apish*, Minx? Do you call a Baronet a Fool, and one of so ancient a House? Hussy, the *Simples* and the *Traps* are the two ancientest Houses in *England*. Don't provoke me, don't provoke me, I say; I'll send for Sir

Apish immediately: You shall be wedded, bedded, and executed in half an Hour.

Hel.

Indeed! executed? O barbarous!

Sir Pos.

These Girls love Plain-dealing. She wants it *in puris naturalibus*.

[Half aside.

La. Trap.

Had you heard her just now, you wou'd have thought her ripe for any thing; I protest she made me blush.

Sir Pos.

O monstrous! make my Lady Wife blush!

Hel.

She who did that, I am sure, was ripe for any thing.

Sir Pos.

Hussy, you are no *Trap*; you have nothing of the *Traps* in you. The Midwife put a Cheat on Sir *Gregory*. *La. Trap* .

I have wonder'd how a Creature of such Principles, cou'd spring up in a Family so noted for the Purity of its Women.

Sir Pos.

She shall change her Name to-morrow, prepare to receive Sir *Apish*, for this is the last day of your Virginity.

Hel.

Do you look on my Consent as unnecessary then? For he has never made any Addresses to me.

Sir Pos.

Addresses to you! Why I never saw my Lady there 'till an Hour before our Marriage. I made my Addresses to her Father, her Father to his Lawyer, the Lawyer to my Estate, which being found a *Smithfield* Equivalent the Bargain was struck. Addressing quotha! What need have young People of Addressing, or any thing, 'till they come to Undressing? *La. Trap*.

Ay, this Courtship is an abominable, diabolical Practice, and the Parent of nothing but Lies and Flattery. The

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first who used it was the Serpent to beguile *Eve*.

Sir Pos.

Oons! and it hath beguiled above half the Women since. I hope to see the time, when a Man may carry his Daughter to Market with the same lawful Authority, as any other of his Cattle. But for you, Madam, to-morrow's your Wedding-day. I have said it, and I am positive.

Hel.

Yes. But know, Uncle of mine, that I am a Woman, and may be as positive as you, and so your Servant.

La. Trap.

After her, Honey; don't leave her to herself in this Rage.

Sir Pos.

I'll bring her to herself, by the Right-hand of the *Traps*.

SCENE VII.

Lady TRAP alone.

If *Helena* be *Sir Simple's* to-morrow, I have but this Day for my Design on *Merital*. Some way he must know my Love: But shou'd he reject it and betray me! Why, if he does, 'tis but denying it bravely, and my reserv'd Behaviour has raised me such a Reputation of Virtue, that he wou'd not be believed. Yet how to let him know! Shou'd I write! that were too sure a Testimony against me; and yet that's the only way. My Neice goes to *Lady Matchless's* this Evening. I'll make him an Assignation, in her Name, to meet by dark, in the Dining-room. But how to make it in her Name!

[Pauses.

Ha! I have thought of a Way, and will about it instantly.

SCENE VIII.

HELENA, and Sir POSITIVE TRAP.

Hel.

Don't tease me so, dear Uncle. I can never like a Fool, I abhor a Fop.

Sir Pos.

But there are three thousand Pounds a Year, and a Title. Do you abhor those, Hussy?

Hel.

His Estate I don't want, and his Title I despise.

Sir Pos.

Very fine! very fine! Despise a Title! Hussy, you are no *Trap*; Oons! I believe you are no Woman either. What, wou'd you take a scandalous, sneaking Mister, one who can't make you a Lady?

Hel.

Since nothing else will do, I am engaged by all the strength of Vows and Honour.

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Sir *Pos.*

Engaged! Why was not the Widow *Jilt* engaged to Mr. *Good-land*, and left him immediately on the Arrival of Sir *Harry Rich*, whom she left again for my Lord *Richmore*? Never tell me of Engagements, Contracts, and I don't know what. Mere Bug-bears to frighten Children with; all Women of Sense laugh at them. You are no more obliged to stand to your Word when you have promised a Man, than when you have refused him. The Law dissolves all Contracts without a valuable Consideration; or, if it did not, a valuable Consideration would dissolve the Law.

Hel.

Perhaps, Sir, I'll never marry at all.

Sir *Pos.*

Hussy, Hussy, you have a sanguine Constitution. You will either marry, or do worse.

Hel.

In my Opinion, I can't do worse, than to marry a Fool.

Sir *Pos.*

A very fine Notion, indeed! I must sell her soon, or she will go off but as a piece of Second-hand Goods.

[Aside.]

SCENE IX.

To them, Lady TRAP with a Letter.

La. Trap.

O my Dear, see what good luck has presented us with. A Letter from your Neice to *Merital*.

Sir Positive reads.

Dear Sir,

This Afternoon my Uncle will be abroad, to-morrow I am intended for Sir Apish. I need say no more, than at six this Evening, you will find in the Dining-room Yours,

Helena.

P. S. I shall be alone, and in the Dark: Ask no Questions. but come up directly.

But, Dreary, this is not her Hand.

La. Trap.

Do you think, Child, she would not disguise it as much as possible?

Sir *Pos.*

I smell it. I see it. I read it. 'Tis her Hand with a Witness. See here, thou vile Daughter of Sir *Gregory*. An Assignment to a Man.

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Hel.

Insupportable! to confront me with a Forgery!

Sir Pos.

Your own Forgery, Hussy.

La. Trap.

But, really, it does not look very like her Hand.

Sir Pos.

Let me see, Hum! 'tis not exactly, very, very like. Methinks, 'tis not like at all.

[Looking through Spectacles.

La. Trap.

This may be some Counterfeit. I wou'd engage my Honour she is innocent. Copy it over before your Uncle, my Dear, that will be a Conviction.

Sir Pos.

Copy it over before *Sir Positive*, Hussy.

Hel.

Bring Pen, Ink, and Paper there. You shall not have the least Pretence to accuse me.

Sir Pos.

I would not have thee guilty for the World. I wou'd not have such a Disgrace fall on our noble and ancient Family. It might render us ridiculous to every Upstart.

[Here a Servant brings Pen, &c. Helena writes.

La. Trap.

O horrible! write to a Man! Had I held a Pen, at her Age, with that Design, my Hand wou'd have shook so, that I should have spilt my Ink, with the bare Apprehension.

Hel.

Now, Sir, be convinced, and justifie me.

[Giving the Letter with the Copy to Sir Pos.

Sir Pos.

There is, indeed, no Resemblance. *La. Trap.*

Are you blind? they are both alike to a Tittle.

[Taking them.

Sir Pos.

To a dot. Her Hand to a dot. I'll send for *Sir Apish* immediately. I smell it, a rank Plot! I smell it.

Hel.

You have out-faced me bravely before *Sir Positive*. You may not, perhaps, do so before an impartial Judge.

SCENE X.

Lady TRAP alone.

It is strange that Women shou'd contend for Wit in a Husband, when they may enjoy such an Advantage from having a Fool.

SCENE XI.

St. James's Park.

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA, MERITAL, RATTLE.

Mer.

Indeed, *Vermilia*, it is very barbarous in you to torment poor *Malvil* so. Don't you think, if you shou'd drive him to any desperate Extremity, you wou'd have a great deal to answer for? And I assure you, by Words he has lately dropt, I fear he has some such Design.

Rattle.

Don't you imagine, Widow, that an humble Servant of yours is in as much Danger?

La. Match.

If he be, I wish him a safe Deliverance.

Ver.

Wou'd he have me believe him mad enough to run his Neck into one Noose, because I am not mad enough to run mine into a worse. No, no. You all use those Words, Ropes, Daggers, Swords and Pistols, only as Embellishments of Speech; or, if you have any Design by them, it is to frighten us, not injure yourselves.

La. Match.

But I am resolved not to be alarmed with Threats. Let me see a Gallant fairly swinging And then I'll say, poor *Strephon*, alas! He did love.

Mer.

You might justly say, he had more Love than Reason.

Ver.

Why do you attempt then to persuade us into so despicable an Opinion of your Reason?

Mer.

Malvil says, that's the surest way to your Love: and that the lower we are in your Opinion of our Sense, the higher we are in your Favour. He compares those to two Scales, of which as the one rises the other falls.

La. Match.

And, upon my Word, he is in the right: for who expects Wit in a Lover, any more than good Musick in an *English* Opera, or common Sense in an *Italian* one! They are all three absolute Farces Not but I wou'd have the Creature be a little rational, and able to divert one in the Sullenness of a Monkey or a Paroquet. So as to sing half a favourite Song, or read a new Play, or fill up a Party at *Quadrille*.

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Mer.

As a Chair does at a Country–Dance, or a Country Justice a Chair at a Quarter–Sessions. *La. Match.*
Right. A Lover, when he is admitted to Cards, ought to be solemnly silent, and observe the Motions of his Mistress. He must laugh when she laughs, sigh when she sighs. In short, he shou'd be the Shadow of her Mind. A Lady, in the Presence of her Lover, shou'd never want a Looking–glass, as a Beau, in the Presence of his Looking–glass, never wants a Mistress.

Mer.

Since a Lover is such a ridiculous thing, Madam, e'en turn one into a Husband.

La. Match.

Auh! The very Name throws me into the Vapours

Rattle.

It is a Receipt, which has cured many a vapoured Lady of my Acquaintance.

Mer.

But, Lady *Matchless*, what wou'd you say to a Lover who shou'd address himself to your Reason, and try to convince you of the principal End in the Formation of Woman, and the Benefits of Matrimony, from the Lights of Nature and Religion, disclose to you the System of Platonick Love, and draw his Pretensions from his Wisdom, and his Arguments from his Philosophy.

La. Match.

If he had more Philosophy than Love, I shou'd advise him to seek his Cure from that. But if he had more Love than Philosophy Mercy upon him.

Mer.

Then you have just such a Lover arrived.

La. Match.

Bless us! 'Tis not *Seneca's* Ghost, I hope.

Mer.

No, 'tis the Ghost of a departed Beau, in the Habit of a Country Squire, with the Sentiments of an *Athenian* Philosopher, and the Passion of an *Arcadian* Swain.

La. Match.

This must be *Wisemore*.

[Aside.

Ver.

A motly Piece, indeed. I fancy, my Dear, there is as ridiculous a Variety in this One, as in all the rest of your Admirers.

Rattle.

Variety enough: For by his Dress you wou'd imagine he came from *North Friezland*, and his Manners seem piping hot from the Cape of *Good–Hope*.

La. Match.

Fie! you rally.

Mer.

Why, positively, the poor Man is an apter Object of Pity than of Rallery, and wou'd better become an Elegy

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than a Lampoon. He look'd as melancholly, as ill-natured and as absurd, as I've seen a young Poet who cou'd not out-live the third Night.

Rattle.

Or an old Bride-groom who has out-liv'd the third Night.

Ver.

Dear *Matchless*, let us turn; for I see one coming whom I wou'd avoid.

Mer.

You won't be so cruel! I'll discover you.

Ver.

Do: and I will revenge myself on you to *Helena*.

SCENE XII.

MALVIL, MERITAL.

Malv.

Who were those fine Ladies you parted from?

Mer.

Some of *Rattle's* Acquaintance.

Malv.

Was not *Vermilia* there?

Mer.

She was.

Malv.

Do you act friendly, *Merital*?

Mer.

Ay, faith! and very friendly; for I have been pleading your Cause with the same Earnestness as if I had been your Council in the Affair. I have been a sort of Proxy to you.

Malv.

Confusion!

[Aside.

Mer.

Why, thou art jealous, I believe. Come, do we dine together?

Malv.

I am engaged, but will meet at five.

Mer.

Nay, then I am engaged, and to meet a Mistress.

SCENE XII.

Love in Several Masques

Malv.

A Mistress at five!

Mer.

Ay, Sir, and such a Mistress. But I see something has put you out of Humour: So I will not expatiate on my Happiness: for I know Lovers are, of all Creatures, the most subject to Envy. So, Servant.

SCENE XIII.

MALVIL alone.

Malv.

And thou shalt find they are subject to Rage too. Do you laugh at your successful Villany! Yet his open Carriage wou'd persuade me he has no ill Design. This Morning too he told me of another Mistress. But that may be false, and only intended to blind my Suspicions. It must be so. *Vermilia's* fond Expressions, her Appointment, his denying her. O they are glaring Proofs! and I am now convinced. Yet all these Appearances may be Delusions. Well, I will once more see her. If I find her innocent, I am happy; if not, the knowing her Guilt may cure my Love. But Anxiety is the greatest of Torments.

In Doubt, as in the Dark, Things sad appear,
More dismal, and more horrid than they are.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

SCENE Lady Matchless's House.

MALVIL, VERMILIA.

