

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Thomas Middleton

Table of Contents

<u>The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street</u>	1
<u>Thomas Middleton</u>	1
<u>I[i. A garden behind the widow's house]</u>	1
<u>II.i. A room in the Widow's house]</u>	17
<u>III.i. The street before the Widow's house]</u>	27
<u>IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]</u>	51
<u>V.ii. The street before the Widow's house]</u>	65

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Thomas Middleton

- [Act I](#)
- [Act II](#)
- [Act III](#)
- [Act IV](#)
- [Act V](#)

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The Actors' Names in the Play Entitled The Puritan Widow

Lady Plus, a citizen's WIDOW

[FRANK] }

MOLL } her two daughters

SIR GODFREY [Plus], brother-in-law to the Widow Plus

Master EDMOND, son to the Widow Plus

George PYEBOARD, a scholar and a citizen

Peter SKIRMISH, an old soldier

Captain IDLE, a highwayman

Corporal OATH, a vainglorious fellow

NICHOLAS St. Tantlings }

SIMON St. Mary-Overies } serving-men to the Lady Plus

FRAILTY }

SIR OLIVER Muckhill, a [rich city knight and] suitor to the Lady Plus

SIR JOHN Pennydub, a [country knight and] suitor to Moll

SIR ANDREW Tipstaff, a [courtier and] suitor to [Frank]

The SHERIFF of London

PUTTOCK }

RAVENSHAW } two of the sheriff's sergeants

DOGSON, a yeoman

A NOBLEMAN

A GENTLEMAN Citizen

[A KEEPER in the Marshalsea Prison]

[SERVANTS to the Gentleman and Sir Oliver Muckhill]

Officers[, Musicians, and Attendants]

The Scene: London

I.[i. A garden behind the widow's house]

Enter the Widow Plus, her two daughters Frank and Moll, her husband's brother, an old knight, Sir Godfrey, with her son and heir, Master Edmond, all in mourning apparel, Edmond in a cypress hat, the Widow wringing her hands and bursting out into passion, as newly come from the burial of her husband.

WIDOW

Oh, that ever I was born, that ever I was born!

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

SIR GODFREY

Nay, good sister, dear sister, sweet sister, be of good comfort; show yourself a woman now or never.

WIDOW

Oh, I have lost the dearest man, I have buried the sweetest husband that ever lay by woman!

SIR GODFREY

Nay, give him his due, he was indeed an honest, virtuous, discreet, wise man. He was my brother, as right as right.

WIDOW

Oh, I shall never forget him, never forget him! He was a man so well given to a woman. Oh!

SIR GODFREY

Nay, but, kind sister, I could weep as much as any woman; but, alas, our tears cannot call him again. Methinks you are well read, sister, and know that death is as common as homo, a common name to all men. A man shall be taken when he's making water. Nay, did not the learned parson, Master Pigman, tell us e'en now that all flesh is frail, we are born to die, man has but a time, with such-like deep and profound persuasions, as he is a rare fellow, you know, and an excellent reader. And for example, as there are examples abundance, did not Sir Humphrey Bubble die t'other day? There's a lusty widow! Why, she cry'd not above half an hour! For shame, for shame! Then followed him old Master Fulsome, the usurer; there's a wise widow: why, she cry'd ne'er a whit at all.

WIDOW

Oh, rank not me with those wicked women; I had a husband out-shin'd 'em all!

SIR GODFREY

Ay, that he did, i'faith; he out-shin'd 'em all.

WIDOW

[To Edmond] Dost thou stand there and see us all weep, and not once shed a tear for thy father's death? Oh, thou ungracious son and heir, thou!

EDMOND

Troth, mother, I should not weep, I'm sure. I am past a child, I hope, to make all my old schoolfellows laugh at me; I should be mock'd, so I should. Pray let one of my sisters weep for me. I'll laugh as much for her another time.

WIDOW

Oh, thou past-grace, thou! Out of my sight, thou graceless imp! Thou grievest me more than the death of thy father. Oh, thou stubborn only son! Hadst thou such an honest man to thy father, that would deceive all the world to get riches for thee, and canst thou not afford a little salt water? He that so wisely did quite overthrow the right heir of those lands, which now you respect not: up every morning betwixt four and five, so duly at Westminster Hall every term-time, with all his cards and writings, for thee, thou wicked Absalom! Oh, dear husband!

EDMOND

Weep, quoth 'a? I protest I am glad he's church'd, for now he's gone, I shall spend in quiet.

FRANK

Dear mother, pray cease; half your tears suffice:

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

'Tis time for you to take truce with your eyes;
Let me weep now.

WIDOW

Oh, such a dear knight, such a sweet husband have I lost, have I lost! If blessed be the corse the rain rains upon, he had it pouring down.

SIR GODFREY

Sister, be of good cheer; we are all mortal ourselves. I come upon you freshly. I ne'er speak without comfort. Hear me what I shall say: my brother has left you wealthy; y'are rich.

WIDOW

Oh!

SIR GODFREY

I say y'are rich. You are also fair.

WIDOW

Oh!

SIR GODFREY

Go to, y'are fair. You cannot smother it: beauty will come to light. Nor are your years so far enter'd with you but that you will be sought after, and may very well answer another husband. The world is full of fine gallants; choice enow, sister: for what should we do with all our knights, I pray, but to marry rich widows, wealthy citizens' widows, lusty, fair-brow'd ladies? Go to, be of good comfort, I say; leave snobbing and weeping. [Aside] Yet my brother was a kind-hearted man. I would not have the elf see me now.—Come, pluck up a woman's heart. Here stand your daughters, who be well estated, and at maturity will also be enquir'd after with good husbands; so all these tears shall be soon dry'd up, and a better world than ever. What, woman! You must not weep still; he's dead, he's buried. [Aside] Yet I cannot choose but weep for him.

WIDOW

Marry again! No, let me be buried quick then,
And that same part o' [the] choir whereon I tread
To such intent, oh, may it be my grave!
And that the priest may turn his wedding prayers,
E'en with a breath, to funeral dust and ashes!
Oh, out of a million of millions, I should ne'er find such a husband; he was unmatchable, unmatchable. Nothing was [too] hot nor too dear for me. I could not speak of that one thing that I had not. Beside, I had keys of all, kept all, receiv'd all, had money in my purse, spent what I would, went abroad when I would, came home when I would, and did all what I would. Oh, my sweet husband! I shall never have the like.

SIR GODFREY

Sister, ne'er say so. He was an honest brother of mine, and so; and you may light upon one as honest again, or one as honest again may light upon you: that's the properer phrase indeed.

WIDOW

[Kneeling] Never. Oh, if you love me, urge it not.
Oh, may I be the byword of the world,
The common talk at table in the mouth
Of every groom and waiter, if e'er more
I entertain the carnal suit of man.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

MOLL

[Kneeling] I must kneel down for fashion too.

FRANK

[Kneeling] And I, whom never man as yet hath scal'd,
E'en in this depth of general sorrow, vow
Never to marry, to sustain such loss
As a dear husband seems to be, once dead.

MOLL

I lov'd my father well too; but to say,
Nay, [vow], I would not marry for [his] death,
Sure I should speak false Latin, should I not?
I'd as soon vow never to come in bed.
Tut! Women must live by th' quick and not by th' dead.

WIDOW

Dear copy of my husband, oh, let me kiss thee! [Kisses his picture.]
How like him is this model! This brief picture
Quickens my tears: my sorrows are renew'd
At [this] fresh sight.

SIR GODFREY

Sister---

WIDOW

Away!
All honesty with him is turn'd to clay.
Oh, my sweet husband! Oh!

FRANK

My dear father!

Exeunt [Widow and Frank].

MOLL

[Aside] Here's a puling indeed! I think my mother weeps for all the women that ever buried husbands, for if from time to time all the widowers' tears in England had been bottled up, I do not think all would have fill'd a three-halfpenny bottle. Alas, a small matter bucks a handkercher, and sometimes the spital stands too nigh Saint Thomas a' Waterings. Well, I can mourn in good sober sort as well as another; but where I spend one tear for a dead father, I could give twenty kisses for a quick husband.

Exit Moll.

SIR GODFREY

[Aside] Well, go thy ways, old Sir Godfrey, and thou mayst be proud on't; thou hast a kind, loving sister-in-law. How constant, how passionate, how full of April the poor soul's eyes are! Well, I would my brother knew on't; he should then know what a kind wife he had left behind him. Truth, and 'twere not for shame that th' neighbours at the next garden should hear me, between joy and grief I should e'en cry outright!

Exit Sir Godfrey.

EDMOND

So, a fair riddance! My father's laid in dust; his coffin and he is like a whole meat-pie, and the worms will cut him up shortly. Farewell, old dad, farewell! I'll be curb'd in no more. I perceive a son and heir may quickly be made a fool, and he will be one, but I'll take another order. Now she would have me weep for him, forsooth. And why? Because he cozen'd the right heir, being a fool, and bestow'd those lands on me his eldest son; and therefore I must weep for him. Ha, ha! Why, all the world knows, as long as 'twas his pleasure to get me, 'twas his duty to get for me: I know the law in that point; no attorney can gull me. Well, my uncle is an old ass and an admirable coxcomb. I'll rule the roost myself; I'll be kept under no more; I know what I may do well enough by my father's copy: the law's in mine own hands now. Nay, now I know my strength, I'll be strong enough for my mother, I warrant you.

Exit.

[I.ii. A street]

Enter George Pyeboard, a scholar and a citizen, and unto him an old soldier, Peter Skirmish.

PYEBOARD

What's to be done now, old lad of war? Thou that were wont to be as hot as a turnspit, as nimble as a fencer, and as lousy as a school-master, now thou art put to silence like a sectary. War sits now like a justice of peace and does nothing. Where be your muskets, calivers and hot-shots? In Long Lane, at pawn, at pawn. Now keys are your only guns, key-guns, key-guns, and bawds the gunners. Who are your sentinels in peace and stand ready charg'd to give warning with hems, hums, and pocky coughs? Only your chambers are licens'd to play upon you, and drabs enow to give fire to 'em.

SKIRMISH

Well, I cannot tell, but I am sure it goes wrong with me, for since the ceasure of the wars I have spent above a hundred crowns out a' purse. I have been a soldier any time this forty years, and now I perceive an old soldier and an old courtier have both one destiny, and in the end turn both into hobnails.

PYEBOARD

Pretty mystery for a beggar, for indeed a hobnail is the true emblem of a beggar's shoe-sole.

SKIRMISH

I will not say but that war is a bloodsucker and so, but in my conscience—as there is no soldier but has a piece of one, though it be full of holes, like a shot ancient, no matter, 'twill serve to swear by—in my conscience, I think some kind of peace has more hidden oppressions and violent heady sins, though looking of a gentle nature, than a profess'd war.

PYEBOARD

Troth, and for mine own part, I am a poor gentleman and a scholar. I have been matriculated in the university, wore out six gowns there, seen some fools and some scholars, some of the city and some of the country, kept order, went bare-headed over the quadrangle, eat my commons with a good stomach, and battled with discretion; at last, having done many sleights and tricks to maintain my wit in use, as my brain would never endure me to be idle, I was expell'd the university only for stealing a cheese out of Jesus College.

SKIRMISH

Is't possible?

PYEBOARD

Oh, there was one Welshman, God forgive him, pursued it hard, and never left till I turn'd my staff toward London, where when I came, all my friends were pit-hol'd, gone to graves, as indeed there was but a few left before. Then was I turn'd to my wits to shift in the world, to tower among sons and heirs, and fools, and gulls, and ladies' eldest sons, to work upon nothing, to feed out of flint; and ever since has my belly been much beholden to my brain. But now to return to you, old Skirmish: I say as you say, and for my part wish a turbulency in the world, for I have nothing to lose but my wits, and I think they are as mad as they will be; and to strengthen your argument the more, I say an honest war is better than a bawdy peace, as touching my profession. The multiplicity of scholars, hatch'd and nourish'd in the idle claws of peace, makes 'em, like fishes, one devour another, and the community of learning has so play'd upon affections, and thereby almost religion is come about to fantasy, and discredited by being too much spoken of, in so many and mean mouths. I myself being a scholar and a graduate have no other comfort by my learning but the [affection] of my words, to know how, scholar-like, to name what I want, and can call myself a beggar both in Greek and Latin. And therefore not to cog with peace, I'll not be afraid to say 'tis a great breeder but a barren nourisher, a great getter of children which must either be thieves or rich men, knaves or beggars.

SKIRMISH

Well, would I had been born a knave then, when I was born a beggar! For if the truth were known, I think I was begot when my father had never a penny in his purse.

PYEBOARD

Puh! Faint not, old Skirmish; let this warrant thee: *facilis descensus Averni*; 'tis an easy journey to a knave. Thou mayst be a knave when thou wilt, and peace is good madam to all other professions, and an arrant drab to us. Let us handle her accordingly, and by our wits thrive in despite of her, for since the law lives by quarrels, the courtier by smooth good-morrows, and every profession makes itself great by imperfections, why not we then by shifts, wiles, and forgeries? And seeing our brains are our only patrimonies, let's spend with judgment, not like a desperate son and heir, but like a sober and discreet Templar, one that will never march beyond the bounds of his allowance. And for our thriving means, thus: I myself will put on the deceit of a fortune-teller.

SKIRMISH

A fortune-teller? Very proper.

PYEBOARD

And you a figure-caster or a conjurer.