Malv.

How have I deserved this Usage, Madam? By what Behaviour of mine, have I provoked you to make me that despicable thing the Dangler after a Woman who is carrying on an Affair with another Man?

Verm.

An Affair, Sir!

Malv.

You know too well the Justice of my Accusation, nor am I Stranger to your soft, languishing Fondness, your wanton Praises of my Rival, of *Merital*, your walking in the Park, your Appointment with him.

Verm.

O Jealousie, thou Child and Bane of Love! Rash, dreaming Mad-man, cou'd you awake from your Errors, and see how grossly you abuse me, if you had the least Spark of Humanity left, it wou'd raise a Flame of Horrour in your Soul.

Love in Several Masques

Malv.

O, it were worse than ten thousand Deaths to find I have wrong'd you, and I wou'd undergo them all to prove you innocent.

Verm.

To think you innocent I must think you mad. Invention cannot counterfeit any other Excuse.

Malv.

A Reflection on your own Conduct, Madam, will justify every Part of mine, but my Love.

Verm.

Name not that noble Passion. A Salvage is as capable of it as thou art. And do you tax me with my Love to *Merital*? He has as many Virtues as thou hast Blemishes. The proudest of our Sex might glory in his Addresses, the meanest might be ashamed of thine. Go, curse thy Fate, and Nature, which has made thee an Object of our Scorn: but thank thy Jealousie, which has discovered to thee that thou art the Derision of a successful Rival, and my Aversion.

SCENE II.

MALVIL, CATCHIT. [Malvil stands as in amaze.]

Catch.

O Gemini! Sir, what's the matter? I met my Mistress in the greatest Rage.

Malv.

You know enough, not to have asked that. Here, take this Letter, and when *Merital* comes to his Appointment, you will find an Opportunity to deliver it him. Be sure to do it before he sees your Mistress; for I have contrived a Scheme in it that will ruin him for ever with her. You will deliver it carefully?

Catch.

Yes, indeed, Sir.

Malv.

And learn what you can, and come to my Lodgings To-morrow Morning take this Kiss, as an Earnest of what I'll do for you.

SCENE III.

CATCHIT alone.

Catch.

Methinks, I long to know what this Scheme is. I must know, and I will know. 'Tis but Wafer-sealed. I'll open it and read it. But here are the Ladies.

SCENE IV.

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA.

Love in Several Masques

La. Match.

Ha, ha, ha! and so the Creature has taken a Fit of Jealousy into his Head, and has been raving most tragically! Don't look so dull, Dear; what, because he gives himself Airs, will you give yourself the Vapours?

Verm.

I am concerned only that I should ever have favoured him in my Opinion.

La. Match.

Indeed, you have no Cause: for you have Revenge in your own Hand, since nothing but Matrimony will cure his Phrenzy.

Verm.

Which Cure when I afford him, may I

La. Match.

O no Oaths, no Imprecations. But, if any, let it be this. When next you are inclined to forgive him, may he be so stubborn not to ask it; that, I am sure, is Curse enough.

Verm.

Nay, but, dear *Matchless*, do not rally me on that Subject.

La. Match.

Is there any Subject fitter for Raillery? The Wise, you know, have always made a Jest of Love.

Verm.

Yes, and Love has made a Jest of the Wise, who seem to have no other Quarrel to it, but that they are the least successful in it.

La. Match.

Nay, if you are an Advocate for Love, I shall think

Verm.

What?

La. Match.

That you are in Love.

Verm.

Well, you are a censorious, ill-natur'd, teasing *La. Match.*

Don't be out of Humour, Child. I tell you the Fellow's your own.

SCENE V.

To them RATTLE.

Rattle.

Ladies, your humble Servant.

La. Match.

O, you are most opportunely come, for poor *Vermilia* is horridly in the Vapours, and you are, we know, a skilful Physician.

Love in Several Masques

Rattle.

But what signifies Skill in the Physician, when the Patient will not take his Advice?

Verm.

When he mistakes the Disease, his Advice is not like to be safe. And, I assure you, I never was less in the Vapours than now.

La. Match.

That's a dangerous Symptom: for when a sick Lady thinks herself well, her Fever must be very high.

Rattle.

Pox take her, wou'd she was dead: for she's always in my way.

[Aside.

Verm.

This is acting Physicians, indeed, to persuade me into a Distemper.

Rattle.

I believe, Madam, you are in very little Danger. But, Widow, the whole Town wonders you are not surfeited with so much Courtship.

Verm.

Courtship, Mr. *Rattle*, is a Dish adapted to the Palate of our Sex.

Rattle.

But there is a second Course more agreeable, and better adapted to a Lady's Palate. Courtship is but a long, dull Grace to a rich Entertainment, both equally, Banes to sharp-set Appetite, and equally, out of Fashion; the Beau-monde say only *Benedicite*, and then fall on.

La. Match.

No. Courtship is to Marriage, like a fine Avenue to an old falling Mansion beautified with a painted Front; but no sooner is the Door shut on us, than we discover an old, shabby, out-of-fashion'd Hall, whose only Ornaments are a Set of branching Stag's Horns lamentable Emblems of Matrimony.

SCENE VI.

Lady MATCHLESS, Lord FORMAL, VERMILIA, RATTLE.

L. Form.

Ladies, I am your most obedient, and obsequious humble Servant. Mr. *Rattle*, I am your devoted.

Rattle.

That's an over-strained Compliment, my Lord: we all know you are entirely devoted to the Ladies.

La. Match.

That's an over-strain'd Compliment to us; for we must be all proud of so elegant a Devoté! *L. Form.* Your Ladyship has infused more Pride into the ingredients of my Nature, by that one Word, than was ever in them since their first mingling into Man. And if my Title, or the Opinion which the World has (I will not say justly) conceived of me, can render me agreeable to the Fountain of Beauty, I wou'd, with Pleasure, throw off

Love in Several Masques

all other Canals, and let the pure Current of my Joys flow from her alone. *La. Match.*
That were to draw the Envy of the whole World on me; and wou'd be as unreasonable, as a Desire to monopolize the Light of the Sun. *L. Form.*

As your Ladyship says, I have been compared to the Sun. But the Comparison will break, if pursued: for the Sun shines on all alike; whereas my Influence wou'd be strictly confin'd to one Centre.

Rattle.

Methinks, my Lord, you who profess Good-breeding, shou'd be less particular before Ladies.

Verm.

O, we may excuse Particularity in a Lover; besides, Lord *Formal* is so perfect a Master of Good-breeding, that if he launched a little out of the common Road, the World wou'd esteem it a Precedent, and not an Error.

La. Match.

O, we shall never out-shine the Court of *France*, till Lord *Formal* is at the Head of *Les Affaires de Beau Monde*. *L. Form.*

Your Ladyship's Compliments are such an Inundation, that they hurry the weak Return of mine down their Stream. But, really, I have been at some Pains to inculcate Principles of Good-breeding, and have laid down some Rules concerning Distance, Submission, Ceremonies, Laughing, Sighing, Ogling, Visits, Affronts, Respect, Pride, Love.

Verm.

Has your Lordship published this Book? It must be mightily read, for it promises much And then the Name of the Author

Rattle. [Aside.]

Promises nothing.

L. Form.

Why, I am not determin'd to print it at all; for there are an ill-bred Set of People called Criticks whom I have no great Notion of encountering.

SCENE VII.

To them, Sir POSITIVE TRAP, Sir APISH SIMPLE, HELENA.

Sir Pos.

Ladies, your humble Servant; your Servant, Gentlemen. *La. Match.*

You are a great Stranger, *Sir Positive*. *Sir Pos.*

Ay, Cousin, you must not take our not visiting you oftner amiss, for I am full of Business, and she there, poor Girl, is never easy but when she is at home. The *Traps* are no gadding Family, our Women stay at Home and do Business.

Rattle. [Aside.]

Their Husbands Business, I believe.

Sir Pos.

They are none of your fidgeting, flirting, flanting Lasses, that sleep all the Morning, dress all the Afternoon, and Card it all Night. Our Daughters rise before the Sun, and go to Bed with Him: The *Traps* are House-wives, Cousin. We teach our Daughters to make a Pye, instead of a Curtsie, and that good old *English Art* of Clear-starching, instead of that Heathenish Gambol, called Dancing. *L. Form.*

Love in Several Masques

Sir, give me Leave to presume to ask your Pardon. Sir *Apish* .

Why, Sir Father of mine, you will not speak against Dancing before the Ladies. Clear–starching, indeed! You will pardon him, Madam, Sir *Positive* is a little *a la Campaigne*.

Sir *Pos*.

Dancing begets Warmth, which is the Parent of Wantonness. It is, Sir, the Great–Grandfather of Cuckoldom. L. *Form*.

O inhuman! it is the most glorious Invention that has been conceived by the Imagination of Mankind, and the most perfect Mark that distinguishes us from the Brutes. Sir *Pos*.

Ay, Sir, it may serve some, perhaps; but the *Traps* have always had Reason to distinguish Them. L. *Form*.

You seem to have misunderstood me, Sir; I mean the polite World from the Savage. L. *Match*.

Have you seen the new Opera, Cousin *Helena*?

Hel.

I never saw an Opera, Cousin, and, indeed, I have a great Curiosity

L. *Form*.

May I presume on the Honour of waiting on you? Sir *Pos*.

Sir, Sir, my Neice has an Antipathy to Musick, it always makes her Head ake. Sir *Apish*.

Ha, ha, ha! Musick make a Lady's Head ake!

Sir *Pos*.

Ay, and her Husband's Heart ake too, by the Right Hand of the *Traps*. L. *Form*.

Pray, Sir, who are the *Traps*? Sir *Pos*.

Why Sir, the *Traps* are a venerable Family. We have had, at least, fifty Knights of the Shire, Deputy–Lieutenants, and Colonels of the Militia in it. Perhaps, the Grand–Mogul has not a nobler Coat of Arms. It is, Sir, a Lion Rampant, with a Wolf Couchant, and a Cat Currant, in a Field Gules. L. *Form*.

It wants nothing but Supporters to be very noble, truly. Sir *Pos*.

Supporters, Sir! It has Six thousand a Year to support its Nobility, and Six thousand Years to support its Antiquity. L. *Form*.

You will give me Leave to presume, Sir, with all the Deference imaginable to your Superiority of Judgment, to doubt whether it be practicable to confer the Title of Noble on any Coat of Arms that labours under the deplorable Deficiency of a Coronet. Sir *Pos*.

How, Sir! Do you detract from the Nobility of my Coat of Arms? if you do, Sir, I must tell you, you labour under a Deficiency of common Sense. La. *Match*.

O fie, Sir *Positive*, you are too severe on his Lordship.

Sir *Pos*.

He is a Lord then, and what of that! an old *English* Baronet is above a Lord. A Title of Yesterday! an Innovation! Who were Lords, I wonder, in the Time of Sir *Julius Cæsar*? And, it is plain, he was a Baronet, by his being called by his Christian Name.

Verm.

Christen'd Name! I apprehended, Sir, that *Cæsar* lived before the Time of Christianity.

Sir *Pos*.

And what then, Madam? He might be a Baronet without being a Christian, I hope. But I don't suppose our Antiquity will recommend us to you; for Women love Upstarts, by the Right Hand of the *Traps* .

SCENE VIII.

To them, WISEMORE.

Wisem.

Ha! Grant me Patience, Heaven. Madam, if five Months Absence has not effaced the Remembrance of what has passed between us, You will recollect me with blushing Cheeks. Not to blush now, were to forsake your Sex.

La. Match.

You have forsaken your Humanity, Sir, to affront me thus publickly.

Wisem.

How was I deceived by my Opinion of your good Sense! But *London* wou'd seduce a Saint. A Widow no sooner comes to this vile Town, than she keeps open House for all Guests. All, all are welcome. Your Hatchments were at first intended to repel Visitants; but they are now hung out for the same hospitable End, as the Bills, *Lodgings to Let*, with this Difference only, that the one invites to a Mercenary, the other to a free Tenement.

Rattle.

This Behaviour, Sir, will not be suffered here.

Sir Apish.

No, Sir, this Behaviour, Sir, will not be suffered here, Sir.

L. Form.

Upon my Title, it is not altogether consonant to the Rules of consummate Good-breeding. *La. Match.* Pray, Gentlemen, take no Notice.

Wisem.

Madam, I may have been too rude; I hope you'll pardon me: the sudden Surprize of such a Sight hurried away my Senses, as if I sympathized with the Objects I beheld. But I have recovered them. My Reason cools, and I can now paint out your Errors. Start not at that Word, nor be offended that I do it before so many of your Admirers: for tho' my Colours be never so lively, the weak Eye of their Understanding is too dim to distinguish them. They will take them for Beauties. They will adore you for them. You may have a Coronet doubtless. A large Jointure is as good a Title to a Lord, as a Coronet is to a fine Lady.