SKIRMISH

A conjurer?

PYEBOARD

Let me alone; I'll instruct you and teach you to deceive all eyes but the devil's.

SKIRMISH

Oh, ay, for I would not deceive him, and I could choose, of all others.

PYEBOARD

Fear not, I warrant you. And so by those means we shall help one another to patients, as the condition of the age affords creatures enow for cunning to work upon.

SKIRMISH

Oh, wondrous! New fools and fresh asses!

PYEBOARD

Oh, fit, fit; excellent!

SKIRMISH

What, in the name of conjuring?

PYEBOARD

My memory greets me happily with an admirable subject to graze upon: the lady widow, who of late I saw weeping in her garden for the death of her husband. Sure she 'as but a waterish soul, and half of't by this time is dropp'd out of her eyes: device well manag'd may do good upon her. It stands firm; my first practice shall be there.

SKIRMISH

You have my voice, George.

PYEBOARD

Sh'as a grey gull to her brother, a fool to her only son, and an ape to her youngest daughter. I overhead 'em severally, and from their words I'll derive my device; and thou, old Peter Skirmish, shalt be my second in all sleights.

SKIRMISH

Ne'er doubt me, George Pyeboard. Only you must teach me to conjure.

PYEBOARD

Puh! I'll perfect thee, Peter.

Enter Captain Idle pinioned, and with a guard of officers passeth over the stage.

How now! What's he?

SKIRMISH

Oh, George, this sight kills me! 'Tis my sworn brother, Captain Idle!

PYEBOARD

Captain Idle!

SKIRMISH

Apprehended for some felonious act or another. He has started out; h'as made a night on't, lack'd silver. I cannot but commend his resolution; he would not pawn his buff-jerkin. I would either some of us were employed or might pitch our tents at usurers' doors to kill the slaves as they peep out at the wicket.

PYEBOARD

Indeed, those are our ancient enemies; they keep our money in their hands, and make us to be hang'd for robbing of 'em. But come, let's follow after to the prison, and know the nature of his offence; and what we can stead him in, he shall be sure of. And I'll uphold it still, that a charitable knave is better than a soothing Puritan.

Exeunt.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[I.iii. A street]

Enter at one door Corporal Oath, a vainglorious fellow, and at the other, three of the Widow Puritan's serving-men, Nicholas St. Tantlings, Simon St. Mary-Overies, and Frailty, in black scurvy mourning coats, and books at their girdles, as coming from church. They meet.

NICHOLAS

What, Corporal Oath! I am sorry we have met with you, next our hearts; you are the man that we are forbidden to keep company withal. We must not swear, I can tell you, and you have the name for swearing.

SIMON

Ay, Corporal Oath, I would you would do so much as forsake us, sir. We cannot abide you; we must not be seen in your company.

FRAILTY

There is none of us, I can tell you, but shall be soundly whipp'd for swearing.

[OATH]

Why, how now, we three? Puritanical scrape-shoes, flesh o' Good Fridays, a hand!

[Shakes them by the hand.]

ALL [THREE serving-mEN]

Oh!

[OATH]

Why, Nicholas St. Tantlings, Simon St. Mary-Overies, has the de'il possess'd you that you swear no better? You half-christen'd catamites, you ungodmother'd varlets! Does the first lesson teach you to be proud, and the second to be coxcombs? Proud coxcombs, not once to do duty to a man of mark!

FRAILTY

A man of mark, quoth 'a? I do not think he can show a beggar's noble.

[OATH]

A corporal, a commander, one of spirit, that is able to blow you up all [three] with your books at your girdles.

[NICHOLAS]

We are not taught to believe that, sir, for we know the breath of man is weak.

Corporal [Oath] breathes upon Frailty.

FRAILTY

Foh! You lie, Nicholas, for here's one strong enough! Blow us up, quoth 'a? He may well blow me above twelve-score off [a'] him: I warrant, if the wind stood right, a man might smell him from the top of Newgate to the leads of Ludgate.

[OATH]

Sirrah, thou hollow book of wax-candle—

NICHOLAS

Ay, you may say what you will, so you swear not.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[OATH]

I swear by the---

NICHOLAS

Hold, hold, good Corporal Oath, for if you swear once, we shall all fall down in a swoon presently!

[OATH]

I must and will swear, you quivering coxcombs. My captain is imprison'd, and by Vulcan's leather cod-piece point---

NICHOLAS

Oh, Simon, what an oath was there!

FRAILTY

If he should chance to break it, the poor man's breeches would fall down about his heels, for Venus allows him but one point to his hose.

[OATH]

With these my bully feet I will thump ope the prison doors, and brain the keeper with the begging-box, but I'll see my honest, sweet Captain Idle at liberty.

NICHOLAS

How, Captain Idle? My old aunt's son, my dear kinsman, in cappadochio?

[OATH]

Ay, thou church pealing, thou holy paring, religious outside, thou! If thou hadst any grace in thee, thou wouldst visit him, relieve him, swear to get him out.

NICHOLAS

Assure you, corporal, indeed, la, 'tis the first time I heard on't.

[OATH]

Why, do't now then, marmoset! Bring forth thy yearly wages; let not a commander perish.

SIMON

But if he be one of the wicked, he shall perish.

NICHOLAS

Well, corporal, I'll e'en along with you to visit my kinsman; if I can do him any good, I will, but I have nothing for him. Simon St. Mary-Overies and Frailty, pray make a lie for me to the knight my master, old Sir Godfrey.

[OATH]

A lie! May you lie then?

FRAILTY

Oh, ay, we may lie, but [we] must not swear.

SIMON

True, we may lie with our neighbour's wife, but we must not swear we did so.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[OATH]

Oh, an excellent tag of religion!

NICHOLAS

Oh, Simon, I have thought upon a sound excuse; it will go current: say that I am gone to a fast.

SIMON

To a fast? Very good.

NICHOLAS

Ay, to a fast, say, with Master Fullbelly the minister.

SIMON

Master Fullbelly? An honest man; he feeds the flock well, for he's an excellent feeder.

Exit Corporal [Oath with] Nicholas.

FRAILTY

Oh, ay, I have seen him eat up a whole pig, and afterward fall to the pettitoes.

[Exeunt] Simon and Frailty.

[I.iv. Idle's cell in the Marshalsea Prison]

Enter Captain Idle at one door, and [later Pyeboard and the] old soldier [Skirmish] at the other.

PYEBOARD speaking within

Pray turn the key.

SKIRMISH

[Within] Turn the key, I pray.

[IDLE]

Who should those be? I almost know their voices.

[Pyeboard and Skirmish] entering.

Oh, my friends!

You are welcome to a smelling room here.

You new took leave of the air; has it not a strange savour?

PYEBOARD

As all prisons have, smells of sundry wretches

Who, though departed, leave their scents behind 'em.

By gold, captain, I am sincerely sorry for thee.

[IDLE]

By my troth, George, I thank thee. But pish, what must be, must be.

SKIRMISH

Captain, what do you lie in for? Is't great? What's your offence?

[IDLE]

Faith, my offence is ordinary, common: a highway; and I fear me my penalty will be ordinary and common too: a halter.

PYEBOARD

Nay, prophesy not so ill; it shall go hard but I'll shift for thy life.

[IDLE]

Whether I live or die, thou art an honest George. I'll tell you: silver flow'd not with me as it had done, for now the tide runs to bawds and flatterers. I had a start out, and by chance set upon a fat steward, thinking his purse had been as pursy as his body, and the slave had about him but the poor purchase of ten groats; notwithstanding, being descried, pursued, and taken, I know the law is so grim, in respect of many desperate, unsettled soldiers, that I fear me I shall dance after their pipe for't.

SKIRMISH

I am twice sorry for you, captain: first, that your purchase was so small, and now that your danger is so great.

[IDLE]

Push! The worst is but death. Ha' you a pipe of tobacco about you?

SKIRMISH

I think I have thereabouts about me.

[IDLE]

Here's a clean gentleman too to receive.

Captain [Idle] blows a pipe.

PYEBOARD

Well, I must cast about some happy sleight.
Work brain, that ever didst thy master right!

[OATH] within

Keeper, let the key be turn'd!

NICHOLAS within

Ay, I pray, master keeper, give 's a cast of your office.

[Enter Oath and Nicholas.]

[IDLE]

How now? More visitants? What, Corporal Oath?

PYEBOARD, SKIRMISH

Corporal.

[OATH]

In prison, honest captain? This must not be.

NICHOLAS

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

How do you, captain kinsman?

[IDLE]

[To Oath] Good coxcomb! What makes that pure, starch'd fool here?

NICHOLAS

You see, kinsman, I am somewhat bold to call in and see how you do. I heard you were safe enough, and I was very glad on't that it was no worse.

[IDLE]

This is a double torture now. This fool, by th' book,
Does vex me more than my imprisonment.
What meant you, corporal, to hook him hither?

[OATH]

Who, he? He shall relieve thee and supply thee; I'll make him do't.

[IDLE]

[Taking Oath aside] Fie, what vain breath you spend! He supply? I'll sooner expect mercy from a usurer when my bond's forfeited, sooner kindness from a lawyer when my money's spent, nay, sooner charity from the devil than good from a Puritan. I'll look for relief from him when Lucifer is restor'd to his blood and in heaven again!

NICHOLAS

I warrant my kinsman's talking of me, for my left ear burns tyrannically.

[Pyeboard and Skirmish join Idle and Oath.]

PYEBOARD

Captain Idle, what's he there? He looks like a monkey upward and a crane downward.

[IDLE]

Pshaw! A foolish cousin of mine; I must thank God for him.

PYEBOARD

Why, the better subject to work a 'scape upon; thou shalt e'en change clothes with him and leave him here, and so—

[IDLE]

Push! I publish'd him e'en now to my corporal: he will be damn'd ere he do me so much good. Why, I know a more proper, a more handsome device than that, if the slave would be sociable.—Now, goodman Fleeceface?

NICHOLAS

[Aside] Oh, my cousin begins to speak to me now; I shall be acquainted with him again, I hope.

SKIRMISH

Look what ridiculous raptures take hold of his wrinkles!

PYEBOARD

Then what say you to this device? A happy one, captain?

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[IDLE]

Speak low, George; prison—rats have wider ears than those in malt—lofts.

[Pyeboard whispers to them.]

NICHOLAS

Cousin, if it lay in my power, as they say—to—do—

[IDLE]

'Twould do me an exceeding pleasure indeed, that; but ne'er talk further on't: the fool will be hang'd ere he do't.

[OATH]

Pox, I'll thump ['im] to't!

PYEBOARD

Why, do but try the fopster, and break it to him bluntly.

[IDLE]

And so my disgrace will dwell in his jaws, and the slave slaver out our purpose to his master, for would I were but as sure on't as I am sure he will deny to do't.

NICHOLAS

I would be heartily glad, cousin, if any of my friendships, as they say, might—stand—ah—

PYEBOARD

Why, you see he offers his friendship foolishly to you already.

[IDLE]

Ay, that's the hell on't; I would he would offer it wisely.

NICHOLAS

Verily and indeed, la, cousin—

[IDLE]

[To Nicholas] I have took note of thy fleers a good while. If thou art minded to do me good—as thou gap'st upon me comfortably and giv'st me charitable faces, which indeed is but a fashion in you all that are Puritans—wilt soon at night steal me thy master's chain?

NICHOLAS

Oh, I shall swoon!

PYEBOARD

Corporal, he starts already.

[IDLE]

I know it to be worth three hundred crowns, and with half of that I can buy my life at a broker's at second-hand, which now lies in pawn to the law. If this thou refuse to do, being easy and nothing dangerous, in that thou art held in good opinion of thy master, why 'tis a palpable argument thou hold'st my life at no price, and these thy broken and unjointed offers are but only created in thy lip, now born and now buried, foolish breath only. What, would do't? Shall I look for happiness in thy answer?

NICHOLAS

Steal my master's chain, quoth 'a? No, it shall ne'er be said that Nicholas St. Tantlings committed bird-lime.

[IDLE]

[To Pyeboard] Nay, I told you as much, did I not? Though he be a Puritan, yet he will be a true man.

NICHOLAS

Why, cousin, you know 'tis written, "Thou shalt not steal."

[IDLE]

Why, and fool, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," and help him in extremities.

NICHOLAS

Mass, I think it be indeed: in what chapter's that, cousin?

[IDLE]

Why, in the first of Charity, the second verse.

NICHOLAS

The first of Charity, quoth 'a? That's a good jest; there's no such chapter in my book.

[IDLE]

No, I knew 'twas torn out of thy book, and that makes it so little in thy heart.

PYEBOARD

[Taking Nicholas aside] Come, let me tell you, y'are too unkind a kinsman, i'faith, the captain loving you so dearly, ay, like the pomewater of his eye, and you to be so uncomfortable: fie, fie!

NICHOLAS

Pray do not wish me to be hang'd. Anything else that I can do, had it been to rob, I would ha' done't, but I must not steal: that's the word, the literal "Thou shalt not steal;" and would you wish me to steal then?

PYEBOARD

No, faith, that were too much, to speak truth. Why, woulst thou nim it from him?

NICHOLAS

That I will.

PYEBOARD

Why, enough, bully; he shall be content with that or he shall ha' none. Let me alone with him now.—Captain, I ha' dealt with your kinsman in a corner; a good, kind-natur'd fellow, methinks. Go to, you shall not have all your own asking; you shall bate somewhat on't: he is not contented absolutely, as you would say, to steal the chain from him, but to do you a pleasure, he will nim it from him.