La. Match.

Ha, ha, ha! witty, I protest, and true; for, in my Opinion, a Lord is the prettiest Thing in the World. *L. Form.* And your Ladyship may make him the happiest Thing in the World.

Wisem.

O Nature, Nature, why didst thou form Woman, in Beauty the Master-piece of the Creation, and give her a Soul capable of being caught with the tinsel Outside of such a Fop as this! This empty, gaudy, nameless Thing!

L. Form.

Let me presume to tell you, that nameless Thing will be agreeable to the Ladies, in spite of your Envy.

Wisem.

Love in Several Masques

Madam, by all that's heavenly, I love you more than Life, wou'd I might not say than Wisdom; if it be not in my Power to merit a Return, let me obtain this Grant, that you wou'd banish from you these Knaves, these Vulturs; Wolves are more merciful than They. What is their Desire, but to riot in your Plenty? to sacrifice your boundless Stores to their licentious Appetites? to pay their desponding Creditors with your Gold? to ravage you, ruin you: nay, to make you curse that auspicious Day, which gave you Birth.

L. Form.

This is the rudest Gentleman that ever offended my Ears since they first enjoyed the Faculty of Hearing.

[Aside.

Verm.

This is very unaccountable, methinks. *La. Match.*

Lord, my Dear, don't you know he has been formerly a Beau? and was, indeed, very well received in his Time: 'till going down into the Country, and shutting himself up, in a Study, among a Set of Paper-Philosophers, He, who went in a Butter-fly, came out a Book-worm. Ha, ha, ha!

Omnes.

Ha, ha, ha!

Wisem.

When once a Lady's Raillery is set a running, it very seldom stops 'till it has exhausted all her Wit.

Rattle.

Agad! I wou'd advise you to wade off before the Stream's too high: for your Philosophy will be sure to sink you.

Sir Pos.

Ay, ay, sink sure enough: For, by the Right Hand of the *Traps*, a Lady's Wit is seldom any Thing but Froth.

Rattle.

I have seen it make many a wise Esquire froth at the Mouth before now.

Verm.

That must be a very likely Sign of a Lover, indeed.

Wisem.

O very, very likely; for it is a certain Sign of a Madman.

L. Form.

If those are synonymous Terms, I have long since entered into a State of Distraction.

Wisem.

If I stay, I shall be mad, indeed. Madam, farewell; may Heaven open your Eyes before you are shut into Perdition.

SCENE IX.

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA, HELENA, Lord FORMAL, Sir POSITIVE, Sir APISH, and RATTLE.

La. Match.

Ha, ha, ha, Rustick! Did you ever see such a Creature! *L. Form*

SCENE IX.

Love in Several Masques

No, upon my Title, nor am I perfectly determined what Species of Animals to assign him to, unless he be one of those barbarous Insects the Polite call Country–Squires. Sir *Pos*.

Barbarous! Sir, I'd have you to know there are not better–natured People alive.

Hel. [Aside.]

I am uneasy at this Disappointment of *Merital* Sir, my Aunt will be at home before us.

Sir *Pos*.

So she will, *Chucky*. Lookee, Cousin, you see the *Traps* don't love gadding. L. *Form*.

May I presume to lead you to your Coach? Sir *Pos*.

Sir, I always lead my Neice myself; it's the Custom of the *Traps*. L. *Form*.

Sir, your most obedient and obsequious humble Servant.

SCENE X.

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA, Lord FORMAL, Sir APISH and RATTLE.

L. *Form*.

If they are all like you, the *Traps* are the worst bred Family in *Europe*.

[Aside.]

I presume that Gentleman has some Heiress with him.

Sir *Apish*.

Why, she is to be my Wife to–morrow morning.

La. *Match*.

How, Sir *Apish*! This is surprizing. Sir *Apish*.

Why, indeed, I do not like Country Education; but then I consider that the Town Air will produce Town–breeding: for there was Lady *Rig*, who, when first she came to Town, nothing was ever so aukward. But now she swims a Minuet, and sits you eight and forty Hours at *Quadrille*.

L. *Form*.

Her Ladyship is indebted to my Instructions, for 'tis well known, before I had the Honour of her Acquaintance, she has publickly spoke against that divine Collection of polite Learning written by Mr. *Gulliver*; but now, the very Moment it is named, she breaks out into the prettiest Exclamation, and cries, O the dear, sweet, pretty, little Creatures, Oh! Gemini! wou'd I had been born a *Lilliputian*. La. *Match*. But methinks, Sir *Apish*, a Lady who has seen the World shou'd be more agreeable to one of your refined Taste; besides, I have heard you say, you like a Widow. Sir *Apish*.

Ah! *l'Amour*! a perfect Declaration! She is in love with me, *Mardie*!

[Aside.]

Ah! Madam, if I durst declare it, there is a certain Person in the World, who, in a certain Person's Eye, is a more agreeable Person, than any Person, amongst all the Persons, whom Persons think agreeable Persons.

La. *Match*.

SCENE X.

Love in Several Masques

Whoever that Person is, she, certainly, is a very happy Person. Sir *Apish*.

Ah! Madam, my Eyes sufficiently, and evidently declare that that Person, is no other Person, than your Ladyship's own Person.

La. Match.

Nay, all this I have drawn on my self. *L. Form.*

Your Ladyship's Eyes are two Loadstones that attract the Admiration of our whole Sex; their Virtues are more refined than the Loadstone's; for you, Madam, attract the golden Part.

Rattle.

Come, Gentlemen, are you for the Opera?

L. Form.

Oh! by all means. Ladies, your most humble Servant. Sir *Apish* .

Your Ladyship's everlasting Creature.

SCENE XI.

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA.

Verm.

And pray, my Dear, what do you mean by an additional Lover?

La. Match.

To deliver my Cousin *Helena* from so detestable a Match. She intreated it of me, and I believe I have now done her Business, and am a successful Rival.

SCENE XII.

To them, CATCHIT.

Catch.

Oh Madam, I have been waiting this half Hour for an Opportunity. There's a terrible Scene of Mischief going forwards. Mr. *Malvil* , has been taxing me about Mr. *Merital*, and so, I let drop a few Words, and so, he has taken a Fit of Jealousie, and so see the Consequence.

[Gives an open Letter.

Verm.

Ha! 'tis a Challenge! How came you by it?

Catch.

Why, Madam, he had heard that Mr. *Merital* had an Appointment here, and so, he desired me to give him this Letter, and so, and so

Verm.

And so, you had the Curiosity to open it?

Love in Several Masques

La. Match.

Since it has given us an Opportunity to prevent Mischief, you must pardon her.

Verm.

Prevent! No, I'll further it rather.

La. Match.

But, my Dear, consider, here is the Life of the Innocent as well as Guilty at Stake.

Catch.

O dear Madam, don't let poor Mr. *Merital* suffer for my Fault.

Verm.

Your Fault!

Catch.

If you will pardon me, Madam, I'll discover the whole Mistake.

La. Match.

On that Condition, I'll assure your Pardon.

Catch.

Why, Madam, I had heard that Mrs. *Helena* was to be here at five, and so I sent word to Mr. *Merital*; and Mr. *Malvil* coming in at that Time, (which was when your Ladyship went to the Park this Morning) I dropt a Word or two about meeting a Mistress here, and so, I suppose, he thought it was your Ladyship, and so, this Afternoon he gave me a Letter, which I must own my Curiosity

Verm.

Very fine, indeed!

La. Match.

I have a Thought just risen, which may turn this Accident into a very lucky Scene of Diversion. Mistress *Catchit*, can you not change the name of *Merital* on the Superscription, into that of *Wisemore*?

Catch.

O Madam, I am dextrous at those Things.

La. Match.

Come in then, and I'll tell you farther. Give me your Hand, *Vermilia*; take my Word for it, Child, the Men are very silly Creatures; therefore let us laugh at Mankind, And teach them that, in Spight of all their Scorn, Our Slaves they are, and for our Service born.

SCENE XIII.

Scene, Sir Positive Trap's House.

Lady TRAP discovered, and then MERITAL.

La. Trap.

Every Thing is prepared, now is the happy Hour. I hear some Steps, 'tis surely he. Who's there? My Love?

SCENE XIII.

Love in Several Masques

Mer.

My Life! my Soul! my Joy!

La. Trap.

Soft, my Aunt will hear us.

Mer.

Oh! name her not. She is a perfect Antidote to Love. Let these blessed Moments be spent in nothing but soft Caresses; Oh! let me breathe out my fond Soul on thy Lips, and let thine own inform thee what I'd say; it will, I know, be tender as my Thoughts.

La Trap. [Aside.]

What Fools Men are to make Bustles about particular Women, when they know not one from another in the dark?

Mer.

But say, my Life, what Method shall I contrive for your Escape? Consider, you are in the Jaws of Wretches, who wou'd for a little Profit see you miserable for ever.

La. Trap.

I must blame my ill-advised Boldness, in trusting myself alone, even with you. I fear the Frailty of my own Sex, and the Streight of yours.

Mer.

Not infant Babes can love their tender Mothers with more Innocence. Sure, my *Helena* has observed nothing in my Conduct to ground such a Suspicion on. But let us not trifle. Go with me now, do not trust your Aunt, she has Cunning enough to deceive a thousand *Argos's*.

La. Trap.

Nay, you have no Reason to asperse my Aunt, she always speaks well of you, and I hate Ingratitude.

[Here Helena entring with a Candle, overhearing Lady Trap, blows it out, retires to the Corner of the Scene and listens.

Mer.

'Tis the Aunt herself. What a Nose have I, to mistake a Bunch of Hemlock for a Nose-gay of Violets! I don't know the Meaning of this, but I'll try how far she will carry it; perhaps, I may blind her Suspicions for the future.

[Aside.

Come, come, Madam, contrive some Way for an Escape, or I shall make use of the present Opportunity. My Passion must be cooled.

La. Trap. [In a low Voice.]

I'll call my Aunt, if you dare attempt.

Mer.

She is here already, Madam. Ha, ha, ha, did you think I did not know a fine Woman from a green Girl? Cou'd

Love in Several Masques

not my warm, vigorous Kisses inform you that I knew on whom they were bestowed? You must long since have discover'd my Passion for your Neice to have been a Counterfeit, a Covering on my Flame for you. Be assured, Madam, she has nothing agreeable to Me but her Fortune. Wou'd you manage wisely, you might secure yourself a Gallant, and your Gallant an Estate.

La. Trap.

Cou'd I believe you, Sir, it were an Affront to my Virtue.

Mer.

Ah! Madam, whom did you expect just now, when, with a languishing Sigh, you cried, Who's there? My Love? That's not a Name for a Husband?

La. Trap.

Since I am discovered, I will own

Mer.

Let me kiss away the dear Word, Brandy and Assafoetida, by *Jupiter*.

[Aside.

La. Trap.

But will you be a Man of Honour?

Mer. [Aloud]

For-ever, Madam, for-ever, whilst those bright Eyes conquer all they behold.

The Devil's in it if this does not alarm somebody.

[Aside.

La. Trap.

Softly, Sir, you will raise the House.

Mer. [Aside.]

I am sure, I never wanted Relief more.

La. Trap.

Ha! I am alone, in the dark, a Bed-Chamber by, if you shou'd attempt my Honour, who knows what the Frailty of my Sex may consent to? Or, if you shou'd force me, am I, poor weak Woman, able to resist? Ay, but then there is Law and Justice, yet you may depend too fatally on my Good-nature.

Mer.

Consider, Madam, you are in my Power; remember your Declaration. I had your Love from your own dear Lips. Consider, well, the Temptation of so much Beauty, the Height of my offered Joys, the Time, the Place, and the Violence of my Passion. Think on this, Madam, and you can expect no other than that I shou'd this

Love in Several Masques

Moment seize on all my Transports.

La. Trap.

If you shou'd Heaven forgive you.

Mer. [louder still.]

Yet, to convince you of my Generosity, you are at your Liberty. I will do nothing without your Consent.

La. Trap.

Then to shew you what a Confidence I repose in your Virtue, I vow to grant whate'er you ask.

Mer. [very loud]

And to shew you how well I deserve that Confidence, I vow never to tempt your virtuous Ears with Love again; but try, by your Example, to reduce licentious Passion to pure *Platonick* Love.

SCENE XIV.

HELENA behind, with Sir POSITIVE with a broad Sword.

Sir Pos.

I hear 'em, I hear 'em. *La. Trap.*

Ha! *Sir Positive's* Voice! Avaunt, nor think all thy Entreaties shall avail against my Virtue, or that it is in the Power of all Mankind to make me wrong the best, the kindest of Husbands. I swear I never will, even in Thought, more than at this Moment.

Sir Pos.

O! incomparable Virtue! what an excellent Lady have I! Lights there, Lights.

[Servants bring Lights.]

La. Trap.

O! my Dear, you are most seasonably come, for I was hardly able to resist him.

Sir Pos.

What's your Business here, Sir?

Mer.

My usual Business, Sir, Cuckoldom. My Design is against your Worship's Head and your Lady's Heart.

Sir Pos.

A very pretty Gentleman! And so, Sir, you are beginning with my Wife first?

Mer.

Yes, Sir, the easiest way to the Husband is through the Wife.

Sir Pos.

Come away, Lady Wife; come away, Niece. Sir, there's the Door; the next time I catch you here, I may,

SCENE XIV.

Love in Several Masques

perhaps, teach you what it is to make a Cuckold of Sir *Positive Trap*.

Hel.

Assure yourself, I'll speak to you no more.

La. Trap.

Au! the Monster!

Mer.

Your Monster is gone before, Madam. So, whilst I am trying to blind the Aunt with a pretended Passion for her, the Neice over-hears; and she'll speak to me no more! There never comes any Good of making Love to an old Woman.

SCENE XV.

Scene, Wisemore's Lodgings.

WISEMORE alone.

How vain is human Reason, when Philosophy cannot over-come our Passions! when we can see our Errors, and yet pursue them. But if to Love be an Error, why shou'd great Minds be the most subject to it? No, the first Pair enjoy'd it in their State of Innocence, whilst Error was unborn.

SCENE XVI.

To him, Servant with a Letter.

Serv.

A Letter, Sir.

Wisemore reads.

Sir,

You, who are conscious of being secretly my Rival in the midst of an intimate Friendship, will not be surprized when I desire that Word may be cancelled between us, and that you wou'd not fail me to-morrow at Seven in Hide-Park. Your injured,

Malvil.

What can this mean? Ha! here's a Postscript.

P. S. Your poor Colourings of Love for another Woman, which you put on this Morning, has confirm'd, not baffled my Suspicion. I am certain you had no Mistress to meet at Lady Matchless's but Vermilia.

Who brought this Letter?

SCENE XV.

Love in Several Masques

Serv.

A Porter, Sir, who said it required no Answer.

Wisem.

What am I to think? Am I in a Dream? or was this writ in one? Sure, Madness has possessed the World, and Men, like the Limbs of a tainted Body, universally share the Infection. What shall I do! to go, is to encounter a Mad-man, and yet I will. Some strange Circumstances may have wrought this Delusion, which my Presence may dissipate. And, since Love and Jealousie are his Diseases, I ought to pity him, who know by dreadful Experience,

When Love in an impetuous Torrent flows,
How vainly Reason would its Force oppose;
Hurl'd down the Stream, like Flowers before the Wind,
She leaves to Love, the Empire of the Mind.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

SCENE, *Hide-Park.*

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA, Masqued.

Lady Matchless.

I am sure I saw some one hereabouts, who, by his Posture, Actions, and Dress, must be my Swain. Well, *Vermilia*, this sure is the maddest Prank what will the World say?

Verm.

The World is a censorious, ill-natur'd Critick, and I dispise its Cavillings. Besides, I am now grown careless of every thing. O! my Dear! it is the most valuable Privilege of Friendship to disburthen our Secrets into one another's Bosoms If you knew those of mine I am sure you wou'd pity me.

SCENE II.

To them, WISEMORE.

La. Match.

I do pity you, indeed, for sure to be in Love

Wisem.

Is to be foolish, mad, miserable To be in Love is to be in Hell.

[Advancing from behind.]

La. Match.

ACT IV.

Love in Several Masques

Do you speak from Experience, Sir?

Wisem.

From sad Experience I have been in Love so monstrously in Love, that, like a Bow over-bent, I am now relaxed into an opposite Extreme and heartily hate your whole Sex.

La. Match.

Poor *Cardenio*! ha, ha, ha! be not so disconsolate, you may yet find your *Lucinda*.

Wisem.

No, she has lost her self and in a Wilderness.

La. Match.

How, in a Wilderness?

Wisem.

Ay, in that Town! that worst of Wildernesses! where Follies spread like Thorns; where Men act the part of Tygers, and Women of Crocodiles; where Vice lords it like a Lion, and Virtue, that Phoenix, is so rarely seen, that she is believed a Fable But these Sentiments do not please you, so, pray leave me.

Verm.

Our Company, Sir, was your own Choice.

La. Match.

And now you have raised our Curiosity, you shall lay it.

Wisem.

I would have raised the Devil sooner, and sooner wou'd I have laid him Your Curiosity, Madam, is a sort of a *Hydra*, which not even a *Hercules* can tame; so, dear Ladies, leave me, or I shall pull off your Sham-faces

La. Match.

You would repent it, heartily, if you did.

Wisem.

Perhaps so. I believe, indeed, you shew the best Part of you.

La. Match.

You wou'd give half your Soul to see the best Part of me.

Wisem.

Half-a-crown I will. The best Sight to me is your Back, turn it, and away; you lose your Time, indeed, you do. What can such as you with a plain, honest Man like me? Go, seek your Game: the Beaus will begin to yawn presently, and Sots return home from their Debauches, strike in there, and you make your Fortune, at least, get a Dinner, which you may want by staying here.

La. Match.

Do not be angry, dear Rustick for we are both Enamorata's as well as you nay, perhaps, I am so with your self. Hang Constancy, you know too much of the World to be constant, sure.

Wisem.

'Tis from a Knowledge of the World, Madam, that I am constant. For I know it has Nothing which can pay me for the Exchange. *La. Match.*

ACT IV.

Love in Several Masques

Come, come, you wou'd have more modern Notions, if you knew that a certain Woman of Fortune has some kind Thoughts of you; and, I assure you, I am not what I seem.

Wisem.

Faith, Madam, I shou'd not. Grandeur, is to me nauseous as a gilded Pill, and Fortune, as it can never raise my Esteem for the Possessor, can never raise my Love. My Heart is no Place of mercenary Entertainment, nor owns more than one Mistress. Its spacious Rooms, are all, all hers who slights and despises it. Yes, she has abandon'd me, and I will abandon my self to Despair; so, pray leave me to it, for such as you can have no Business with the Unhappy.

La. Match.

Generous, worthy Man!

[Aside.

Romantick Nonsense! I tell you, I am a Woman of Family and Fortune, perhaps, Beauty too, and am so violently enamoured of your Humour, that I am afraid my Life is in your Power.

Wisem.

Wou'd your Tongue was in my Power, tho' I question, even then, the Possibility of stopping it. I wonder the Anatomy of a Woman's Tongue does not enable our modern Philosophers to discover a perpetual Motion. To me, the *Turkish* Yawl at an On-set, the *Irish* Howl at a Funeral, or the *Indian* Exclamation at an Eclipse, are all soft Musick to that single Noise. It has no Likeness in Nature, but a Rattle-snake: The Noise as odious, and the Venom as dangerous.

La. Match.

But, like a Rattle-snake, it gives you warning, and if you will front the Danger, you must blame your own Prowess if you smart for it.

Wisem.

The Serpent practises not half your Wiles. He covers not his Poison with the Cloak of Love. Like Lawyers, you gild your Deceit, and lead us to Misery, whilst we imagine our selves pursuing Happiness.

La. Match.

Ha, ha, ha. Piqued Malice! you have lost an Estate for want of Money, and a Mistress for want of Wit.

Wisem.

Methinks, either of those Possessions shou'd be maintained by juster Titles In my Opinion, the only Title to the first shou'd be Right, and to the latter Merit, Love and Constancy.

La. Match.

Ha, ha, ha! then know, thou Romantick Hero, that Right is a sort of Knight-Errant whom we have long since laughed out of the World. Merit is Demerit, Constancy Dulness, and Love an out-of-fashion *Saxon* Word which no polite Person understands Lookee, Sir, pull out your Purse to a Lawyer, and your Snuff-box to a Lady, and I warrant you carry your Point with both.

Wisem.

The Purse may, indeed, win the Lawyer; but for the other you must depend on Chance. You may as well teach us a certain Method to gain that fickle, airy, imaginary Mistress, *Fortune*, whose Emblems you are. For your Favours are as blindly bestowed, as fickle in their Duration and, like *Fortune*, you often curse him most to whom you seem most kind.

SCENE III.

To them MALVIL.

Malv.

Wisemore and Women! My Philosopher turned Rake! Good-morrow, *Ned*; I see a Country Gentleman must have his Morning Walk.

Wisem.

What does he mean? this Coldness ill suits his Letter. [*Aside.*] Ay, Sir, and you are very seasonably come to my Assistance, or I had been devoured by two She-Wolves, more ravenous than any in the Desarts of *America*.

Malv.

Nay, Ladies, it was barbarous to attack with Odds, when even singly, you might have vanquished.

[Talks apart with Vermilia.

Wisem.

Will you take away your Companion, and leave us? for that Gentleman and I have Business. *La. Match.* Not till you agree to an Assignation. Promise to meet me barefaced at ten, and I am your Servant.

Wisem.

I'll promise any thing to be rid of you.

La. Match.

Step aside then, and I'll give you the Signals.

Malvil and Vermilia advance.

Verm.

Indeed! so gallant!

Malv.

O Madam, a Lady is never more agreeable to me than at first Sight; for, to my Temper, a Woman palls as much by frequent Conversation, as Enjoyment.

Verm.

But how are you sure that first Sight will be agreeable?

Malv.

Why, faith! as no Woman has Charms enough to engage my Constancy to the last; so neither does Any want enough to fire my Desires at first. But, if thy Face be potently ugly, keep it to thy self, and discover only thy Beauties. You are young, I am sure, and well-shaped, have a vast Share of Wit, and a very little Share of Modesty.

Verm.

Impudence! In what, pray, have I discovered my Want of it?

Malv.

Love in Several Masques

In your Pretension to it, Child; and, faith! that's better than the real Possession. What is Modesty, but a flaming Sword to keep Mankind out of Paradise? It is a Jack—with—a Lanthorn, that mis—leads poor Women in their Roads to Happiness. It is the Contempt of all Society; Lawyers call it the sign of a bad Cause, Soldiers of Cowardice, Courtiers of Ill—breeding, and Women the worst Sign of a Fool. Indeed, it has, sometimes, made a good Cloak for the beauteous, tawdry Outside of a Lady's Reputation. But, like other Cloaks, it is now out of Fashion, and worn no where but in the Country.

Verm.

Then to silence your Impertinence at once, know, Sir, that I'm a Woman of Fashion, rigidly virtuous, and severely modest.

Malv.

A blank Verse, faith! and may make a Figure in a fustian Tragedy. Four fine sounding Words, and mean just nothing at all.

Verm.

I suppose these are the Sentiments of you modern fine Gentlemen. The Beaus of this Age, like the Criticks, will not see Perfections in others which they are Strangers to themselves. You confine the masterly Hand of Nature to the narrow Bands of your own Conceptions.

Malv.

Why what have we here? *Seneca's* Morals under a Masque!

Verm.

I hope that Title will prevent your further Perusal.

Malv.

I'll tell you a way to do it.

Verm.

O name it.

Malv.

Unmasque then. If I like your Face no better than your Principles, Madam; I will immediately take my Leave of both.

Verm.

That's an Uncertainty, I'm afraid, considering the Sentiments you just now professed. Was you, indeed, that Heroe in Love which your Friend is there?

Malv.

No, faith! I have been Heroe in Love long enough.

Verm.

What Woman was blessed with so faithful an Admirer. Pray, what was your Mistress's Name?

Malv.

Her Name was nothing. I was violently enamoured with a Constellation of Virtues in a fine Lady, who had not one in her whole Composition.

Love in Several Masques

Verm.

And pray, Sir, how was you cured of your Love?

Malv.

As Children are of their Fear, when they discover the Bug–bear.

La. Match. [Advancing with Wisemore]

Well, you will be punctual?

Verm.

O, my Dear, I have met with a discarded Lover too, full as Romantick as yours.

La. Match.

Say you so? then, I believe, these are the very two famed Heroes in *Don Quixotte*.

Wisem.

Shall we never lose your Prating?

La. Match.

Promise not to dodge us.

Wisem.

Not even to look after you.

La. Match.

Adieu then.

Verm.

Bie, Constancy; ha, ha, ha!

SCENE IV.

WISEMORE, MALVIL.

Wisem.

Well, Sir; you see I am come.

Malv.

And am very sorry to see it too, *Ned*, ha, ha!

Wisem.