NICHOLAS

Ay, that I will, cousin.

[IDLE]

Well, seeing he will do no more, as far as I see, I must be contented with that.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[OATH]

[Aside] Here's no notable gullery!

PYEBOARD

Nay, I'll come nearer to you, gentleman. Because we'll have only but a help and a mirth on't, the knight shall not lose his chain neither, but [it shall] be only laid out of the way some one or two days.

NICHOLAS

Ay, that would be good indeed, kinsman.

PYEBOARD

For I have a farther reach to profit us better by the missing on't only than if we had it outright, as my discourse shall make it known to you. When thou hast the chain, do but convey it out at back door into the garden, and there hang it close in the rosemary bank, but for a small season; and by that harmless device I know how to wind Captain Idle out of prison. The knight thy master shall get his pardon and release him, and he satisfy thy master with his own chain, and wondrous thanks on both hands.

NICHOLAS

That were rare indeed, la! Pray let me know how.

PYEBOARD

Nay, 'tis very necessary thou should'st know, because thou must be employ'd as an actor.

NICHOLAS

An actor? Oh, no, that's a player, and our parson rails again' the players mightily, I can tell you, because they brought him drunk upo' th' stage once, as he will be horribly drunk.

[OATH]

Mass, I cannot blame him then, poor church-spout.

PYEBOARD

Why, as an intermeddler then.

NICHOLAS

Ay, that, that.

PYEBOARD

Give me audience then. When the old knight thy master has [rag'd] his fill for the loss of the chain, tell him thou hast a kinsman in prison of such exquisite art that the devil himself is French lackey to him and runs bare-headed by his horse-belly, when he has one, whom he will cause with most Irish dexterity to fetch his chain, though 'twere hid under a mine of sea-coal and ne'er make spade or pick-axe his instruments. Tell him but this, with farther instructions thou shalt receive from me, and thou showest thyself a kinsman indeed.

[OATH]

A dainty bully.

SKIRMISH

An honest bookkeeper.

[IDLE]

And my three times thrice honey cousin.

NICHOLAS

Nay, grace of God, I'll rob him on't suddenly, and hang it in the rosemary bank; but I bear that mind, cousin, I would not steal anything, methinks, for mine own father.

SKIRMISH

He bears a good mind in that, captain.

PYEBOARD

Why, well said; he begins to be an honest fellow, faith.

[OATH]

In troth, he does.

NICHOLAS

You see, cousin, I am willing to do you any kindness, always saving myself harmless.

[IDLE]

Why, I thank thee. Fare thee well; I shall requite thee.

Exit Nicholas.

[OATH]

'Twill be good for thee, captain, that thou hast such an egregious ass to thy cousin.

[IDLE]

Ay, is he not a fine fool, corporal?
But, George, thou talk'st of art and conjuring:
How shall that be?

PYEBOARD

Puh! Be't not in your care;
Leave that to me and my directions.
Well, captain, doubt not thy delivery now,
E'en with the vantage, man, to gain by prison,
As my thoughts prompt me. Hold on, brain and plot!
I aim at many cunning far events,
All which I doubt not but to hit at length.
I'll to the widow with a quaint assault.
Captain, be merry.

[IDLE]

Who, I? Kerry–merry–buff–jerkin!

PYEBOARD

Oh, I am happy in more sleights, and one will knit strong in another. Corporal Oath?

[OATH]

Ho, bully?

PYEBOARD

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

And thou, old Peter Skirmish, I have a necessary talk for you both.

SKIRMISH

Lay't upon [us], George Pyeboard.

[OATH]

[Whate'er] it be, we'll manage it.

PYEBOARD

I would have you two maintain a quarrel before the lady widow's door, and draw your swords i' th' edge of the evening: clash a little, clash, clash.

[OATH]

Fuh! Let us alone to make our blades ring noon, though it be after supper.

PYEBOARD

[I] know you can, and out of that false fire, I doubt not but to raise strange belief. And, captain, to countenance my device the better, and grace my words to the widow, I have a good plain satin suit that I had of a young reveller t'other night; for words pass not regarded nowadays unless they come from a good suit of clothes, which the Fates and my wits have bestowed upon me. Well, Captain Idle, if I did not highly love thee, I would ne'er be seen within twelve score of a prison, for I protest, at this instant I walk in great danger of small debts. I owe money to several hostesses, and you know such jills will quickly be upon a man's jack.

[IDLE]

True, George.

PYEBOARD

Fare thee well, captain. Come, corporal and ancient. Thou shalt hear more news next time we greet thee.

[OATH]

More news? Ay, by yon Bear at Bridgefoot in heaven, shalt thou!

Exeunt [Pyeboard, Skirmish, and Oath.]

[IDLE]

Enough; my friends, farewell!
This prison shows as ghosts did part in hell.

Exit.

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

Enter Moll, youngest daughter to the Widow, alone.

MOLL

Not marry? Forswear marriage? Why, all women know 'tis as honourable a thing as to lie with a man, and I, to spite my sister's vow the more, have entertained a suitor already, a fine gallant knight of the last feather. He says he will coach me too, and well appoint me, allow me money to dice withal, and many such pleasing

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

protestations he sticks upon my lips. Indeed, his short-winded father i' th' country is wondrous wealthy, a most abominable farmer, and therefore he may [do it] in time. Troth, I'll venture upon him. Women are not without ways enow to help themselves: if he prove wise and good as his word, why, I shall love him and use him kindly; and if he prove an ass, why, in a quarter of an hour's warning I can transform him into an ox: there comes in my relief again.

Enter Frailty.

FRAILTY

Oh, Mistress Moll, Mistress Moll!

MOLL

How now? What's the news?

FRAILTY

The knight your suitor, Sir John Pennydub!

MOLL

Sir John Pennydub? Where, where?

FRAILTY

He's walking in the gallery.

MOLL

Has my mother seen him yet?

FRAILTY

Oh, no; she's spitting in the kitchen.

MOLL

Direct him hither softly, good Frailty; I'll meet him halfway.

FRAILTY

That's just like running a tilt, but I hope he'll break nothing this time.

[Exit.]

MOLL

'Tis happiness my mother saw him not.

Enter Sir John Pennydub.

Oh, welcome, good Sir John.

[SIR JOHN]

I thank you, faith. [He tries to kiss her, but she rebuffs him.] Nay, you must stand me till I kiss you: 'tis the fashion everywhere, i'faith, and I came from court [e' now].

MOLL

Nay, the Fates forfend that I should anger the fashion!

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[SIR JOHN]

Then, not forgetting the sweet of new ceremonies, I first fall back; then recovering myself, make my honour to your lips thus, and then accost it.

[Kisses her.]

MOLL

Trust me, very pretty and moving; y'are worthy on't, sir.

Kissing. Enter Widow and Sir Godfrey.

Oh, my mother, my mother! Now she's here, we'll steal into the gallery.

Exeunt [Sir John and Moll].

SIR GODFREY

Nay, sister, let reason rule you: do not play the fool; stand not in your own light. You have wealthy offers, large tend'rings; do not withstand your good fortune. Who comes a-wooing to you, I pray? No small fool; a rich knight a' th' city, Sir Oliver Muckhill: no small fool, I can tell you. And furthermore, as I heard late by your maid-servants—as your maid-servants will say to me anything, I thank 'em—both your daughters are not without suitors; ay, and worthy ones too: one a brisk courtier, Sir Andrew Tipstaff, suitor afar off to your eldest daughter, and the third a huge, wealthy farmer's son, a fine young country knight. They call him Sir John [Pennydub], a good name, marry: he may have it coin'd when he lacks money. What blessings are these, sister!

WIDOW

Tempt me not, Satan.

SIR GODFREY

Satan! Do I look like Satan? I hope the devil's not so old as I, I trow.

WIDOW

You wound my senses, brother, when you name
A suitor to me. Oh, I cannot abide it!
I take in poison when I hear one nam'd.

Enter Simon.

How now, Simon? Where's my son Edmond?

SIMON

Verily, madam, he is at vain exercise, dripping in the tennis court.

WIDOW

At tennis court? Oh, now his father's gone, I shall have no rule with him! Oh, wicked Edmond! I might well compare this with the prophecy in the Chronicle, though far inferior: as Harry of Monmouth won all, and Harry of Windsor lost all, so Edmond of Bristow, that was the father, got all, and Edmond of London, that's his son, now will spend all.

SIR GODFREY

Peace, sister, we'll have him reform'd; there's hope on him yet, though it be but a little.

[ll.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Enter Frailty.

FRAILTY

Forsooth, madam, there are two or three archers at door would very gladly speak with your ladyship.

WIDOW

Archers?

SIR GODFREY

Your husband's fletcher, I warrant.

WIDOW

Oh,

Let them come near; they bring home things of his.

Troth, I should ha' forgot 'em. How now, villain!

Which be those archers?

Enter the suitors Sir Andrew Tipstaff, Sir Oliver Muckhill, and [Sir John] Pennydub.

FRAILTY

Why, do you not see 'em before you? Are not these archers? What do you call 'em? Shooters. Shooters and archers are all one, I hope.

WIDOW

Out, ignorant slave!

[SIR OLIVER]

Nay, pray be patient, lady.

We come in way of honourable love—

[SIR ANDREW, SIR JOHN]

We do.

[SIR OLIVER]

To you.

[SIR ANDREW, SIR JOHN]

And to your daughters.

WIDOW

Oh,

Why will you offer me this, gentlemen—

Indeed I will not look upon you—when the tears are scarce out of mine eyes, not yet wash'd off from my cheeks, and my dear husband's body scarce so cold as the coffin? What reason have you to offer it? I am not like some of your widows that will bury one in the evening and be sure to another ere morning. Pray, away; pray take your answers, good knights, and you be sweet knights. I have vow'd never to marry, and so have my daughters too.

[SIR JOHN]

[Aside] Ay, two of you have, but the third's a good wench.

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[SIR OLIVER]

Lady, a shrewd answer, marry. The best is, 'tis but the first, and he's a blunt wooer that will leave for one sharp answer.

[SIR ANDREW]

Where be your daughters, lady? I hope they'll give us better encouragements.

WIDOW

Indeed, they'll answer you so; take 't a' my word, they'll give you the very same answer verbatim, truly, la.

[SIR JOHN]

[Aside] Mum. Moll's a good wench still; I know what she'll do.

[SIR OLIVER]

Well, lady, for this time we'll take our leaves, hoping for better comfort.

WIDOW

Oh, never, never, and I live these thousand years. And you be good knights, do not hope; 'twill be all vain, vain. Look you put off all your suits and you come to me again.

[Exeunt Sir John and Sir Andrew.]

FRAILTY

[Aside] Put off all their suits, quoth 'a? Ay, that's the best wooing of a widow indeed, when a man's non-suited, that is, when he's a-bed with her.

Going out, [Sir Oliver] Muckhill and Sir Godfrey.

[SIR OLIVER]

[Giving him money] Sir Godfrey, here's twenty angels more. Work hard for me; there's life in't yet.

SIR GODFREY

Fear not, Sir Oliver Muckhill, I'll stick close for you; leave all with me.

Exit [Sir Oliver] Muckhill. Enter George Pyeboard the scholar.

PYEBOARD

By your leave, lady widow.

WIDOW

What, another suitor now?

PYEBOARD

A suitor! No, I protest, lady, if you'd give me yourself, I'd not be troubled with you.

WIDOW

Say you so, sir? Then you're the better welcome, sir.

PYEBOARD

Nay, heaven bless me from a widow, unless I were sure to bury her speedily!

[ll.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

WIDOW

Good bluntness. Well, your business, sir?

PYEBOARD

Very needful, if you were in private once.

WIDOW

Needful? Brother, pray leave us, and you, sir.

[Exit Sir Godfrey.]

FRAILTY

[Aside] I should laugh now if this blunt fellow should put 'em all beside the stirrup and vault into the saddle himself. I have seen as mad a trick.

Exit Frailty.

WIDOW

Now, sir, here's none but we.

Enter daughters [Moll and Frank].

Daughters, forbear.

PYEBOARD

Oh, no, pray let 'em stay, for what I have to speak importeth equally to them as to you.

WIDOW

Then you may stay.

PYEBOARD

I pray bestow on me a serious ear,
For what I speak is full of weight and fear.

WIDOW

Fear?

PYEBOARD

Ay, if't pass unregarded and unaffected; else peace and joy: I pray attention. Widow, I have been a mere stranger for these parts that you live in, nor did I ever know the husband of you and father of them, but I truly know by certain spiritual intelligence that he is in purgatory.

WIDOW

Purgatory! Tuh, that word deserves to be spit upon! I wonder that a man of sober tongue, as you seem to be, should have the folly to believe there's such a place.

PYEBOARD

Well, lady, in cold blood I speak it. I assure you that there is a purgatory, in which place I know your husband to reside, and wherein he is like to remain till the dissolution of the world, till the last general bonfire, when all the earth shall melt into nothing, and the seas scald their finny labourers; so long is his abidance unless

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

you alter the property of your purpose together with each of your daughters theirs: that is, the purpose of single life in yourself and your eldest daughter, and the speedy determination of marriage in your youngest.

MOLL

[Aside] How knows he that? What, has some devil told him?

WIDOW

Strange he should know our thoughts. Why, but, daughter, have you purpos'd speedy marriage?