This Reception, Sir, ill agrees with your Letter. But 'twere absurd to expect Coherencies in a Mad–man's Behaviour.

Malv.

What's this?

Wisem.

Was it, Sir, from my expressed Abhorrence of this civil Butchery, you pitched on me as one who wou'd give you the Reputation of a Duelist, without the Danger? perhaps, you had rather met with another.

SCENE IV.

Love in Several Masques

Malv.

That I had, indeed.

Wisem.

Death and the Devil! did you invite me here to laugh at me?

Malv.

Are you mad, or in a Dream?

Wisem.

He who denies To-day what he writ Yesterday, either dreams, or worse. Your monstrous Jealousy, your Challenge, and your present Behaviour, look like a feverish Dream.

Malv.

Invite! Jealousy! Challenge! What do you mean?

Wisem. [Shews a Letter]

Read there, then ask my Meaning.

Malv. [Reads]

Ha! my Letter to *Merital!* villainous Jade! She has altered the Name too on the Superscription. I am abused, indeed!

Wisem.

Well, Sir!

Mal.

Wisemore, be assured my Surprize is equal to yours. This Letter, I did, indeed, write, but not to you.

Wisem.

How!

Malv.

Believe me, on my Honour, I did not send it you. His Name to whom I designed it is erased, and yours superscribed, I suppose, by the Person to whom I entrusted the Delivery. And, be assured, you was not the Enemy I wished to meet here.

Wisem.

What Novel's this?

Malv.

Faith! it may be a pleasant one to you, and no less useful to me. But the Morning is late, you shall go home, and breakfast at my Lodgings, and, in the Way, I will let you into the whole Story.

Wisem.

Whatever it be which clears my Friend from the Imputation of so wild a Delusion, must be agreeable to me.

Malv.

And now we will have our Swing at Satire against the Sex.

Wisem.

SCENE IV.

Love in Several Masques

I shall be as severe, as a damned Poet is on the Age.

Malv.

And, perhaps, for the same Reason at least the World will always give Satire on Women the Names of Malice and Revenge whoever aims at it, will succeed

Like a detracting Courtier in Disgrace,
The Wise will say, he only wants a Place.

SCENE V.

Scene Sir Positive Trap's House.

HELENA alone.

Hel.

Of three deplorable Evils, which shall I chuse? To endure the Tyranny of an imperious Aunt? to venture on a Man whose Inconstancy I have been an ocular Witness of? or support the Company of a Fool for Life? Certainly, the last is the least terrible. I do now think our Parents are wiser than we are, and have Reason to curb our Inclinations: since it is a happier Lot to marry a Fool with a good Estate, than a Knave without one.

SCENE VI.

Sir POSITIVE, HELENA.

Sir Pos.

Are you ready? Are you prepar'd? Hey!

Hel.

I am sensible, Sir, how unworthily I had fixed my Heart; and I think, neither Wisdom nor Honour oblige me to be undutiful to you longer.

Sir Pos.

You are a wise Girl! a very wise Girl! And have considered doubtless the vast difference between a Baronet and a Mister. Ha! ha! and here he comes.

SCENE VII.

To them Sir APISH.

Sir Pos.

Sir Apish Simple, your humble Servant. You are early. What, you have not slept a Wink. I did not sleep for a Week before I was Married to my Lady. *Sir Apish.*

You had a very strong Constitution then, *Sir Positive.*

Sir Pos.

Ay, Sir, we are a strong Family, an *Herculean Race!* *Hercules* was a *Trap* by his Mother's side. Well, well,

Love in Several Masques

my Neice there has given her Consent, and every thing is ready. So, take her by the Hand and Sir *Apish*.

Upon my Word, Sir *Positive*, I cannot Dance a Step.

Sir *Pos*.

How! when I was as young as you, I cou'd have danced over the Moon, and into the Moon too, without a Fiddle. But come, I hate trifling. The Lawyer is without with the Deeds, and the Parson is drest in his *Pontificalibus*. Sir *Apish*.

The Parson! I suppose he is a *Welch* one, and Plays on the Violin, ha, ha, ha!

Hel.

I see my Cousin has been as good as her Word.

[Aside.

Sir *Pos*.

Sir *Apish*, Jestng with Matrimony is playing with edged Tools. Sir *Apish*.

Matrimony! Ha, ha, ha! Sir *Positive* is merry this Morning.

Sir *Pos*.

Sir, you will put me out of Humour presently. Sir *Apish*.

Sir, I have more Reason to be out of Humour; for you have invited me to Breakfast, without preparing any.

Sir *Pos*.

Is not my Neice prepared, Sir? Sir *Apish*.

Sir, I am no *Cannibal*.

Sir *Pos*.

Did not you come to Marry my Neice, Sir? Sir *Apish*.

Sir, I never had such a Thought since I was begotten.

Sir *Pos*.

The Man is mad.

[Staring.

Sir *Apish*.

Poor Sir *Positive*! is it his first Fit, Madam?

Sir *Pos*.

A dark Room and clean Straw wou'd be of Service. Sir *Apish* .

Nay, nay, I have no time to reason with a Madman; but I hope when you hear I am married to one of the finest Ladies about Town, it will cure your Phrenzy; and so, Sir, your humble Servant.

Hel.

Bless me, Sir! what's the Meaning of this?

SCENE V.

Love in Several Masques

Sir Pos.

Why the Meaning is that he is mad, and this News will make my Lady mad, and that will make me mad; and you may be mad for a Husband, by what I can see, by the Right Hand of the *Traps*.

Hel.

So, I had yesterday two Lovers; but now I have forsaken the one, and the other has forsaken me. Well, these Men are Jewels; so far, I am sure, they are Jewels, that the richest Lady has always the most in her Equipage.

SCENE VIII.

The Piazza.

MALVIL, WISEMORE.

Malv.

How! An Assination from *Vermilia*?

Wisem.

That's the Name, the Place this, the Hour ten.

Malv.

Impudent Harlot!

Wisem.

She made me pass my Word to keep it secret from you; but when I perceived it the same Name with that in your Letter, I thought myself obliged by Friendship to discover it. The other Signals were a red Cloak and a Masque.

Malv.

Thou dearest, best of Friends. Ten you say? it is now within an Hour of the time. Since you do not intend to keep your Assination, I will take it off your Hands. But you may yet heap another Obligation on me by your Presence; for I am resolved to expose her.

Wisem.

I am to meet a Serjeant—at-law hard by but will return with all possible Expedition, and then if I can be of Service.

Malv.

If you return before the Hour you will find me at *Tom's*, if not here.

Wisem.

Till then farewell How am I involving myself in other Mens Affairs, when my own require my utmost Diligence! What Course shall I take? I cannot resolve to leave her, and, I am sure, she has given me no hopes of gaining her. Yet she has not shewn any real Dislike, nor will I ever imagine her Inclination's leaning to any of those Fops she is surrounded with.

SCENE IX.

MERITAL, WISEMORE.

Mer.

So thoughtful, *Wisemore*? What Point of Philosophy are you discussing?

Wisem.

One that has puzzled all who ever attempted it Woman, Sir, was the subject of my Contemplation.

Mer.

Ha! Hey! What Point of the Compass does the Widow turn to now?

Wisem.

A very frozen one. Foppery.

Mer.

Let me advise thee, *Ned*, to give over your Attack, or change your Method. For, be assur'd Widows, are a Study you will never be any Proficient in 'till you are initiated into that modern Science which the *French* call *Le bon Assurance*.

Wisem.

Ay, ay, we may allow you Gentlemen of professed Gayety those known turns of Rallery, since they were the Estate of your Fore-fathers: there is an hereditary Fund of little Pleasantries which the Beaus of every Age enjoy, in a continual Succession.

Mer.

Well, and, I hope, you will do those of this Age the Justice to confess, they do not attempt any Innovation in the Province of Wit.

Wisem.

Art thou so converted then as to despise the Fops?

Mer.

As much as thou dost the Women, I believe, *Ned*.

Wisem.

You mistake me. It is their Follies only I despise. But there, certainly, are Women, whose Beauty to their Minds, like Dress to their Beauty, is rather a Covering than an Ornament.

Mer.

These are high Flights, indeed. But, tell me, on what do you build your hopes of the Widow?

Wisem.

On an Opinion I have of her good Sense, and good Nature. The first will prevent her favouring a Fop, the latter may favour me.

Mer.

And, pray, what Foundation is your Opinion of her good Sense built on? If, as you just now seemed to think, the Beaus are its Supporters it is a very rotten one.

Love in Several Masques

Wisem.

No; when I said she inclined to Foppery, I meant only for her Diversion.

Mer.

Hum! I believe, Women very seldom take Matrimony for a Penance.

Wisem.

You draw too direct Inferences from her Conduct towards Coxcombs. Depend on it, they are Mirrours, in which you can hardly discover the Mind of a Woman of Sense, because she seldom shews it them unmasqued. If she be not a Woman of Sense, I have, indeed, built a Castle in the Air, which every Breeze of Perfumes can over-turn.

Mer.

Why, really, it seems to me very little else, by what I know of her Ladyship. But you are one of those reasonable Lovers who can live a Day on a kind Look, a Week on a Smile, and a soft Word wou'd victual you for an *East-India* Voyage.

Wisem.

I find the Conversation of a Friend effaces the Remembrance of Business.

Mer.

Any thing to the Island of Love?

Wisem.

No, no, to that of Law.

Mer.

Success attend you why, I have been forgetful too. But Fortune, I see, is so kind as to remind me.

SCENE X.

Sir APISH, MERITAL.

Mer.

Sir *Apish*, your humble Servant.

Sir *Apish*.

Dear *Tom*, I kiss your Button.

Mer.

That's a pretty Suit of yours, Sir *Apish*, perfectly gay, new, and *Alamode*.

Sir *Apish*.

He, he, he! the Ladies tell me I refine upon them. I think, I have studied Dress long enough to know a little, and I have the good Fortune to have every Suit liked better than the former.

Mer.

Why, indeed, I have remarked that, as your dull Pretenders to Wisdom grow wiser with their Years, so your

Love in Several Masques

Men of Gayety the older they grow, the finer they grow. But, come, your Looks confess there is more in this. The Town says it too.

Sir Apish.

What, dear *Tom*?

Mer.

That you are to be Married, and to a *Yorkshire* great Fortune. *Sir Apish.*

He, he, he! I'll make you my Confident in that Affair. 'Tis true, I had such a Treaty on Foot, for the Girl has ten Thousand Pounds, which wou'd have patched up some Breaches in my Estate; but a finer Lady has vouchsafed to throw a hundred into my Lap, and so I have e'en dropt the other.

Mer.

What, are you in actual Possession?

Sir Apish.

Of her Heart, Sir, and shall be, perhaps, of every thing else in a Day or two. Ah! she's a fine Creature, *Tom*, she is the greatest Beauty, and the greatest Wit Pshaw! can't you guess whom I mean?

Mer.

No for I know no Orange Wench of such a Fortune.

[Aside.

Sir Apish.

Why, who can be all this but Lady *Matchless*?

Mer.

Upon my Word, I commend your Exchange. *Sir Apish*, it lies in your Power to do me an exquisite Favour and, I know, you will do any thing to serve your Friend.

Sir Apish.

I wou'd as much as another indeed why what a Pox, does he intend to borrow Money of me?

[Aside.

Yes, yes, as I was saying, *Tom*, I wou'd do any thing to serve a Friend in Necessity, but Badness of Tenants, two or three supernumerary Suits of Laced Cloaths, and a bad Run of Dice have reduced me, really, to such an Extremity of Cash

Mer.

You misapprehend me. You were this Morning, I hear, to be married to *Helena*?

Sir Apish.

SCENE X.

Love in Several Masques

And, ha, ha, ha! I must tell it you, I have been just now, with Sir *Positive Trap*, her Uncle; and when he expected the Performance of Articles, I persuaded him he was mad, laughed at him, and, with a brave Front, faced him down that I knew nothing of the matter.

Mer.

You shall go back then immediately, turn your former Visit into Raillery tho' it be a little absurd, it will pass on the Knight dissemble a Willingness to go through Affairs, I will be your Chaplain, and may, perhaps, go through Affairs in your Place.

Sir Apish.

Is she an Acquaintance of yours then?

Mer.

O, ay.

Sir Apish.

Dear *Tom*, I am very glad I can oblige you by a Resignation, and will do to the utmost of my Power; and to shew you, Sir, that I love to serve a Friend, Sir, I'll but step to the next Street, and be here, Sir, at your Commands, Sir, in a Moment, Sir.

Mer. [solus.]

My Rencounter with the old Lady, last Night, surprized me: There must have been some Mystery in that Affair, which my Disguise may help me to unravel. Men of capricious Tempers wou'd raise a hundred Jealousies on this Occasion; but it shall be ever my Sentiments of a Mistress, in all doubtful Cases

That if she's true, Time will her Truth discover,
But if she's false, I'll be as false a Lover.

SCENE XI.

Scene, Lady Matchless's House.

Lady MATCHLESS, VERMILIA.

La. Match.

Ha, ha, ha! Love, and Scandal, are the best Sweetners of Tea.

Ver.

The best Embitterers, you mean; but, in my Opinion, Scandal is the sweetest of the two, and least dangerous.

La. Match.

Love is not so dangerous to our Sex, as you imagine. It is a Warfare wherein we always get the better, if we manage prudently; Men are perfect empty Bullies in it, and, as a certain Poet says

Swift to attack, and swift to run away. Ver.

Well, but what do you intend by your Assigation? *La. Match.*

Only, to get an Excuse for discarding a troublesome Lover. Lookee, *Vermilia*, you shall attack him for me; I am afraid of a Discovery myself. If you can but bring him to Terms, that is, if you can procure his Consent to

Love in Several Masques

a second Treaty, I shall be very handsomely, disengaged of mine.

Ver.

You banter, sure. But, if you are in earnest, I must advise you to get another Proxy, for I heartily hate Mankind, and will forswear any Conversation with them.

La. Match.

Nay, but you shall force your Inclination to serve your Friend.

Ver.

And, pray, what has caused this sudden Revolution in your Temper, since, if I am not mistaken, you, but yesterday, expressed some Favour for him?

La. Match.

But I have found him such an out-of-fashion Creature that I am heartily ashamed of him; besides, I have this Morning, received Proposals from that Prince of pretty-Fellows Lord *Formal*.

Ver.

O Constancy! Thou art a Virtue.

La. Match.

It is indeed. For Virtues, like Saints, are never canonized 'till after they are dead which poor Constancy has been long ago.

Ver.

I am afraid it proved abortive, and died before it was born. But if it ever had Being, it was most certainly feminine; and, indeed, the Men have been so modest to allow all the Virtues to be of our Sex.

La. Match.

O! we are extremely obliged to them, they have found out Housewifery to belong to us too. In short, they throw their Families and their Honour into our Care, because they are unwilling to have the Trouble of preserving them themselves.

Ver.

But you railly, sure, in what you say concerning Lord *Formal*.

La. Match.

Fie! my Dear, is a Title so ludicrous a thing? But, come, you shall undertake my Assignment with *Wisemore*.

Ver.

Were I sure it wou'd give an uneasy Moment to *Malvil*, I wou'd; for there is nothing I wou'd stick at to be revenged on him.

La. Match.

When we resolve Revenge against our Lovers, that little Rogue *Love*, sits on his Throne, and laughs till he almost bursts.

Tho' ne'er so high our Rage, the Rogue will find
Some little, ticklish Corner in the Mind,
Work himself in, and make the Virgin kind.

Love in Several Masques

When next before her Feet her Lover lies,
All her Resentment, in a Moment, dies.
Then, with a Sigh, the tender Maid forgives,
And Love's the only Passion that survives.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

SCENE, Sir Positive's House.

Sir POSITIVE, HELENA.

Sir Pos.

I say it was your own Plot, your own Contrivance, your own Stratagem. You threatned him to Hey! and he was Fool enough to believe you!

Hel.

He was wise enough to believe me, for I threatned no Impossibilities. But, don't put on that severe Aspect, dear Uncle, for, I protest, it makes you look so like one of the *Cæsar's* Heads, in our long Gallery.

Sir Pos.

Very likely, there may be a Resemblance, indeed; for *Julius Cæsar*, by his Great-Grandfather's Wife's Great-Grandmother, was a *Trap*.

Hel.

Ha, ha, ha! I am afraid we can hardly call Cousin. But pray, did he leave any Legacy to us?

Sir Pos.

A swinging Legacy! Abundance of Honour!

Hel.

And pray, what will all that Honour sell for?

Sir Pos.

Your right Honour is not to be bought nor obtained, it is what a Man brings into the World with him. He is as much an Upstart who gets his own Honour, as He who gets his own Estate. Take it for a Maxim, Child, no one can be a great Man unless his Father has been so before him. Your true old *English* Honour, like your *English* Oak, will not come to any Maturity under a hundred Years: It must be planted by one Generation for the Good of another.

Hel.

But if I were to chuse a Husband, I shou'd be more forward to enquire into his own Merits, than those of his Ancestors.

Sir Pos.

Ay, ay, to be sure! You wou'd prefer one who is likely to leave a long Retinue behind him, to one who has had never so many glorious Ancestors before him; and be sooner enamoured of a fine Coat, than a fine Coat of Arms. Hearkee, Hussy, most of these fine Fellows are but mere Snails, they carry their all upon their

Love in Several Masques

Backs; and yet it is as difficult to keep our Wives and Daughters from the one, as our Fruit from the other.

Hel.

Do you think so, Sir? I have heard there is not a more dangerous Place than a China–Shop; take Care my Aunt does not bring one home in a Jar, and then you may chance to see it pop forth its Horns, on the Top of your Cabinet.

Sir Pos. [Aside.]

Ha! I must own, I do not like these Morning Rambles.

Hel.

Looke, Sir, I can make Discoveries to you; and since my Aunt has falsely accused me with being the Occasion of Sir *Apish's* Behaviour to–day, I will tell you out of Revenge what I would never have told you out of Love. In short, my Aunt has

Sir Pos.

How! what?

Hel.

Planted something that will branch to Maturity in less than a hundred Years, ha, ha, ha! She has set a modern Front upon your old Tabernacle, ha, ha, ha! I hear the Coach stop this Moment. Step, but into that Closet, and you shall hear her convict herself. I'll bring her to Confession.

Sir Pos. [Aside.]

Hum! methinks, I grow suspicious.

Hel.

Nay, nay, nay, if you don't accept the Tryal, I shall proclaim you dare not.

Sir Pos.

Looke, Hussy, if you wrong my Lady, by the Right Hand of the *Traps!*

Hel.

Any, any Punishment. But fly, she's just here.

SCENE II.

Lady TRAP, HELENA.

La. Trap.

I am fatigued to death Oh! your Servant, Miss; but, perhaps I ought to say, Mistress, your Husband may have changed your Title since I saw you.

Hel.

And your Ladyship may have changed your Husband's Title But that Change has been made long ago. *La. Trap.*

What do you mean, Madam?

Love in Several Masques

Hel.

Ha, ha, ha! dear Aunt, the World knows the Use of China-Shops, tho' Sir *Positive* does not.

La. Trap.

You seem to know, Madam, I think, more than is consistent with your Years.

Hel.

And you seem to practise, Madam, more than is consistent with yours. The Theory becomes my Age much better than the Practice does yours.

La. Trap.

Your Age! marry come up, you are always boasting of that Youth and Beauty which you have.

Hel.

That's more excusable, than to boast of that Youth and Beauty which we have not.

La. Trap.

I know whom you reflect on I thank my Stars, indeed, I am no Girl; and as for Beauty, if my Glass be allowed a Judge

Hel.

A very corrupt Judge; for a Glass is so well-bred a Thing, that it tells every Woman she is a Beauty. O! it is the greatest Flatterer in the World to our Faces, but the Reverse in one thing; for it never disparages us behind our Backs.

La. Trap.

Malapert Creature! A Girl is now-a-days no sooner out of her Leading-strings than she sets up for a Toast. And, as the Girls are Women before their Time, so the Men are Children all their Lives, for they will be devouring the green Fruit.

Hel.

And sure, the green is preferable to the withered, Aunt. Come, come, Madam, you had better make me your Friend and Confident, for, if you declare War, I shall be able to enlist more Soldiers than you. But here's my Hand, and if you will let me into your Secrets, I'll give you the Honour of a Woman never to disclose them.

SCENE III.

To them, Sir APISH, MERITAL disguised as a Parson.

Sir Apish.

Lady Trap, I am your most obedient; sweet Mistress *Helena*, I am everlastingly yours.

La. Trap.

Sir Apish, your Behaviour this Morning staggered us, but I am glad to find you are relapsed.

SCENE III.

Love in Several Masques

Sir Apish.

He, he, he! it was all a Jest, upon my Word; as I question not, but my future Behaviour will explain to that Lady.

Hel.

It has already explained you, Sir, to me, to be the greatest Jest in Nature.

La. Trap.

Sir Apish, you know too much of the World to regard a young Lady's Coyness, and I assure you, Sir, it is all affected; for she is ever repeating your Name, even in her Sleep. Don't blush, Child; but you'll excuse the Faults of Youth; she will learn more Sense.

Hel.

I don't know whether you move my Anger, or my Pity most. But for that Thing there, I'd have him know, I scorn and detest him.

Sir Apish.

I wou'd not have your Ladyship chagrin at my Bride's Expression. For, I'll engage, we shall hate one another with as much good Breeding, as any Couple under the Sun.

Mer.

Give me the Permission to lead you, Madam.

Sir Apish. [*Apart to Lady Trap.*]

If you wou'd leave Miss a few Minutes with Mr. Parson here, I wou'd engage for his Success He is a noted Match-maker.

La. Trap.

Neice, pray be attentive to that reverend Gentleman; he will convince you of your Errors Come, *Sir Apish*, we'll take a Turn in the Dining-room; *Sir Positive* will not be long.

[*Apart to Sir Apish.*]

[*These two Speeches spoke together.*]

Hel. [*Aside.*]

Sir Positive is safe, I'm sure, 'till I give him an Opportunity to sneak off, so I've a Reprieve at least.

SCENE IV.

HELENA, MERITAL.

Hel.

What gone? Ha!

Mer.

SCENE IV.

Love in Several Masques

Be not frightened, dear Madam; for I have nothing of Sanctity, but the Masque, I assure you.

[Discovering himself.]

Hel.

I believe it, nor of any other Virtue.

Mer.

Very prettily frowned I know some Ladies who have practised a Smile twenty Years without becoming it so well But, come, we have no Time to lose.

Hel.

No, to upbraid you were loss of Time, indeed, for the Remonstrances of an injured Woman have but little Weight with such hardened Sinners.

Mer.

Hum! the Sight of a Gown has not inspired you, I hope; you don't intend to preach, but if you do, the Wedding, you know, is always before the Sermon, which is one of the chief Things wherein Hanging and Matrimony disagree.

[Aside.]

Hel.

Mr. *Merital*, I liked your Raillery well enough whilst I believed you innocent. But as that Gayety in Dress, which gives a Bloom to Beauty, shews Deformity in its worst Light; so that Mirth and Humour which are vastly amiable in the Innocent, look horrid in the Guilty.

Mer.

Are you really, in earnest, Child?

Hel.

That Question surprizes me, when you know I was Witness to your last Night's Adventure.

Mer.

Faith, my Dear, I might have been more justly surprised, that you should make me an Assignation, and send your Aunt to keep it.

Hel.

I make you an Assignation! I'll never see you more.

Mer.

Turn, mighty Conqueress, turn your Eyes this Way,
And hear, at once, your Priest and Lover pray.
In vain, by Frowns, you wou'd the World subdue,
For when, with all your Might, you've knit your Brow,
Your Grand-mother more Wrinkles has than you. Ha, ha, ha! don't put on those severe Looks, dear *Helena*;
good Humour sets off a Lady's Face more than Jewels.

Hel.

I wish my Looks had the Power to blast you.

Mer.

Love in Several Masques

No, no, Madam, I have a sort of Armour called Common-sense that's Frown-proof, I assure you; your Smiles may melt, but your Frowns will never pierce it. What, to make me an Assignation with your own Hand, then send your Aunt for a Proxy? My Good-nature, indeed, gave it the Turn of a Tryal, tho' she was a fitter Object to try my Vigour than my Constancy.

[Half Aside.

Hel.

I write to you Yesterday?

Mer.

Why, I cannot say, positively, it was you; for I begin to think myself in Don *Quixotte's* Case, and that some wicked Enchanters have transmographed my *Dulcinea*. I'll leave it to your own Judgment, whether you are not a little altered since you writ this.

[Shews a Letter.

Hel.

Ha! the Letter I copied before my Aunt! then I've wronged him, indeed. Unheard-of Baseness! Mr. *Merital*, perhaps my Suspicions have been too ill grounded; but for your Reproaches, Sir

Mer.

Nay, if there be a Mystery in it, and I am guilty of undeserved Reproaches, your Justice cannot, shall not pardon me, 'till I have attoned for it with a ten Years Service; Yet, impute what I have said to the Sincerity of my Love; my Passions simpathize with yours, and if one wild Delusion has possessed us, let us partake the equal Joy of its Discovery.