PYEBOARD

You see she tells you ay, for she says nothing. Nay, give me credit as your please; I am a stranger to you, and yet you see I know your determinations, which must come to me metaphysically and by a supernatural intelligence.

WIDOW

This puts amazement on me.

FRANK

Know our secrets?

MOLL

[Aside] I'd thought to steal a marriage. Would his tongue
Had dropp'd out when he blabb'd it!

WIDOW

But, sir, my husband was too honest a dealing man to be now in any purgatories.

PYEBOARD

Oh, do not load your conscience with untruths;
'Tis but mere folly now to gild him o'er
That has past but for copper. Praises here
Cannot unbind him there. Confess but truth:
I know he got his wealth with a hard gripe,
Oh, hardly, hardly!

WIDOW

[Aside] This is most strange of all: how knows her that?

PYEBOARD

He would eat fools and ignorant heirs clean up,
And had his drink from many a poor man's brow,
E'en as their labour brew'd it. He would scrape
Riches to him most unjustly: the very dirt
Between his nails was ill got and not his own.
Oh, I groan to speak on't; the thought makes me shudder,
Shudder!

WIDOW

[Aside] It quakes me too now I think on't.—
Sir, I am much griev'd that you, a stranger, should
So deeply wrong my dead husband—

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

PYEBOARD

Oh!

WIDOW

A man that would keep church so duly: rise early, before his servants, and e'en for religious haste, go ungarter'd, unbutton'd, nay, sir—reverence, untruss'd to morning prayer—

PYEBOARD

Oh, uff!

WIDOW

Dine quickly upon high days, and when I had great guests, would e'en shame me and rise from the table to get a good seat at an afternoon sermon.

PYEBOARD

There's the devil, there's the devil! True, he thought it sanctity enough if he had kill'd a man, so 't 'ad been done in a pew, or undone his [neighbour], so 't 'ad been near enough to th' preacher. Oh, a sermon's fine short cloak of an hour long and will hide the upper part of a dissembler! Church! Ay, he seem'd all church, and his conscience was as hard as the pulpit.

WIDOW

I can no more endure this.

PYEBOARD

Nor I, widow, endure to flatter.

WIDOW

Is this all your business with me?

PYEBOARD

No, lady, 'tis but the induction to it.
You may believe my strains; I strike all true:
And if your conscience would leap up to your tongue,
Yourself would affirm it. And that you shall perceive
I know of things to come, as well as I do
Of what is present, a brother of your husband's
Shall shortly have a loss.

WIDOW

A loss? Marry, heaven forfend! Sir Godfrey, my brother?

PYEBOARD

Nay, keep in your wonders till I have told you the fortunes of you all, which are more fearful if not happily prevented. For your part and your daughters', if there be not once this day some bloodshed before your door, whereof the human creature dies, two of you, the elder, shall run mad—

[WIDOW], FRANK

Oh!

MOLL

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

That's not I yet.

PYEBOARD

And, with most impudent prostitution, show your naked bodies to the view of all beholders.

WIDOW

Our naked bodies? Fie, for shame!

PYEBOARD

Attend me: and your younger daughter be stricken dumb.

MOLL

Dumb? Out, alas! 'Tis the worst pain of all for a woman. I'd rather be mad, or run naked, or anything. Dumb!

PYEBOARD

Give ear: ere the evening fall upon hill, bog, and meadow, this my speech shall have past probation, and then shall I be believed accordingly.

WIDOW

If this be true, we are all sham'd, all undone!

MOLL

Dumb! I'll speak as much as ever I can [possibly] before evening.

PYEBOARD

But if it so come to pass, as for your fair sakes I wish it may, that this presage of your strange fortunes be prevented by that accident of death and blood-shedding, which I before told you of, take heed, upon your lives, that two of you, which have vow'd never to marry, seek out husbands with all present speed, and you, the third, that have such a desire to outstrip chastity, look you meddle not with a husband.

MOLL

A double torment!

PYEBOARD

The breach of this keep your father in purgatory, and the punishments that shall follow you in this world would with horror kill the ear should hear 'em related.

WIDOW

Marry! Why, I vow'd never to marry!

FRANK

And so did I.

MOLL

[Aside] And I vow'd never to be such an ass, but to marry. What a cross fortune's this!

PYEBOARD

Ladies, though I be a fortune-teller, I cannot better fortunes; you have 'em from me as they are reveal'd to me. I would they were to your tempers, and fellows with your bloods; that's all the bitterness I would you.

WIDOW

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Oh, 'tis a just vengeance for my husband's hard purchases!

PYEBOARD

I wish you to bethink yourselves and leave ['em].

WIDOW

I'll to Sir Godfrey, my brother, and acquaint him with these fearful presages.

FRANK

For, mother, they portend losses to him.

WIDOW

Oh, ay, they do, they do.
If any happy issue crown thy words,
I will reward thy cunning.

PYEBOARD

'Tis enough, lady; I wish no higher.

Exit [Widow with Frank].

MOLL

Dumb? And not marry? Worse!
Neither to speak nor kiss, a double curse.

Exit.

PYEBOARD

So, all this comes well about yet. I play the fortune-teller as well as if I had had a witch to my grannam: for by good happiness, being in my hostess's garden, which neighbours the orchard of the widow, I laid the hole of mine ear to a hole in the wall, and heard 'em make these vows and speak those words, upon which I wrought these advantages; and to encourage my forgery the more, I may now perceive in 'em a natural simplicity which will easily swallow an abuse, if any covering be over it. And to confirm my former presage to the widow, I have advis'd old Peter Skirmish the soldier to hurt Corporal Oath upon the leg, and in that hurry I'll rush amongst 'em, and instead of giving the corporal some cordial to comfort him, I'll pour into his mouth a potion of a sleepy nature to make him seem as dead; for the which the old soldier being apprehended and ready to be borne to execution, I'll step in and take upon me the cure of the dead man upon pain of dying the condemned's death. The corporal will wake at his minute, when the sleepy force hath wrought itself, and so shall I get myself into a most admir'd opinion, and, under the pretext of that cunning, beguile as I see occasion. And if that foolish Nicholas St. Tantlings keep true time with the chain, my plot will be sound, the captain delivered, and my wits applauded among scholars and soldiers forever.

Exit Pyeboard.

[II.ii. A garden]

Enter Nicholas St. Tantlings with the chain.

NICHOLAS

Oh, I have found an excellent advantage to take away the chain! My master put it off e'en now to say on a new doublet, and I sneak'd it away by little and little, most puritanically. We shall have good sport anon,

[II.i. A room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

when h'as miss'd it, about my cousin the conjurer. The world shall see I'm an honest man of my word, for now I'm going to hang it between heaven and earth, among the rosemary branches.

Exit Nicholas.

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

Enter Simon St. Mary–Overies and Frailty.

FRAILTY

Sirrah Simon St. Mary–Overies, my mistress sends away all her suitors and puts fleas in their ears.

SIMON

Frailty, she does like an honest, chaste, and virtuous woman, for widows ought not to wallow in the puddle of iniquity.

FRAILTY

Yet, Simon, many widows will do't, whatso comes on't.

SIMON

True, Frailty, their filthy flesh desires a conjunction copulative. What strangers are within, Frailty?

FRAILTY

There's none, Simon, but Master Pilfer the tailor; he's above with Sir Godfrey, 'praising of a doublet. And I must trudge anon to fetch Master Suds the barber.

SIMON

Master Suds? A good man: he washes the sins of the beard clean.

Enter old Skirmish the [soldier].

SKIRMISH

How now, creatures? What's a'clock?

FRAILTY

Why, do you take us to be jack[s] [a' th'] clock–house?

SKIRMISH

I say again to you, what's a'clock?

SIMON

Truly, la, we go by the clock of our conscience. All worldly clocks we know go false, and are set by drunken sextons.

SKIRMISH

Then what's a'clock in your conscience?

Enter Corporal [Oath].

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[Aside] Oh, I must break off: here comes the corporal.—Hum, hum. [To Oath] What's a'clock?

[OATH]

A'clock? Why, past seventeen.

FRAILTY

[To Simon] Past seventeen! Nay, h'as met with his match now: Corporal Oath will fit him.

SKIRMISH

Thou dost not balk or baffle me, doest thou? I am a soldier. Past seventeen!

[OATH]

Ay, thou art not angry with the figures, art thou? I will prove it unto thee. Twelve and one is thirteen, I hope, two fourteen, three fifteen, four sixteen, and five seventeen: then past seventeen; I will take the dial's part in a just cause.

SKIRMISH

I say 'tis but past five then.

[OATH]

I'll swear 'tis past seventeen then. Doest thou not know numbers? Canst thou not cast?

SKIRMISH

Cast? Dost thou speak of my casting i' th' street?

[OATH]

Ay, and in the marketplace.

[They] draw [and fight].

SIMON

Clubs, clubs, clubs!

Simon runs in.

FRAILTY

Ay, I knew by their shuffling, clubs would be trump. Mass, here's the knave, and he can do any good upon 'em. Clubs, clubs, clubs!

Enter Pyeboard. [Skirmish wounds Oath on the leg.]

[OATH]

Oh villain, thou hast open'd a vein in my leg!

PYEBOARD

How now? For shame, for shame, put up, put up!

[OATH]

By yon blue welkin, 'twas out of my part, George, to be hurt on the leg!

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Enter Officers.

PYEBOARD

Oh, peace now! I have a cordial here to comfort thee.

[He gives Oath the cordial, which Oath drinks.]

OFFICER

Down with 'em, down with 'em; lay hands upon the villain!

[The Officers seize Skirmish and Oath.]

SKIRMISH

Lay hands on me?

PYEBOARD

I'll not be seen among 'em now.

[Pyeboard withdraws.]

[OATH]

I'm hurt, and had more need have surgeons
Lay hands upon me than rough officers!

OFFICER

Go, carry him to be dress'd then; this mutinous soldier shall along with me to prison.

[Exeunt some of the Officers with Oath.]

SKIRMISH

To prison? Where's George?

OFFICER

Away with him!

Exeunt [Officers] with Skirmish.

PYEBOARD

So,
All lights as I would wish. The amaz'd widow
Will plant me strongly now in her belief
And wonder at the virtue of my words,
For the event turns those presages from 'em
Of being mad and dumb, and begets joy
Mingled with admiration. These empty creatures,
Soldier and corporal, were but ordain'd
As instruments for me to work upon.
Now to my patient; here's his potion.

Exit Pyeboard.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[III.ii. An apartment in the Widow's house]

Enter the Widow with her two daughters [Frank and Moll, and Frailty].

WIDOW

Oh wondrous happiness, beyond our thoughts!
Oh lucky fair event! I think our fortunes
Were blest e'en in our cradles. We are quitted
Of all those shameful violent presages
By this rash, bleeding chance. Go, Frailty, run and know
Whether he be yet living or yet dead
That here before my door receiv'd his hurt.

FRAILTY

Madam, he was carried to the [surgeon], but if he had no money when he came there, I warrant he's dead by this time.

Exit Frailty.

FRANK

Sure that man is a rare fortune-teller: never look'd upon our hands nor upon any mark about us; a wondrous fellow, surely!

MOLL

[Aside] I am glad I have the use of my tongue yet, though of nothing else. I shall find the way to marry too, I hope, shortly.

WIDOW

Oh, where's my brother Sir Godfrey? I would he were here that I might relate to him how prophetically the cunning gentleman spoke in all things.

Enter Sir Godfrey in a rage.

SIR GODFREY

Oh, my chain, my chain! I have lost my chain! Where be these villains, varlets?

WIDOW

Oh, he has lost his chain!

SIR GODFREY

My chain, my chain!

WIDOW

Brother, be patient; here me speak. You know I told you that a cunning-man told me that you should have a loss, and he has prophesied so true---

SIR GODFREY

Out! He's a villain to prophesy of the loss of my chain. 'Twas worth above three hundred crowns. Besides, 'twas my father's, my father's father's, my grandfather's huge grandfather's: I had as [lief] ha' lost my neck as the chain that hung about it. Oh, my chain, my chain!

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

WIDOW

Oh, brother, who can be [guarded] against a misfortune? 'Tis happy 'twas no more.

SIR GODFREY

No more! Oh goodly godly sister, would you had me lost more? My best gown too, with the cloth-of-gold lace? My holiday gaskins, and my jerkin set with pearl? No more!

WIDOW

Oh, brother, you can read—

SIR GODFREY

But I cannot read where my chain is. What strangers have been here? You let in strangers, thieves, and catchpoles. How comes it gone? There was none above with me but my tailor, and my tailor will not steal, I hope.

MOLL

No, he's afraid of a chain!

Enter Frailty.

WIDOW

How now, sirrah? The news?

FRAILTY

Oh, mistress, he may well be call'd a corporal now, for his corpse [is] as dead as a cold capon's.

WIDOW

More happiness!

SIR GODFREY

Sirrah, what's this to my chain? Where's my chain, knave?

FRAILTY

Your chain, sir?

SIR GODFREY

My chain is lost, villain.

FRAILTY

I would he were hang'd in chains that has it then for me. Alas, sir, I saw none of your chain since you were hung with it yourself.

SIR GODFREY

Out, varlet! It had full three thousand links;
I have oft told it over at my prayers,
Over and over, full three thousand links.

FRAILTY

Had it so, sir? Sure it cannot be lost then; I'll put you in that comfort.

SIR GODFREY

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Why? Why?

FRAILTY

Why, if your chain had so many links, it cannot choose but come to light.

Enter Nicholas.

SIR GODFREY

Delusion! Now, long Nicholas, where's my chain?

NICHOLAS

Why, about your neck, is't not, sir?

SIR GODFREY

About my neck, varlet? My chain is lost: 'tis stole away; I'm robb'd!

WIDOW

Nay, brother, show yourself a man.

NICHOLAS

Ay, if it be lost or stole, if he would be patient, mistress, I could bring him to a cunning kinsman of mine that would fetch 't again with a sesarara.

SIR GODFREY

Canst thou? I will be patient; say, where dwells he?

NICHOLAS

Marry, he dwells now, sir, where he would not dwell and he could choose: in the Marshalsea, sir. But he's an ex'lent fellow if he were out; h'as travell'd all the world o'er, he, and been in the seven-and-twenty provinces. Why, he would make it be fetch'd, sir, if 'twere rid a thousand mile out of town.

SIR GODFREY

An admirable fellow! What lies he for?

NICHOLAS

Why, he did but rob a steward of ten groats t'other night, as any man would ha' done, and there he lies for't.

SIR GODFREY

I'll make his peace. A trifle! I'll get his pardon,
Beside a bountiful reward. I'll about it.
But [fee] the clerks, the justice will do much.
I will about it straight. Good sister, pardon me;
All will be well, I hope, and turn to good:
The name of conjurer has laid my blood.

Exeunt.

[III.iii. A street]

Enter two sergeants [Puttock and Ravenshaw, with Yeoman Dogson] to arrest the scholar, George Pyeboard [who enters later].

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

PUTTOCK

His hostess where he lies will trust him no longer. She has feed me to arrest him, and if you will accompany me, because I know not of what nature the scholar is, whether desperate or swift, you shall share with me, Sergeant Ravenshaw. I have the good angel to arrest him.

RAVENSHAW

Troth, I'll take part with thee, then, sergeant, not for the sake of the money so much, as for the hate I bear to a scholar. Why, sergeant, 'tis natural in us, you know, to hate scholars, natural; besides, they will publish our imperfections, knaveries, and conveyances upon scaffolds and stages.

PUTTOCK

Ay, and spitefully too. Troth, I have wonder'd how the slaves could see into our breasts so much, when our [doublets] are button'd with pewter.

RAVENSHAW

Ay, and so close without yielding. Oh, they're parlous fellows; they will search more with their wits than a constable with all his officers.

PUTTOCK

Whist, whist, whist! Yeoman Dogson, Yeoman Dogson.

DOGSON

Ha! What says sergeant?

PUTTOCK

Is he in the 'pothecary's shop still?

DOGSON

Ay, ay.

PUTTOCK

Have an eye, [have an] eye.

RAVENSHAW

The best is, sergeant, if he be a true scholar, he wears no weapon, I think.

PUTTOCK

No, no, he wears no weapon.

RAVENSHAW

Mass, I am right glad of that; 't 'as put me in better heart. Nay, if I clutch him once, let me alone to drag him if he be stiff-necked. I have been one of the six myself that has dragg'd as tall men of their hands when their weapons have been gone, as ever bastinado'd a sergeant. I have done, I can tell you.

DOGSON

Sergeant Puttock, Sergeant Puttock!

PUTTOCK

Ho!

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

DOGSON

He's coming out single.

PUTTOCK

Peace, peace, be not too greedy; let him play a little, let him play a little. We'll jerk him up of a sudden: I ha' fish'd in my time.

RAVENSHAW

Ay, and caught many a fool, sergeant.

Enter Pyeboard.

PYEBOARD

[Aside] I parted now from Nicholas: the chain's couch'd,
And the old knight has spent his rage upon't.
The widow holds me in great admiration
For cunning art. 'Mongst joys I am e'en lost,
For my device can no way now be cross'd;
And now I must to prison to the captain,
And there---

[Ravenshaw and Dogson seize Pyeboard.]

PUTTOCK

I arrest you, sir.

PYEBOARD

Oh! I spoke truer than I was aware: I must to prison indeed.

PUTTOCK

They say you're a scholar. [Pyeboard struggles.] Nay, sir! Yeoman Dogson, have care to his arms. You'll rail against sergeants and stage 'em? You['ll] tickle their vices?

PYEBOARD

Nay, use me like a gentleman; I'm little less.

PUTTOCK

You a gentleman! That's a good jest, i'faith. Can a scholar be a gentleman when a gentleman will not be a scholar? Look upon your wealthy citizens' sons, whether they be scholars or no, that are gentlemen by their fathers' trades. A scholar a gentleman!

PYEBOARD

Nay, let fortune drive all her stings into me, she cannot hurt that in me. A gentleman is accidens inseparable to my blood.

RAVENSHAW

A rabblement! Nay, you shall have a bloody rabblement upon you, I warrant you.

PUTTOCK

Go, Yeoman Dogson, before, and enter the action i' th' Counter.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Exit Dogson.

PYEBOARD

Pray do not handle me cruelly; I'll go whither you please to have me.

PUTTOCK

Oh, he's tame; let him loose, sergeant.

PYEBOARD

Pray, at whose suit is this?

PUTTOCK

Why, at your hostess's suit where you lie, [Mistress] Conyburrow, for bed and board, the sum four pound five shillings and five pence.

PYEBOARD

I know the sum too true, yet I presum'd
Upon a farther day. Well, 'tis my stars,
And I must bear it now, though never harder.
I swear now my device is cross'd indeed;
[Th'] captain must lie [by't]: this is deceit's seed.

PUTTOCK

Come, come away.

PYEBOARD

Pray give me so much time as to knit my garter, and I'll away with you.

PUTTOCK

Well, we must be paid for this waiting upon you; this is no pains to attend thus.

PYEBOARD making to tie his garter

I am now wretched and miserable; I shall ne'er recover of this disease. Hot iron gnaw their fists! They have struck a fever into my shoulder, which I shall ne'er shake out again, I fear me, till with a true habeas corpus the sexton remove me. Oh, if I take prison once, I shall be press'd to death with actions, but not so happy as speedily: perhaps I may be forty years a-pressing, till I be a thin, old man, that looking through the grates, men may look through me. All my means [are] confounded. What shall I do? Has my wit served me so long and now give[s] me the slip, like a train'd servant, when I have most need of [it]? No device to keep my poor carcass fro' these puttocks? Yes, happiness! Have I a paper about me now? Yes, too! I'll try it; it may hit. "Extremity is the touchstone unto wit." Ay, ay.

PUTTOCK

'Sfoot, how many yards are in thy garters that thou art so long a-tying of them? Come away, sir.

PYEBOARD

Troth, sergeant, I protest, you could never ha' took me at a worse time, for now at this instant I have no lawful picture about me.

PUTTOCK

'Slid, how shall [we] come by our fees then?

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

RAVENSHAW

We must have fees, sirrah.

PYEBOARD

I could ha' wish'd, i'faith, that you had took me half an hour hence for your own sake, for, I protest, if you had not cross'd me, I was going in great joy to receive five pound of a gentleman for the device of a masque here, drawn in this paper. But now, come, I must be contented; 'tis but so much lost, and answerable to the rest of my fortunes.

PUTTOCK

Why, how far hence dwells that gentleman?

RAVENSHAW

Ay, well said, sergeant; 'tis good to cast about for money.

PUTTOCK

Speak; if it be not far---

PYEBOARD

We are but a little past it: the next street behind us.

PUTTOCK

'Slid, we have waited upon you grievously already. If you'll say you'll be liberal when you ha't, give us double fees, and spend upon 's, why, we'll show you that kindness and go along with you to the gentleman.

RAVENSHAW

Ay, well said, still, sergeant; urge that.

PYEBOARD

Troth, if it will suffice, it shall be all among you; for my part I'll not pocket a penny: my hostess shall have her four pound five shillings and bate me the five pence, and the other fifteen shillings I'll spend upon you.

RAVENSHAW

Why, now thou art a good scholar.

PUTTOCK

An excellent scholar, i'faith; h'as proceeded very well alate. Come, we'll along with you.

Exeunt [Puttock and Ravenshaw] with him: passing in they knock at the door with a knocker withinside.

[III.iv. A gallery in a Gentleman's house]

[Enter a Servant.]

SERVANT

Who knocks? Who's at door? We had need of a porter.

PYEBOARD

[Within] A few friends here.

[The Servant opens the door. Enter Pyeboard, Puttock, Ravenshaw, and Dogson.]

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Pray, is the gentleman your master within?

SERVANT

Yes; is your business to him?

PYEBOARD

Ay, he knows it when he sees me; I pray you, have you forgot me?

SERVANT

Ay, by my troth, sir. Pray come near; I'll in and tell him of you. Please you to walk here in the gallery till he comes.

PYEBOARD

We will attend his worship.

Exit Servant.

[Aside] Worship, I think, for so much the posts at his door should signify, and the fair coming-in, and the wicket, else I neither knew him nor his worship; but 'tis happiness he is within doors, whatsoever he be. If he be not too much a formal citizen, he may do me good.—Sergeant and yeoman, how do you like this house? Is't not most wholesomely plotted?

RAVENSHAW

Troth, prisoner, an exceeding fine house.

PYEBOARD

Yet I wonder how he should forget me, [aside] for he never knew me.—No matter; what is forgot in you will be remember'd in your master. A pretty, comfortable room this, methinks; you have no such rooms in prison now?

PUTTOCK

Oh, dog-holes to't!

PYEBOARD

Dog-holes indeed. I can tell you, I have great hope to have my chamber here shortly, nay, and diet too, for he's the most free-heartedst gentleman where he takes; you would little think it. And what a fine gallery were here for me to walk and study and make verses.

PUTTOCK

Oh, it stands very pleasantly for a scholar.

Enter Gentleman.

PYEBOARD

Look what maps, and pictures, and devices, and things, neatly, delicately. Mass, here he comes; he should be a gentleman: I like his beard well. All happiness to your worship!

GENTLEMAN

You're kindly welcome, sir.

PUTTOCK

[Aside to Ravenshaw] A simple salutation.

RAVENSHAW

[Aside to Puttock] Mass, it seems the gentleman makes great account of him.

PYEBOARD

I have the thing here for you, sir. [Aside to the Gentleman] I beseech you, conceal me, sir; I'm undone else.--[Aloud, showing him a paper] I have the masque here for you, sir; look you, sir. [Aside to him] I beseech your worship, first pardon my rudeness, for my extremes make me bolder than I would be. I am a poor gentleman and a scholar, and now most unfortunately fall'n into the fangs of unmerciful officers, arrested for debt, which, though small, I am not able to compass, by reason I'm destitute of lands, money, and friends; so that if I fall into the hungry swallow of the prison, I am like utterly to perish, and with fees and extortions be pinch'd clean to the bone. Now, if ever pity had interest in the blood of a gentleman, I beseech you vouchsafe but to favour that means of my escape, which I have already thought upon.

GENTLEMAN

Go forward.

PUTTOCK

[Aside to Ravenshaw] I warrant he likes it rarely.

PYEBOARD

[Aside to the Gentleman] In the plunge of my extremities, being giddy and doubtful what to do, at last it was put into my labouring thoughts to make happy use of this paper, and to blear their unletter'd eyes, I told them there was a device for a masque drawn in't, and that, but for their interception, I was going to a gentleman to receive my reward for't. They, greedy at this word, and hoping to make purchase of me, offered their attendance to go along with me. My hap was to make bold with your door, sir, which my thoughts show'd me the most fairest and comfortablest entrance, and I hope I have happened right upon understanding and pity. May it please your good worship then but to uphold my device, which is to let one of your men put me out at a back door, and I shall be bound to your worship forever.

GENTLEMAN

By my troth, an excellent device.

PUTTOCK

[Aside to Ravenshaw] An excellent device, he says; he likes it wonderfully.

GENTLEMAN

A' my faith, I never heard a better.

RAVENSHAW

[Aside to Puttock] Hark, he swears he never heard a better, sergeant.

PUTTOCK

[Aside to Ravenshaw] Oh, there's no talk on't: he's an excellent scholar, especially for a masque.

GENTLEMAN

Give me your paper, your device; I was never better pleas'd in all my life. Good wit, brave wit, finely wrought! Come in, sir, and receive your money, sir.

PYEBOARD

I'll follow your good worship.

[Exit Gentleman.]

You heard how he lik'd it now?

PUTTOCK

Puh, we know he could not choose but like it. Go thy ways; thou art a witty, fine fellow, i'faith. Thou shalt discourse it to us at tavern anon, wilt thou?

PYEBOARD

Ay, ay, that I will. Look, sergeants, here are maps and pretty toys: be doing in the meantime; I shall quickly have told out the money, you know.

PUTTOCK

Go, go, little villain; fetch thy chink. I begin to love thee; I'll be drunk tonight in thy company.

PYEBOARD

[Aside] This [gentleman] I well may call a part
Of my salvation in these earthly evils,
For he has sav'd me from three hungry devils.

Exit George Pyeboard.

PUTTOCK

[Looking at a map] Sirrah sergeant, these maps are pretty painted things, but I could ne'er fancy 'em yet; methinks they're too busy, and full of circles and conjurations. They say all the world's in one of them, but I could ne'er find the Counter in the Poultry.

RAVENSHAW

I think so; how could you find it, for you know it stands behind the houses.

DOGSON

Mass, that's true; then we must look a' th' backside for't. [He turns the map over.] 'Sfoot, here's nothing; all's bare.