Hel.

That Discovery is too long to be made now, but there is a Riddle in that Letter which will surprise you.

Mer.

Let then those lovely Eyes re-assume their Sweetness, and, like pure Gold, rise brighter from the Flames.

Hel.

Well, well, you know your own Terms, a ten Years Siege, and then

Mer.

Ah! but will not the Garrison be starved in that long Time? and I shall shut it up with a very close Blockade So you had best surrender now on honourable Conditions.

Hel.

Well, but you'll allow the Garrison to make a Sally first Sir *Positive*, Uncle, ha, ha, ha! Come and help me to laugh The same worthy Gentleman who came after your Wife last Night, is now come after your Neice.

SCENE V.

To them, Sir POSITIVE from the Closet.

Sir Pos.

A brave Girl, a very brave Girl! Why, why, why, what a Pox do you want here, Sir?

Hel.

Bless me, how he stares! I wonder he is not confined: I'am afraid he will take away some-body's Life.

Love in Several Masques

Sir *Pos.*

I believe his Intention is to give some–body Life; such as he oftner encrease Families than diminish them.

Hel.

Or, perhaps, the poor Gentleman is an itinerant Preacher. Did you come to preach to us, Sir?

Mer.

Do you take me for the Ordinary of *Bedlam*, Madam? Was I to reason with you, it shou'd be by the Doctrine of Fire and Faggot.

Hel.

Say you so! Nay then, I believe, Uncle, he is a *Popish* Inquisitor.

Sir *Pos.*

An Inquisitor after Fortunes, I suppose. Ah! Sir, is not that your pious Errand? You are one of the Royal–Society of Fortune–hunters? Eh!

Hel.

I'll secure his masquerading Garb among the Trophies of our Family.

SCENE VI.

Sir POSITIVE, MERITAL.

Sir *Pos.*

Well, Sir, and pray have you any Pretensions to my Neice? Where's your Estate, Sir? what's your Title, Sir? what's your Coat of Arms? Does your Estate lie in *Terrâ Firmâ*, or in the Stocks?

Mer.

In a Stock of Assurance, Sir. My Cash is all Brass, and I carry it in my Forehead, for fear of Pick–pockets.

Sir *Pos.*

Are there no Guardians to be cheated, no Cuckolds to be made, but Sir *Positive Trap*? I'd have you know, Sir, there has not been a Cuckold amongst the *Traps*, since they were a Family.

Mer.

That is, Sir, I suppose, a tacite Insinuation, that you are the first of your Family.

Sir *Pos.*

You are ignorant as well as impudent. The first of my Family! The whole World knows, that neither I, nor my Father before me, have added one foot of Land to our Estate; and my Grand–father smoaked his Pipe in the same easy Chair that I do.

Mer.

Very likely. And what then?

Sir *Pos.*

What then! Why, then there's the Door, and then I desire you'd go out. Upstart, quotha! Sir *Positive Trap* an Upstart! I had rather be called Knave. I had rather be the first Rogue of a good Family, than the first honest Man of a bad one.

Love in Several Masques

Mer.
Indeed!

Sir Pos.
Ay, indeed; for do not we upbraid the Son, whose Father was hanged? whereas, many a Man who deserves to be hanged, was never upbraided in his whole Life.

Mer.
Oons! how am I jilted!

[Aside.

Looke, *Sir Positive*, to be plain, I did come hither with a Design of inveigling your Neice, but she shall now die a Maid for me. I imposed on *Sir Apish*, as I wou'd have done on you, but you see I have failed, so you may smoak on in your easy Chair, *Sir Trap* .

Sir Pos.
So, so, I began to suspect *Sir Apish* was in the Plot, but I'm glad to find my Mistake.

SCENE VII.

Sir POSITIVE, Lady TRAP.

Sir Pos.
O my dear Lady, are you come? I have such a Discovery! such a rare Discovery! you will so hug me La. *Trap*.

Not so close as you do your Discovery, my Dear, But where's *Helena*?

Sir Pos.
He, he, he, Rogue! Conjurer! My Lady's a Conjurer! why, 'tis about her I am going to discover. But where's the Baronet? La. *Trap* .

He waits below with his Chaplain.

Sir Pos.
His Chaplain! ha, ha, ha! 'tis a Rogue in the Chaplain's Habit; the wild young Spark that has haunted my Neice so long. La. *Trap* .

How!

Sir Pos.
Ay, and he is stole off without his Disguise, which the Girl has secured as a Trophy of her Victory. La. *Trap*.

Cheated! ruin'd! undone!

Sir Pos.
Ha! what?
La. *Trap*.

She is gone, she is lost without there she's gone, I say, and we are cheated.

Sir Pos.

SCENE VII.

Love in Several Masques

How, by the Right Hand of the *Traps!* La. *Trap.*

By the wrong Head of the *Traps.* I thought what your Discovery wou'd be. Where's Sir *Apish?*

[To a Servant entring.

Serv.

Gone out with his Chaplain, and another Gentleman, Madam. La. *Trap.*

Pursue them, pursue them.

Sir *Pos.*

Get down my broad Sword and Bandaliers, and Sir *Gregory's* Blunderbuss. Fly, fly.

SCENE VIII.

Scene, The Piazza.

MALVIL, meeting CATCHIT Masqued.

Malv.

So, I find she's exact to her Assigation. Well encountred, Madam; what, I suppose I am not the Game you look for. O thou perfidious, false, dissembling Woman. Nay, do not offer to stir, for you are betray'd, and by all the Powers of Love you've wronged, I will expose you. Come, unmasque, unmasque this instant, or

Catch. [unmasquing]

I protest, you are very rude, Mr. *Malvil*, I wou'd ot be seen here for the World.

Malv.

Ha! now I thank my Stars, indeed. Thou vile Intriguer, forge some Lie to excuse thyself in an Instant, or it shall be thy last.

Catch.

O lud! you will frighten me into Fits.

Malv.

Come, confess, how came you here? by what Means did *Wisemore* get my Letter? confess all, and if I find you faulting in one Syllable, I'll cram it down your Throat with my Sword.

Catch.

O lud! I, I, I.

Mal.

What, you belied *Vermilia* in all you said? speak you belied her, I say?

Catch.

O! O! but will you pardon me then?

Malv.

Speak the Truth, I will pardon you; but if I ever discover the least Falshood in what you now tell me, if you

Love in Several Masques

had a thousand Lives, you shou'd forfeit them.

Catch.

Why then, indeed, it was all false; She never said a kind thing of Mr. *Merital*, in her Life and and, so when you gave me the Letter, I suspected what it was, and so I carried it to my Mistress, and Lady *Matchless* being by, she took it, and sealed, and sent it to Mr. and so my Lady and she went into the Park this Morning, and Lady *Matchless* made an Appointment in her Name, and wou'd have had her kept it, and she wou'd not and so I was sent.

Malv.

And how! how did the Devil tempt you to belie her to me?

Catch.

O lud! Sir, it was not the Devil, indeed; but you had often teased, and promised me, if I wou'd discover your Rival; and, Heaven knows, you have none in the World.

Malv.

But on what Embassy was you sent hither?

Catch.

Here's a Letter which, I believe, will tell you. But pray don't keep me, for we are all very busy, my Lady *Matchless* is to be married in a Day or two to my Lord *Formal*.

Malv.

How! to my Lord *Formal*?

Catch.

Yes, Sir.

Malv.

Well, tell her you delivered the Letter as you was ordered. Don't mention a Word of me Be trusty now, and I'll forgive the past.

Catch.

I will, indeed, Sir. O lud! I shall not recover it this Week.

SCENE IX.

MALVIL, WISEMORE.

Malv.

Wisemore, most opportunely arrived. I find you are more concerned in this Assignation than I imagined, as this will explain to you.

Wisemore takes the Letter and reads.

Sir,

You will be surprized at the News of so sudden a Conquest, but, I hope, that Surprize will be an agreeable one, when you know it is over a Woman of a considerable Fortune; and if seven thousand a Year can make me as acceptable to Mr. Wisemore, as his Virtue renders him lovely to me, I shall meet with a favourable Answer, for which the

Love in Several Masques

Messenger who brings you this, will attend an Hour after the Delivery. Yours 'till then,

Incognita.

P. S. I am glad I can inform you, that my Rival is this Day to be married to another.

How received you this Letter?

Malv.

From the very Person who convey'd you mine.

Wisem.

O *Malvil*, I find myself concerned, indeed, and, I fear, fatally.

Malv.

I am sorry to be the Messenger of ill News but I just now heard your Mistress is carrying on a Treaty with one of the greatest Coxcombs in Town.

Wisem.

There is but one Way, and I must beg your immediate Assistance. I have contrived a Stratagem to convince her of the mercenary Views of her pretended Admirers.

Malv.

But do you draw any of your Fears from that Letter? for I have very good Reason to believe it came from Lady *Matchless*.

Wisem.

Impossible!

Malv.

I am confident it did.

Wisem.

By Heav'n, thou hast hast revived a Spark of Hope.

Malv.

And Lovers must nurse up feeble, Infant Hopes 'till they grow big, and ripen into certain Joys.

Wisem.

I will do so: For I have always looked on Love as on a Sea, whose Latitude no one ever discovered, and therefore

Like Mariners, without the Compass tost,

We may be near our Port, when we esteem it lost.

SCENE X.

Scene Lady Matchless's House.

Lady MATCHLESS, Lord FORMAL, Sir APISH, VERMILIA, and RATTLE.

Love in Several Masques

La. Match.

I hope, the Sincerity which I have discovered in your Lordship's Passion, and the glorious Character you bear in the World will excuse my easy Consent. *L. Form.*

I wou'd not be so ill-bred as to blush, but your Ladyship's Compliments have, really, raised an inordinate Flushing in my Cheeks.

Verm.

Why, my Dear, this will be a Surprize to the Town, indeed.

Rattle.

I'm sure it is no agreeable one to me, [*Aside.*] Why, Widow, do you intend to leave me in the Lurch?

Sir Apish.

And me in the Lurch too, Madam? I assure you, I have refused a great Fortune on your Account. Has your Ladyship forgot your Declaration Yesterday?

La. Match.

Yesterday! O Unpolite! are you so conversant in the *Beau-Monde*, and don't know that Women, like Quicksilver, are never fixed 'till they're dead?

Rattle.

Agad, they are more like Gold, I think, for they are never fixed but by Dross.

[*Aside.*]

SCENE XI.

To them, MERITAL, HELENA.

Hel.

Dear Cousin *Matchless!*

La. Match.

My Dear, this is very kind; being earlier with me than my Expectation, is a double Favour.

Mer.

It may be called a double Favour, Madam, for you are partly obliged for it to your humble Servant.

La. Match.

How's this, *Helena?*

Hel.

I don't know, Cousin; I was weary of my old Guardian, I think, and so I chose a new one.

Mer.

Yes, Madam, and we preferred the Church to the Chancery, to save Expences.

La. Match.

O it was a most commendable Prudence. So you are married Well, give you Joy, good People But, methinks, you shou'd not have made your Guardian your Heir. [*To Helena.*] No wise Person ever suffered an

Love in Several Masques

Heir to be Trustee to his own Estate.

Mer.

Not 'till at Years of Discretion, Madam; and, I'm sure, the Men shou'd be That when they marry.

La. Match.

And the Women too, or they never will.

Hel.

Why so, Cousin?

La. Match.

Because it's probable, they may soon after run mad. You see, my Lord, I have not the highest Notions of a married State, therefore, you may be sensible how high an Opinion I must entertain of your Merit, which can persuade me to it.

Mer.

Do you intend to follow our Example, Lady *Matchless*?

Rattle.

I can bear no longer. Lookee, my Lord, if Matrimony be your Play, Fighting must be your Prologue.

[Apart to L. Formal.

L. Form.

He, he, he! Mr. *Rattle*, Fighting is more commonly the Epilogue to that Play.

Rattle.

Damn your Joke, Sir, either walk out with me, or I shall use you ill.

[Apart.

L. Form.

Then you will shew your Ill-breeding, and give me an Opportunity of displaying my Gallantry, by sacrificing the Affront to the Presence of the Ladies.

Mer.

Fie, fie, Gentlemen, let us have no Quarrels, pray.

Rattle.

'Sdeath! Sir, but we will; I shall not resign my Mistress, Sir.

Sir *Apish*.

Nor I neither; and so, Madam, if you don't stand to your Promise, I hope, you'll give me Leave to sue you for it.

La. Match.

I have told you already that a Lady's Promise is an Insect which, naturally, dies almost as soon as it is born.

SCENE XII.

To them, WISEMORE in a Serjeant's Gown, his Hat over his Ears.