RAVENSHAW

I warrant thee that stands for the Counter, for you know there's a company of bare fellows there.

PUTTOCK

Faith, like enough, sergeant; I never mark'd so much before. Sirrah sergeant and yeoman, I should love these maps out a' cry now if we could see men peep out of door in 'em. Oh, we might have 'em in a morning to our breakfast so finely and ne'er knock our heels to the ground a whole day for 'em.

RAVENSHAW

Ay, marry, sir, I'd buy one then myself. But this talk is by the way. Where shall's sup tonight? Five pound receiv'd: let's talk of that. I have a trick worth all. You two shall bear him to th' tavern whilst I go close with his hostess and work out of her. I know she would be glad of the sum to finger money, because she knows 'tis but a desperate debt and full of hazard. What will you say if I bring it to pass that the hostess shall be contented with one-half for all and we to share t'other [fifty] shillings, bullies?

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

PUTTOCK

Why, I would call thee king of sergeants, and thou should'st be chronicled in the Counter–book forever.

RAVENSHAW

Well, put it to me; we'll make a night on't, i'faith.

DOGSON

'Sfoot, I think he receives more money, he stays so long.

PUTTOCK

He tarries long indeed. Maybe I can tell you, upon the good liking on't, the gentleman may prove more bountiful.

RAVENSHAW

That would be rare; we'll search him.

PUTTOCK

Nay, be sure of it, we'll search him and make him light enough.

Enter the [Gentleman].

RAVENSHAW

Oh, here comes the gentleman. By your leave, sir.

GENTLEMAN

God you good den, sirs. Would you speak with me?

PUTTOCK

No, not with your worship, sir; only we are bold to stay for a friend of ours that went in with your worship.

GENTLEMAN

Who? Not the scholar?

PUTTOCK

Yes, e'en he, and it please your worship.

GENTLEMAN

Did he make you stay for him? He did you wrong then; why, I can assure you he's gone above an hour ago.

RAVENSHAW

How, sir!

GENTLEMAN

I paid him his money and my man told me he went out at back door.

PUTTOCK

Back door?

GENTLEMAN

Why, what's the matter?

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

PUTTOCK

He was our prisoner, sir; we did arrest him.

GENTLEMAN

What? He was not! You, the sheriff's officers? You were to blame then. Why did not you make known to me as much? I could have kept him for you. I protest, he receiv'd all of me in Britain gold of the last coining.

RAVENSHAW

Vengeance dog him with't!

PUTTOCK

'Sfoot, has he gull'd us so?

DOGSON

Where shall we sup now, sergeants?

PUTTOCK

Sup, Simon, now! Eat porridge for a month! Well, we cannot impute it to any lack of good will in your worship. You did but as another would have done. 'Twas our hard fortunes to miss the purchase; but if e'er we clutch him again, the Counter shall charm him.

RAVENSHAW

The Hole shall rot him!

DOGSON

Amen.

Exeunt [Puttock, Ravenshaw, and Dogson].

GENTLEMAN

So;

Vex out your lungs without doors. I am proud
It was my hap to help him. It fell fit;
He went not empty neither for his wit.
Alas, poor wretch, I could not blame his brain
To labour his delivery to be free
From their un pitying fangs. I'm glad it stood
Within my power to do a scholar good.

Exit.

[III.v. Idle's cell in the Marshalsea Prison]

Enter in the prison, meeting, George [Pyeboard] and Captain [Idle], George coming in muffled.

[IDLE]

How now! Who's that? What are you?

PYEBOARD

[Showing his face] The same that I should be, captain.

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[IDLE]

George Pyeboard? Honest George? Why cam'st thou in half-fac'd, muffled so?

PYEBOARD

Oh, captain, I thought we should ne'er ha' laugh'd again, never spent frolic hour again.

[IDLE]

Why? Why?

PYEBOARD

I, coming to prepare thee, and with news
As happy as thy quick delivery,
Was trac'd out by the scent: arrested, captain.

[IDLE]

Arrested, George?

PYEBOARD

Arrested. Guess, guess,
How many dogs do you think I'd upon me?

[IDLE]

Dogs? I say, I know not.

PYEBOARD

Almost as many as George Stone the bear: three at once, three at once!

[IDLE]

How didst thou shake 'em off then?

PYEBOARD

The time is busy and calls upon our wits.
Let it suffice,
Here I stand safe and scap'd by miracle;
Some other hour shall tell thee, when we'll steep
Our eyes in laughter. Captain, my device
Leans to thy happiness, for ere the day
Be spent to th' girdle, thou shalt be set free.
The corporal's in his first sleep, the chain is miss'd,
Thy kinsman has express'd thee, and the old knight
With palsy hams now labours thy release.
What rests is all in thee: to conjure, captain.

[IDLE]

Conjure! 'Sfoot, George, you know, the devil a-conjuring I can conjure!

PYEBOARD

The devil [a-]conjuring? Nay, by my fay, I'd not have thee do so much, captain, as the devil a-conjuring.
[Giving him a conjuring circle] Look here, I ha' brought thee a circle ready character'd and all.

[IDLE]

'Sfoot, George, art in thy right wits? Dost know what thou sayst? Why dost talk to a captain a' conjuring? Didst thou ever hear of a captain conjure in thy life? Dost call't a circle? 'Tis too wide a thing, methinks; had it been a lesser circle, then I knew what to have done.

PYEBOARD

Why, every fool knows that, captain. Nay then, I'll not cog with you captain: if you'll stay and hang the next sessions, you may.

[IDLE]

No, by my faith, George. Come, come; let's to conjuring, let's to conjuring.

PYEBOARD

But if you look to be releas'd, as my wits have took pain to work it and all means wrought to farther it; besides, to put crowns in your purse, to make you a man of better hopes. And whereas before you were a captain or poor soldier, to make you now a commander of rich fools, which is truly the only best purchase peace can allow you, safer than [highways], heath, or cony-groves, and yet a far better booty, for your greatest thieves are never hang'd, never hang'd, for, why, they're wise and cheat within doors; and we geld fools of more money in one night than your false-tail'd gelding will purchase in a twelve-month's running, which confirms the old beldam's saying, "He's wisest that keeps himself warmest," that is, he that robs by a good fire.

[IDLE]

Well opened, i'faith, George; thou hast pull'd that saying out of the husk.

PYEBOARD

Captain Idle, 'tis no time now to delude or delay; the old knight will be here suddenly. I'll perfect you, direct you, [tell] you the trick on't: 'tis nothing.

[IDLE]

'Sfoot, George, I know not what to say to't. Conjure? I shall be hang'd ere I can conjure.

PYEBOARD

Nay, tell not me of that, captain; you'll ne'er conjure after you're hang'd, I warrant you. Look you, sir, a parlous matter, sure. First to spread your circle upon the ground with a little conjuring ceremony, as I'll have an hackney-man's wand silver'd o'er a' purpose for you; then arriving in the circle with a huge word and a great trample, as for instance: have you never seen a stalking, stamping player that will raise a tempest with his tongue and thunder with his heels?

[IDLE]

Oh, yes, yes, yes; often, often!

PYEBOARD

Why, be like such a one, for anything will blear the old knight's eyes; for you must note that he'll ne'er dare to venture into the room, only perhaps peep fearfully through the keyhole, to see how the play goes forward.

[IDLE]

Well, I may go about it when I will, but mark the end on't: I shall but shame myself, i'faith, George. Speak big words, and stamp and stare, and he look in at keyhole! Why, the very thought of that would make me laugh outright and spoil all! Nay, I'll tell thee, George, when I apprehend a thing once, I am of such a laxative laughter, that if the devil himself stood by, I should laugh in his face.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

PYEBOARD

Puh! That's but the babe of a man and may easily be hush'd, as to think upon some disaster, some sad misfortune, as the death of thy father i' the country.

[IDLE]

'Sfoot, that would be the more to drive me into such an ecstasy that I should ne'er lin laughing.

PYEBOARD

Why, then think upon going to hanging else.

[IDLE]

Mass, that's well remembered. Now I'll do well, I warrant thee; ne'er fear me now. But how shall I do, George, for boisterous words and horrible names?

PYEBOARD

Puh! Any fustian invocations, captain, will serve as well as the best, so you rant them out well; or you may go to a 'pothecary's shop and take all the words from the boxes.

[IDLE]

Troth, and you say true, George; there's strange words enow to raise a hundred quacksalvers, though they be ne'er so poor when they begin. But here lies the fear on't: how [if] in this false conjuration a true devil should pop up indeed?

PYEBOARD

A true devil, captain? Why, there was ne'er such a one. Nay, faith, he that has this place is as false a knave as our last churchwarden.

[IDLE]

Then he's false enough a' conscience, i'faith, George.

The cry at Marshalsea.

PRISONERS cry [within]

Good gentlemen over the way, send your relief! Good gentlemen over the way! Good Sir Godfrey!

PYEBOARD

He's come, he's come.

[Enter Sir Godfrey, Edmond, and Nicholas.]

NICHOLAS

Master, that's my kinsman yonder in the buff-jerkin. Kinsman, that's my master yonder i' th' taffety hat. Pray salute him entirely.

[Sir Godfrey and Idle] salute, and Pyeboard salutes Master Edmond.

SIR GODFREY

[Taking Idle aside] Now, my friend--

PYEBOARD

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

May I partake your name, sir?

EDMOND

My name is Master Edmond.

PYEBOARD

Master Edmond? Are you not a Welshman, sir?

EDMOND

A Welshman? Why?

PYEBOARD

Because Master is your Christian name and Edmond your surname.

EDMOND

Oh, no, I have more names at home; Master Edmond Plus is my full name at length.

PYEBOARD

Oh, cry you mercy, sir!

[IDLE]

I understand that you are my kinsman's good master, and in regard of that, the best of my skill is at your service. But had you fortun'd a mere stranger and made no means to me by acquaintance, I should have utterly denied to have been the man, both by reason of the act pass'd in parliament against conjurers and witches, as also because I would not have my art vulgar, trite, and common.

SIR GODFREY

I much commend your care therein, good captain conjurer, and that I will be sure to have it private enough, you shall do't in my sister's house; mine own house I may call it, for both our charges therein are proportion'd.

[IDLE]

Very good, sir. What may I call your loss, sir?

SIR GODFREY

Oh, you may call 't a great loss, a grievous loss, sir, as goodly a chain of gold, though I say it, that wore it. How sayst thou, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS

Oh, 'twas as delicious a chain of gold, kinsman, you know—

SIR GODFREY

You know? Did you know't, captain?

[IDLE]

[Aside] Trust a fool with secrets!—Sir, he may say I know. His meaning is, because my art is such, that by it I may gather a knowledge of all things.

SIR GODFREY

Ay, very true.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[IDLE]

[Aside] A pox of all fools! The excuse stuck upon my tongue like ship-pitch upon a mariner's gown, not to come off in haste.—Berlady, knight, to lose such a fair chain of gold were a foul loss. Well, I can put you in this good comfort on't: if it be between heaven and earth, knight, I'll ha't for you.

SIR GODFREY

A wonderful conjurer! Oh, ay, 'tis between heaven and earth, I warrant you; it cannot go out of the realm. I know 'tis somewhere above the earth—

[IDLE]

[Aside] Ay, nigher the earth than thou wotst on.

SIR GODFREY

For, first, my chain was rich, and no rich thing shall enter into heaven, you know.

NICHOLAS

And as for the devil, master, he has no need on't, for you know he has a great chain of his own.

SIR GODFREY

Thou sayst true, Nicholas, but he has put off that now; that lies by him.

[IDLE]

Faith, knight, in few words, I presume so much upon the power of my art that I could warrant your chain again.

SIR GODFREY

Oh, dainty captain!

[IDLE]

Marry, it will cost me much sweat; I were better go to sixteen hothouses.

SIR GODFREY

Ay, good man, I warrant thee.

[IDLE]

Beside great vexation of kidney and liver.

NICHOLAS

Oh, 'twill tickle you hereabouts, cousin, because you have not been used to't.

SIR GODFREY

No? Have you not been us'd to't, captain?

[IDLE]

[Aside] Plague of all fools still!—Indeed, knight, I have not us'd it a good while, and therefore 'twill strain me so much the more, you know.

SIR GODFREY

Oh, it will, it will.

[IDLE]

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[Aside] What plunges he puts me to! Were not this knight a fool, I had been twice spoil'd now. That captain's worse than accurs'd that has an ass to his kinsman. 'Sfoot, I fear he will drivel 't out before I come to't!—Now, sir to come to the point indeed: you see I stick here in the jaw of the Marshalsea and cannot do't.

SIR GODFREY

Tut, tut, I [k]now thy meaning: thou would'st say thou'rt a prisoner; I tell thee thou'rt none.

[IDLE]

How, none? Why, is not this the Marshalsea?

SIR GODFREY

Would hear me speak? I heard of thy rare conjuring:
My chain was lost; I sweat for thy release
As thou shalt do the like at home for me.
Keeper!

Enter Keeper.

KEEPER

Sir.

SIR GODFREY

Speak, is not this man free?

KEEPER

Yes, at his pleasure, sir, the fees discharg'd.

SIR GODFREY

Go, go; I'll discharge them, I.

KEEPER

I thank your worship.

Exit Keeper.

[IDLE]

Now, trust me, y'are a dear knight! Kindness unexpected! Oh, there's nothing to a free gentleman! I will conjure you, sir, till froth come through my buff-jerkin.

SIR GODFREY

Nay, then thou shalt not pass with so little a bounty, for at the first sight of my chain again, forty fine angels shall appear unto thee.

[IDLE]

'Twill be a glorious show, i'faith, knight, a very fine show. But are all these of your own house? Are you sure of that, sir?

SIR GODFREY

Ay, ay; no, no. What's he yonder talking with my wild nephew? Pray heaven he give him good counsel.

[IDLE]

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Who, he? He's a rare friend of mine: an admirable fellow, knight, the finest fortune-teller.

SIR GODFREY

Oh! 'Tis he indeed that came to my lady sister and foretold the loss of my chain; I am not angry with him now, for I see 'twas my fortune to lose it. By your leave, m[aster] fortune-teller, I had a glimpse on you at home, at my sister's the widow's; there you prophesied of the loss of a chain; simply though I stand here, I was he that lost it.

PYEBOARD

Was is you, sir?

EDMOND

A' my troth, nuncle, he's the rarest fellow; h'as told me my fortune so right! I find it so right to my nature.

SIR GODFREY

What is't? God send it a good one.

EDMOND

Oh, 'tis a passing good one, nuncle, for he says I shall prove such an excellent gamester in my time that I shall spend all faster than my father got it.

SIR GODFREY

There's a fortune indeed.

EDMOND

Nay, it hits my humour so pat.

SIR GODFREY

Ay, that will be the end on't. Will the curse of the beggar prevail so much that the son shall consume that foolishly which the father got craftily? Ay, ay, ay; 'twill, 'twill, 'twill.

PYEBOARD

Stay, stay, stay.

Pyeboard opens an almanac and [takes] the Captain [aside].

[IDLE]

Turn over, George.

PYEBOARD

June, July; here, July: that's this month. Sunday thirteen, yesterday fourteen, today fifteen.

[IDLE]

Look quickly for the fifteen day. If within the compass of these two days there would be some boisterous storm or other, it would be the best; I'd defer him off till then. Some tempest, and it be thy will.

PYEBOARD

Here's the fifteen day. [Reading] "Hot and fair."

[IDLE]

Puh! Would 't 'ad been hot and foul.

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

PYEBOARD

The sixteen day, that's tomorrow. [Reading] "The morning for the most part fair and pleasant"--

[IDLE]

No luck.

PYEBOARD

"But about high noon, lightning and thunder."

[IDLE]

Lightning and thunder? Admirable! Best of all! I'll conjure tomorrow just at high noon, George.

PYEBOARD

Happen but true tomorrow, almanac, and I'll give thee leave to lie all the year after.

[IDLE]

[To Sir Godfrey] Sir, I must crave your patience to bestow this day upon me, that I may furnish myself strongly. I sent a spirit into Lancashire t'other day to fetch back a knave drover, and I look for his return this evening. Tomorrow morning my friend here and I will come and breakfast with you.

SIR GODFREY

Oh, you shall be both most welcome.

[IDLE]

And about noon, without fail, I purpose to conjure.

SIR GODFREY

Mid-noon will be a fine time for you.

EDMOND

Conjuring? Do you mean to conjure at our house tomorrow, sir?

[IDLE]

Marry, do I, sir; 'tis my intent, young gentleman.

EDMOND

By my troth, I'll love you while I live for't. Oh, rare! Nicholas, we shall have conjuring tomorrow.

NICHOLAS

Puh! Ay, I could ha' told you of that.

[IDLE]

[Aside] Law, he could ha' told him of that! Fool, coxcomb, could ye?

EDMOND

Do you hear, sir? I desire more acquaintance on you. You shall earn some money of me, now I know you can conjure. But can you fetch any that is lost?

[IDLE]

Oh, anything that's lost.

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

EDMOND

Why, look you, sir, I tell 't you as a friend and a conjurer. I should marry a 'pothecary's daughter, and 'twas told me she lost her maidenhead at Stony–Stratford; now if you'll do but so much as conjure for't, and make all whole again--

[IDLE]

That I will, sir.

EDMOND

By my troth, I thank you, la!

[IDLE]

A little merry with your sister's son, sir.

SIR GODFREY

Oh, a simple young man, very simple. Come, captain, and you, sir; we'll e'en part with a gallon of wine till tomorrow breakfast.

[PYEBOARD], [IDLE]

Troth, agreed, sir.

[Exit Sir Godfrey and Edmond.]

NICHOLAS

Kinsman, scholar.

PYEBOARD

Why, now thou art a good knave, worth a hundred Brownists.

NICHOLAS

Am I indeed, la? I thank you truly, la.

Exeunt.

IV.[i. A room in the Widow's house]

Enter Moll and Sir John Pennydub.

[SIR JOHN]

But I hope you will not serve a knight so, gentlewoman, will you? To cashier him and cast him off at your pleasure! What, do you think I was dubb'd for nothing? No, by my faith, lady's daughter.

MOLL

Pray, Sir John Pennydub, let it be deferr'd awhile. I have as big a heart to marry as you can have, but as the fortune–teller told me--

[SIR JOHN]

Pox a' th' fortune–teller! Would Derrick had been his fortune seven years ago to cross my love thus! Did he know what case I was in? Why, this is able to make a man drown himself in's father's fishpond!

III.[i. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

MOLL

And then he told me moreover, Sir John, that the breach of it kept my father in purgatory.

[SIR JOHN]

In purgatory! Why, let him purge out his heart there; what have we to do with that? There's physicians enow there to cast his water; is that any matter to us? How can he hinder our love? Why, let him be hang'd now he's dead. Well, have I rid post day and night to bring you merry news of my father's death, and now—

MOLL

Thy father's death? Is the old farmer dead?

[SIR JOHN]

As dead as his barn door, Moll.

MOLL

And you'll keep you word with me now, Sir John, that I shall have my coach and my coachman?

[SIR JOHN]

Ay, faith.

MOLL

And two white horses with black feathers to draw it?

[SIR JOHN]

Two.

MOLL

A guarded lackey to run before it and pied liveries to come trashing after 't?

[SIR JOHN]

Thou shalt, Moll.

MOLL

And to let me have money in my purse to go whither I will.

[SIR JOHN]

All this.

MOLL

Then come; whatsoe'er comes on't, we'll be made sure together before the maids a' the kitchen.

Exeunt.

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

Enter Widow with her eldest daughter Frank, and Frailty.

WIDOW

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

How now? Where's my brother Sir Godfrey? Went he forth this morning?

FRAILTY

Oh, no, madam; he's above at breakfast, with, sir reverence, a conjurer.

WIDOW

A conjurer! What manner a' fellow is he?

FRAILTY

Oh, a wondrous rare fellow, mistress, very strongly made upward, for he goes in a buff-jerkin. He says he will fetch Sir Godfrey's chain again if it hang between heaven and earth.

WIDOW

What! He will not! Then he's an ex'lent fellow, I warrant. How happy were that woman to be blest with such a husband! A man a' cunning! How does he look, Frailty? Very swartly, I warrant, with black beard, scorch'd cheeks, and smoky eyebrows.

FRAILTY

Fooh, he's neither smoke-dried, nor scorch'd, nor black, nor nothing. I tell you, madam, he looks as fair to see to as one of us. I do not think but if you saw him once, you'd take him to be a Christian.

FRANK

So fair and yet so cunning! That's to be wonder'd at, mother.

Enter Sir Oliver Muckhill and Sir Andrew Tipstaff.

[SIR OLIVER]

Bless you, sweet lady.

[SIR ANDREW]

And you, fair mistress.

Exit Frailty.

WIDOW

Coads, what do you mean, gentlemen? Fie, did I not give you your answers?

[SIR OLIVER]

Sweet lady.

WIDOW

Well, I will not stick with you now for a kiss;
Daughter, kiss the gentleman for once.

FRANK

Yes, forsooth.

[She kisses Sir Andrew.]

[SIR ANDREW]

I'm proud of such a favour.

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

WIDOW

Truly, la, Sir Oliver, y'are much to blame to come again when you know my mind, so well deliver'd as widow could deliver a thing.

[SIR OLIVER]

But I expect a farther comfort, lady.

WIDOW

Why, la, you now! Did I not desire you to put off your suit quite and clean when you came to me again? How say you? Did I not?

[SIR OLIVER]

But the sincere love which my heart bears you—

WIDOW

Go to, I'll cut you off. And, Sir Oliver, to put you in comfort afar off, my fortune is read me; I must marry again.

[SIR OLIVER]

Oh, blest fortune!

WIDOW

But not as long as I can choose. Nay, I'll hold out well.

[SIR OLIVER]

Yet are my hopes now fairer.

Enter Frailty.

FRAILTY

Oh, madam, madam!

WIDOW

How now? What's the haste?

[Frailty whispers to her] in her ear.

[SIR ANDREW]

Faith, Mistress Frances, I'll maintain you gallantly. I'll bring you to court, wean you among the fair society of ladies, poor kinswomen of mine, in cloth of silver; beside, you shall have your monkey, your parrot, your muskcat, and your piss, piss, piss.

FRANK

It will do very well.

WIDOW

[Aside] What, does he mean to conjure here then? How shall I do to be rid of these knights?—Please you, gentlemen, to walk a while i' th' garden, go gather a pink or a gilly-flower.

[SIR OLIVER, SIR ANDREW]

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

With all our hearts, lady, and count us favour'd.

[Exeunt Sir Andrew, Sir Oliver, and Frailty. The Widow and Frank enter the adjoining room.]

SIR GODFREY

[Within] Step in, Nicholas; look, is the coast clear?

NICHOLAS

[Within] Oh, as clear as a cat's eye, sir.

SIR GODFREY

[Within] Then enter, captain conjurer!

Enter Sir Godfrey, Captain [Idle], Pyeboard, Edmond, Nicholas.

Now, how like you your room, sir?

[IDLE]

Oh, wonderful convenient.

EDMOND

I can tell you, captain, simply though it lies here, 'tis the fairest room in my mother's house; as dainty a room to conjure in, methinks. Why, you may bid I cannot tell how many devils welcome in't; my father has had twenty here at once.

PYEBOARD

What! Devils?

EDMOND

Devils! No, deputies, and the wealthiest men he could get.

SIR GODFREY

Nay, put by your chats now; fall to your business roundly: the fescue of the dial is upon the crisscross of noon. But, oh, hear me, captain: a qualm comes o'er my stomach.

[IDLE]

Why, what's the matter, sir?

SIR GODFREY

Oh, how if the devil should prove a knave and tear the hangings?

[IDLE]

Fuh! I warrant you, Sir Godfrey.

EDMOND

Ay, nuncle, or spit fire upo' th' ceiling?

SIR GODFREY

Very true too, for 'tis but thin plaster'd and 'twill quickly take hold a' the laths; and if he chance to spit downward too, he will burn all the boards.

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

[IDLE]

My life for yours, Sir Godfrey.

SIR GODFREY

My sister is very curious and dainty o'er this room, I can tell [you], and therefore if he must needs spit, I pray desire him to spit i' th' chimney.

PYEBOARD

Why, assure you, Sir Godfrey, he shall not be brought up with so little manners to spit and spawl a' th' floor.

SIR GODFREY

Why, I thank you, good captain; pray have a care.

[Idle lays out his conjuring circle.]

Ay, fall to your circle; we'll not trouble you, I warrant you. Come, we'll into the next room, and because we'll be sure to keep him out there, we'll bar up the door with some of the godly's zealous works.

EDMOND

That will be a fine device, nuncle, and because the ground shall be as holy as the door, I'll tear two or three rosaries in pieces and strew the leaves about the chamber.

Thunders.

Oh! The devil already!

Runs in [with Sir Godfrey and Nicholas].

PYEBOARD

'Sfoot, captain, speak somewhat for shame: it lightens and thunders before thou wilt begin. Why, when!

[IDLE]

Pray, peace, George! Thou'lt make me laugh anon and spoil all.

[Lightning and thunder.]

PYEBOARD

Oh, now it begins again; now, now, now, captain!

[IDLE]

[Aloud, stamping up and down] Rumbos! Ragdayon, pur, pur, colucundrion, hois-plois!

SIR GODFREY through the keyhole, within

Oh, admirable conjurer! H'as fetch'd thunder already.

PYEBOARD

Hark, hark! Again, captain.

[IDLE]

Benjamino! Gaspois! Kay! Gosgothoteron! Umbrois!

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

SIR GODFREY

[Within] Oh, I would the devil would come away quickly; he has no conscience to put a man to such pain!

PYEBOARD

Again!

[IDLE]

Flowste! Kakopumpos! Dragone! Leloomenos! Hodge-podge!

PYEBOARD

Well said, captain.

SIR GODFREY

[Within] So long a-coming? Oh, would I had ne'er begun 't now, for I fear me these roaring tempests will destroy all the fruits of the earth and tread upon my corn--[thunder] oh!--i' th' country!

[IDLE]

Gog de gog, hobgoblin, hunks, hounslow, hockley te combe park!

WIDOW

[Within] Oh, brother, brother, what a tempest's i' th' garden! Sure there's some conjuration abroad.

SIR GODFREY

[Within] 'Tis at home, sister!

PYEBOARD

By and by I'll step in, captain.

[IDLE]

Nunc! Nunc! Rip-gaskins, ipis, drip-dropite!

SIR GODFREY

[Within] He drips and drops, poor man; alas, alas!

PYEBOARD

Now I come.

[IDLE]

O sulphure sootface--

PYEBOARD

[Aloud] Arch-conjurer, what wouldst thou with me?