Wisem.

Pray which is the Lady *Matchless*?

La. *Match*.

Have you any Business with me, Sir? L. *Form*.

This must be a very ill-bred Gentleman, or he wou'd not come before so much good Company with his Hat on.

[*Aside*.

Wisem.

It concerns an Affair, Madam, which will be soon so publick, that I may declare it openly. There is one Mr. *John Matchless*, who, being Heir-at-Law to your Ladyship's late Husband, intends to prosecute his Right, which, as his Council, out of a particular Regard to your Ladyship, I shall farther let you know, I am persuaded we shall make Good and, I'm afraid, it will touch you very sensibly. La. *Match*.

My Cousin *John Matchless*, Heir-at-Law to Sir *William* ! I wou'd not have you be under any Apprehension, on my Account, good Sir; I am afraid he has a better Right to *Bedlam*, than my Estate.

Mer.

Be not concerned, Madam; a Declaration of a Title is not, always, a Proof.

Verm., Hel.

We condole you, heartily, my Dear, on this bad News.

La. *Match*.

Ladies, I thank you for your kind Concern, but do assure you it gives me none.

Wisem.

I am sensible you will find your Error, my Clerk will be here immediately with the Ejectment.

L. *Form*.

I perceive the Reason of her Ladyship's Haste to be married.

[*Aside*.

La. *Match*.

What can this mean! I know my Title to be secure, it must be some trumped-up Cheat; and I'll try to divert the Chagrin of my Friends, by a Tryal of my Lovers, whom, I already know, I shall find guilty.

[*Aside*.

Well, as most Misfortunes bring their Allay with them, so this Dispute of my Estate will give me an Opportunity to distinguish the Sincerity of a Lover.

[*Looks on Formal*.

L. *Form*.

He, he, he! it has always been my good Fortune to conduce to the Entertainment of the Ladies, and, I find, your Ladyship has a most inexhaustible Vein of Raillery. La. *Match*.

Raillery, my Lord! L. *Form*.

Ah! Madam, it were an unpardonable Vanity in me to esteem it otherwise. It wou'd be contrary to all the

Love in Several Masques

Rules of Good-manners for me to offer myself up at the Shrine of your Beauty. Ah! 'tis a Sacrifice worthy a higher Title than mine. Indeed, I have some Thoughts of purchasing, which when I do, I shall throw myself at your Feet in Raptures; but 'till then, I am, with the greatest Distance, Madam, your Ladyship's most obsequious humble Servant.

Rattle.

Why, indeed, I think all Raillery is unseasonable on so serious an Occasion; therefore, to drop the Jest, Dear Widow, I do assure you all that has passed between us has been mere Gallantry, for I have been long since engaged to a Widow Lady in the City.

Sir Apish.

And to shew you, Madam, that no Sights from you can lessen my Affection, I do entirely relinquish all Pretensions to any Promise whatsoever.

SCENE XIII.

To them, MALVIL.

Malv.

Where, where's my injured Mistress? where's *Vermilia*? O see, at your Feet, the most miserable of Mankind.

Verm.

What mean you, Sir?

Malv.

Think not I wou'd extenuate, no, I come to blazon out my Crimes, to paint them in the utmost Cast of Horror, to court, not fly the Severity of Justice; for Death's to me a Blessing: Ah! my Friend's Blood cries out for Vengeance on me; and Jealousie, Rage, Madness and false Honour stand ready Witnesses against me. [*To Vermil.*] Of you, Madam, I am to beg a Pardon for your wronged Innocence. [*To La. Match.*] But to you I have a harder Task: To implore it, for having deprived you of the best of Lovers, whose dying Sighs were loaded with your Name Yes, the last Words your *Wisemore* uttered, were to implore eternal Blessings on you; your *Wisemore*, whom this rash, this fatal Hand has slain.

[Lady Matchless sinks into the Arms of Vermilia.

Mer.

Help, help! She faints!

Hel.

A Glass of Water, the Harts-horn immediately.

Rattle.

Rustick's dead then, Hey? Poor Rustick!

Verm.

How do you, Dear?

La. Match.

O! I shall rave, my frantick Brain will burst; and did he bless me with his latest Breath? he should have cursed me rather, for I alone am Guilty. Oh! I have wildly played away his Life Then take my Fortune all,

SCENE XIII.

Love in Several Masques

since he is gone, to reward whose Merit I only valued Riches. But now farewell Content, Greatness, Happiness, and all the Sweets of Life I'll study to be miserable.

Wisem.

O never, never; be blessed as Love and Life and Happiness can make you be blessed as I am now.

[Discovering himself, and running to her.

La. Match.

And art thou then my *Wisemore*?

[After a long Pause.

Wisem.

And do I live to hear you call me yours? O my Heart's Joy! my everlasting Bliss! *La. Match.*
And can you generously forgive?

Wisem.

O name it not, but swear you never will revoke what you have said.

La. Match.

O would I had Worlds to give thee, for all the Happiness I can bestow is nothing to the Merit of your Love.

Wisem.

My Heart o'erflows with Raptures. Oh! my tender Love, now do I live, indeed

Mer.

Why after these high Flights, *Ned*, I am afraid wishing you Joy will be too low a Phrase.

Wisem.

Dear *Merital*, I thank you. But here am I eternally indebted; for I shall always attribute my Happiness (next to this Lady) to your Friendship.

[To Malvil.

Malv.

Be assured it gives me an equal Satisfaction, as if I had procured my own.

Mer.

I have known two Friends embrace just before cutting of Throats; but, I believe, you are the first who ever embraced after it.

Rattle.

Formal.

[Sheepishly.

L. Form.

By my Title, I am perfectly amazed. Sir *Apish*.

We are all bit, Agad!

[Aside.

Love in Several Masques

Mer.

Come, *Harry*, put the best Face you can on the Matter, tho' I know you have a little Chagrin in your Heart As for his Lordship, the Lady may be a Widow again before he gets his Title and my Friend Sir *Apish* has refused a very fine Lady this Morning before. Sir *Apish*.

Yes, I had two Strings to my Bow, both Golden ones, Agad! and both cracked.

Verm.

Dear *Matchless*, this sudden Revolution of your Fortune has so amazed me, that I can hardly recover myself to congratulate you on it.

La. Match.

Well, but I hope, you will not see your Friend embarked on a second Voyage, and hesitate at undertaking the first.

Verm.

If I were sure my Voyage wou'd be as short as yours has been; but Matrimony is too turbulent a Sea to be ventured on, in so light a Vessel as every little Blast can overset.

Malv.

Madam, when Mrs. *Catchit* has discovered the whole Affair to you, as she has done to me, I doubt not but your Good-nature will seal my Pardon, since Excess of Love caused the Offence.

La. Match.

Nay, we must all sue.

Mer., Hel.

All, all.

Verm.

Well, to avoid so much Importunity, and to shew you the Power of a prevalent Example In hopes of future Amendment, Mr. *Malvil*, here take my Hand.

Malv.

O my fairest, softest, I have no Words to express my Gratitude, or my Love.

Verm.

Pray let them be both understood then; for we have had so many Raptures already, they must be but a dull Repetition.

L. Form.

When it is in vain to strive against the Stream, all well-bred Men sail with it.

[Aside.

Ladies, I beg Leave to presume to advance with my Compliments of Congratulation on this glorious Occasion. I must

own your Ladyship's Choice has something novel in it, but, by the Sanction of so great an Authority, I don't question, but it may be reconciled with the Rules of consummate Good-breeding.

Sir *Apish*.

Love in Several Masques

I am always his Lordship's Second. Ladies, I heartily wish you Joy, upon my Word.

Rattle.

And so do I, Widow. This Fellow will be poisoned before the Honey–Moon's out.

[Aside.

SCENE XIV

SCENE the last.

Sir POSITIVE TRAP, Lady TRAP, Lady MATCHLESS, Lord FORMAL, VERMILIA, HELENA, WISEMORE, MALVIL, MERITAL, RATTLE, Sir APISH SIMPLE.

Sir Pos.

O Cousin, I am undone, and ruined! The *Traps* are abused, disgraced, dishonoured! *La. Match.*

What's the Matter, *Sir Positive?* *Sir Pos.*

I am undone, my Neice is lost and ruined.

Hel.

I had been so, *Sir*, but for the Interposition of a worthy Gentleman here.

Mer.

It is, indeed, my happy Fate to be

Sir Pos.

Is it so? is it so? and I believe this will be your happy Fate. *[Pointing to his Neck.]* She is an Heiress, and you are guilty of Felony, and shall be hanged, with the whole Company, your Abettors. *L. Form.*

This Gentleman must have had a barbarous Education.

[Aside.

Mer.

Looke, Madam, as you expect that what has passed between us shall be kept secret

[To Lady Trap.

La. Trap. [to Mer.]

I understand you *Sir Positive*, be appeased, and leave this Matter to me. *Sir Pos.*

I am calm. *La. Match.*

My Cousin, *Sir*, is married to a Gentleman of Honour, and one who, I doubt not, love her By your Resentment, you will call your Conduct not hers into Question. *Sir Pos.*

Then you have been her Adviser, I suppose?

La. Match.

If I have, Cousin, you cannot be angry, since it is an Advice I am like to follow myself. *Sir Pos.*

Why, what, are you going to be married again?

Wisem.

Sir Positive, I hope shortly to be your Relation.

Sir Pos.

That's more than I do, *Sir*, till I know your Name and Family.

Wisem.

Love in Several Masques

You shall both, Sir. My Name is *Wisemore*.

Sir *Pos*.

Wisemore! Wisemore! Why it is a good Name but I thought that Family had been extinct. Well, Cousin, I am glad to see you have not married a Snuff-Box. La. *Match*.

To perfect the Good-Humour of the Company, and since Dinner is not yet ready, I'll entertain you with a Song which was sent me by an unknown Hand. Is Mr. *Hemhem* there? Sir, if you will oblige us. Gentlemen, and Ladies, please to sit.

SONG.

I.

Ye Nymphs of Britain, to whose Eyes
The World submits the glorious Prize
Of Beauty to be due;
Ah! guard it with assiduous Care,
Let neither Flattery ensnare,
Nor Wealth your Hearts subdue.

II.

Old Bromio's rank'd among the Beaus;
Young Cynthio solitary goes,
Unheeded by the Fair!
Ask you then what this Preference gives?
Six Flanders Mares the former drives,
The latter but a Pair.

III.

Let meaner things be bought and sold,
But Beauty never truck'd for Gold;
Ye Fair, your Value prove:
And since the World's a Price too low,
Like Heaven, your Ecstasies bestow
On Constancy and Love.

IV.

But still, ye generous Maids, beware,
Since Hypocrites to Heaven there are
And to the Beauteous too:
Do not too easily confide,
Let every Lover well be try'd,
And well reward the True.

The COMPANY advance.

Love in Several Masques

Wisem.

The Song is not without a Moral And now, Ladies, I think myself bound to a solemn Recantation of every Slander I have thrown upon your Sex: For I am convinc'd, that our Complaints against you, flow generally, (if not always) more from our Want of Merit, than your Want of Justice.

For when vain Fools, or Fops, your Hearts pursue,
To such, the Charming Prize is never due.
But when the Men of Sense their Passions prove,
You seldom fail rewarding 'em with Love:
Justly on them, the Fair their Hearts bestow,
Since they, alone, the Worth of Virtue know.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Miss *ROBINSON*, jun.

Our Author, full of Sorrow, and Repentance,
Has sent me here, to mitigate his Sentence.
To you tremendous Criticks in the Pit,
Who on his first Offence in Judgment sit!
He pleads Oh gad! how Terrible his Case is
For my Part, I am frighten'd by your Faces.
Think on his Youth it is his first Essay;
He may, in Time, perhaps Attonement pay,
If but Repriev'd this Execution-Day
Methinks I see some Elder Critick rise,
And darting furious Justice from his Eyes,
Cry, "Zounds! What means the Brat? why all this Fuss?
"What are his Youth, and Promises to us?
"For shou'd we from Severity refrain,
"We soon shou'd have the Coxcomb here again.
"And, Brothers, such Examples may invite,
"A thousand other senseless Rogues to write!
From you then ye Toupets he hopes Defence:
You'll not condemn him for his Want of Sense
What, now you'll say, I warrant, with a Sneer,
"He's chose too young an Advocate, my Dear!
Yet boast not (for if my own Strength I know)
I am a Match sufficient for a Beau!
Lastly, to you ye Charmers, he applies,
For in your tender Bosoms Mercy lies,
As certain, as Destruction in your Eyes.
Let but that lovely Circle of the Fair,
Their Approbation, by their Smiles declare,
Then, let the Criticks, Damn him if they dare.

FINIS.