SIR GODFREY

[Within] Oh, the devil, sister, i' th' dining-chamber! Sing, sister; I warrant you that will keep him out: quickly, quickly, quickly!

PYEBOARD

[To Idle] So, so, so, I'll release thee. Enough, captain, enough; allow us some time to laugh a little: they're shuddering and shaking by this time as if an earthquake were in their kidneys.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[IDLE]

Sirrah George, how was't, how was't? Did I do't well enough?

PYEBOARD

Woult believe me, captain? Better than any conjurer, for here was no harm in this and yet their horrible expectation satisfied well. You were much beholding to thunder and lightning at this time; it grac'd you well, I can tell you.

[IDLE]

I must needs say so, George. Sirrah, if we could ha' convey'd hither cleanly a cracker or a fire-wheel, 't 'ad been admirable.

PYEBOARD

Blurt, blurt! There's nothing remains to put thee to pain now, captain.

[IDLE]

Pain? I protest, George, my heels are sorer than a Whitsun morris-dancer['s].

PYEBOARD

All's past now; only to reveal that the chain's i' th' garden, where thou know'st it has lain these two days.

[IDLE]

But I fear that fox Nicholas has reveal'd it already.

PYEBOARD

Fear not, captain; you must put it to th' venture now. Nay, 'tis time; call upon 'em. Take pity on 'em, for I believe some of 'em are in a pitiful case by this time.

[IDLE]

Sir Godfrey? Nicholas, kinsman! 'Sfoot, they're fast at it still, George! Sir Godfrey!

SIR GODFREY

[Within] Oh, is that the devil's voice? How comes he to know my name?

[IDLE]

Fear not, Sir Godfrey; all's quieted!

[Enter Sir Godfrey, the Widow, Frank, and Nicholas.]

SIR GODFREY

What, is he laid?

[IDLE]

Laid, and has newly dropp'd your chain i' th' garden.

SIR GODFREY

I' th' garden? In our garden?

[IDLE]

Your garden.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

SIR GODFREY

Oh, sweet conjurer! Whereabouts there?

[IDLE]

Look well about a bank of rosemary.

SIR GODFREY

Sister, the rosemary bank. Come, come; there's my chain, he says.

WIDOW

Oh, happiness; run, run!

[Exeunt Widow, Sir Godfrey, Frank, and Nicholas.]

EDMOND

[Within] Captain conjurer?

[IDLE]

Who? Master Edmond?

EDMOND

[Within] Ay, Master Edmond. May I come in safely without danger, think you?

[IDLE]

Fuh, long ago; 'tis all as 'twas at first.
Fear nothing; pray come near.

[Enter Edmond.]

How now, man?

EDMOND

Oh, this room's mightily hot, i'faith! 'Slid, my shirt sticks to my belly already! What a steam the rogue has left behind him! Foh! This room must be air'd, gentlemen: it smells horribly of brimstone; let's open the window.

PYEBOARD

Faith, Master Edmond, 'tis but your conceit.

EDMOND

I would you could make me believe that, i'faith. Why, do you think I cannot smell his savour from another? Yet I take it kindly from you because you would not put me in a fear, i'faith. A' my troth, I shall love you for this the longest day of my life.

[IDLE]

Puh, 'tis nothing, sir; love me when you see more.

EDMOND

Mass, now I remember, I'll look whether he has singed the hangings or no.

PYEBOARD

[Aside to Idle] Captain, to entertain a little sport till they come, make him believe you'll charm him invisible.

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

He's apt to admire anything, you see. Let me alone to give force to't.

[IDLE]

[Aside to Pyeboard] Go; retire to yonder end then.

[Pyeboard retires to the far end of the room.]

EDMOND

I protest you are a rare fellow, are you not?

[IDLE]

Oh, Master Edmond, you know but the least part of me yet. Why, now at this instant I could but flourish my wand thrice o'er your head and charm you invisible.

EDMOND

What? You could not! Make me walk invisible, man! I should laugh at that, i'faith. Troth, I'll requite your kindness, and you'll do't, good captain conjurer.

[IDLE]

Nay, I should hardly deny you such a small kindness, Master Edmond Plus. Why, look you, sir, 'tis no more but this [waving his wand], and thus, and again, and now y'are invisible.

EDMOND

Am I, i'faith? Who would think it?

[IDLE]

You see the fortune-teller yonder at farther end a' th' chamber. Go toward him; do what you will with him: he shall ne'er find you.

EDMOND

Say you so? I'll try that, i'faith.

[Edmond] justles him.

PYEBOARD

How now, captain? Who's that justled me?

[IDLE]

Justled you? I saw nobody.

EDMOND

[Aside to Idle] Ha, ha, ha! Say 'twas a spirit.

[IDLE]

Shall I? [To Pyeboard] Maybe some spirit that haunts the circle.

[Edmond] pulls him by the nose.

PYEBOARD

Oh, my nose! Again! Pray conjure then, captain.

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

EDMOND

Troth, this is ex'lent; I may do any knavery now and never be seen! And now I remember, Sir Godfrey me, my uncle, abus'd me t'other day and told tales of me to my mother. Troth, now I'm invisible, I'll hit him a sound wherret a' th' ear when he comes out a' th' garden. I may be reveng'd on him now finely.

Enter Sir Godfrey, Widow, Frank, Nicholas with the chain.

SIR GODFREY

I have my chain again; my chain's found again! Oh, sweet captain! Oh, admirable conjurer!

Edmond strikes him.

Oh! What mean you by that, nephew?

EDMOND

Nephew? I hope you do not know me, uncle?

WIDOW

Why did you strike your uncle, sir?

EDMOND

Why, captain, am I not invisible?

[IDLE]

[Aside to Pyeboard] A good jest, George!—Not now you are not, sir. Why, did you not see me when I did uncharm you?

EDMOND

Not I, by my troth, captain. Then pray you pardon me, uncle; I thought I'd been invisible when I struck you.

SIR GODFREY

So, you would do't! Go, y'are a foolish boy,
And were I not o'ercome with greater joy,
I'd make you taste correction.

EDMOND

[Aside] Correction! Push! No, neither you nor my mother shall think to whip me as you have done.

SIR GODFREY

Captain, my joy is such I know not how to thank you; let me embrace you, hug you. Oh, my sweet chain! Gladness e'en makes me giddy. Rare man! 'Twas just i' th' rosemary-bank, as if one should ha' laid it there. Oh, cunning, cunning!

WIDOW

Well, seeing my fortune tells me I must marry, let me marry a man of wit, a man of parts. Here's a worthy captain, and 'tis a fine title truly, la, to be a captain's wife. A captain's wife! It goes very finely; beside, all the world knows that a worthy captain is a fit companion to any lord: then why not a sweet bedfellow for any lady? I'll have it so.

Enter Frailty.

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

FRAILTY

Oh, mistress, gentlemen, there's the bravest sight coming along this way!

WIDOW

What brave sight?

FRAILTY

Oh, one going to burying, and another going to hanging!

WIDOW

A rueful sight.

PYEBOARD

[Aside to Idle] 'Sfoot, captain, I'll pawn my life the corporal's coffin'd, and old Skirmish the solider going to execution, and 'tis now full about the time of his [waking]. Hold out a little longer, sleepy potion, and we shall have ex'lent admiration, for I'll take upon me the cure of him.

[Exeunt.]

[IV.iii. The street before the Widow's house]

Enter the coffin of the corporal [Oath], the soldier [Skirmish] bound and led by Officers, the Sheriff there.
[Enter from the house Sir Godfrey, the Widow, Frank, Idle, Pyeboard, Edmond, Frailty, and Nicholas.]

FRAILTY

Oh, here they come, here they come!

PYEBOARD

[Aside] Now must I close secretly with the soldier, prevent his impatience, or else all's discovered.

WIDOW

Oh, lamentable seeing! These were those brothers that fought and bled before our door.

SIR GODFREY

What! They were not, sister!

SKIRMISH

[Aside to Pyeboard] George, look to't; I'll peach at Tyburn else!

PYEBOARD

[Aside to Skirmish] Mum!—Gentles all, vouchsafe me audience,
And you especially, master sheriff:
Yon man is bound to execution
Because he wounded this that now lies coffin'd?

SHERIFF

True, true; he shall have the law, and I know the law.

PYEBOARD

But under favour, master sheriff, if this man had been cured and safe again, he should have been releas'd then?

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

SHERIFF

Why make you question of that, sir?

PYEBOARD

Then I release him freely, and will take upon me the death that he should die if within a little season I do not cure him to his proper health again.

SHERIFF

How, sir! Recover a dead man? That were most strange of all.

Frank comes to him [Pyeboard].

FRANK

Sweet sir, I love you dearly, and could wish my best part yours. Oh, do not undertake such an impossible venture!

PYEBOARD

Love you me? Then for your sweet sake I'll do't.
Let me entreat the corpse to be set down.

SHERIFF

Bearers, set down the coffin. This were wonderful and worthy Stow's chronicle.

PYEBOARD

I pray bestow the freedom of the air upon our wholesome art. [Aside] Mass, his cheeks begin to receive natural warmth! Nay, good corporal, wake betime, or I shall have a longer sleep than you. 'Sfoot, if he should prove dead indeed now, he were fully reveng'd upon me for making a property on him; yet I had rather run upon the ropes than have a rope like a tetter run upon me. Oh, he stirs! He stirs again!--Look, gentlemen! He recovers! He starts, he rises!

SHERIFF

Oh, oh, defend us! Out, alas!

PYEBOARD

Nay, pray be still; you'll make him more giddy else. He knows nobody yet.

[OATH]

Zounds, [where] am I? Cover'd with snow? I marvel!

PYEBOARD

[Aside] Nay, I knew he would swear the first thing he did as soon as ever he came to his life again.

[OATH]

'Sfoot, hostess, some hot porridge! Oh, oh! Lay on a dozen of faggots in the moon parlour there.

PYEBOARD

[To Widow] Lady, you must needs take a little pity of him, i'faith, and send him in to your kitchen fire.

WIDOW

Oh, with all my heart, sir. Nicholas and Frailty, help to bear him in.

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

NICHOLAS

Bear him in, quoth 'a! Pray call out the maids; I shall ne'er have the heart to do't, indeed, la!

FRAILTY

Nor I neither; I cannot abide to handle a ghost, of all men.

[OATH]

'Sblood, let me see. Where was I drunk last night, heh?

WIDOW

Oh, shall I bid you once again take him away?

FRAILTY

Why, we're as fearful as you, I warrant you. Oh!

WIDOW

Away, villains! Bid the maids make him a caudle presently to settle his brain, or a posset of sack; quickly, quickly.

Exeunt [Frailty and Nicholas] pushing in [Corporal Oath].

[SHERIFF]

Sir, whatsoever you are, I do more than admire you.

WIDOW

Oh, ay, if you knew all, master sheriff, as you shall do, you would say then that here were two of the rarest men within the walls of Christendom.

SHERIFF

Two of 'em? Oh, wonderful! Officers, I discharge you: set him free; all's in tune.

SIR GODFREY

Ay, and a banquet ready by this time, master sheriff, to which I most cheerfully invite you and your late prisoner there. See you this goodly chain, sir? Mum, no more words: 'twas lost and is found again. Come, my inestimable bullies; we'll talk of your noble acts in sparkling charnico, and instead of a jester, we'll have the ghost i' th' white sheet sit at [the] upper end a' th' table.

SHERIFF

Ex'lent, merry man, i'faith!

[Exeunt all but Frank.]

FRANK

Well, seeing I am enjoin'd to love and marry,
My foolish vow thus I cashier to air,
Which first begot it. Now, love, play thy part;
The scholar reads his lecture in my heart.

[Exit.]

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

V.[i. The street before the Widow's house]
Enter in haste Edmond and Frailty.

EDMOND

This is the marriage-morning for my mother and my sister.

FRAILTY

Oh me, Master Edmond! We shall ha' rare doings.

EDMOND

Nay, go, Frailty, run to the sexton; you know my mother will be married at Saint Antling's. Hie thee; 'tis past five: bid them open the church door; my sister is almost ready.

FRAILTY

What, already, Master Edmond?

EDMOND

Nay, go; hie thee. First run to the sexton, and run to the clerk, and then run to Master Pigman the parson, and then run to the milliner, and then run home again.

FRAILTY

Here's run, run, run--

EDMOND

But hark, Frailty.

FRAILTY

What, more yet?

EDMOND

Has the maids remember'd to strew the way to the church?

FRAILTY

Fagh, an hour ago! I help['d] 'em myself.

EDMOND

Away, away, away, away then.

FRAILTY

Away, away, away then.

Exit Frailty.

EDMOND

I shall have a simple father-in-law, a brave captain, able to beat all our street: Captain Idle. Now my lady mother will be fitted for a delicate name: my Lady Idle, my Lady Idle, the finest name that can be for a woman. And then the scholar, Master Pyeboard, for my sister Frances, that will be Mistress Frances Pyeboard. Mistress Frances Pyeboard. They'll keep a good table, I warrant you. Now all the knights' noses are put out of joint; they may go to a bone-setter's now.

[IV.ii. Another room in the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

Enter Captain [Idle] and Pyeboard [with attendants].

Hark, hark! Oh, who come here with two torches before 'em? My sweet captain and my fine scholar! Oh, how bravely they are shot up in one night! They look like fine Britons now, methinks. Here's a gallant change, i'faith! 'Slid, they have hir'd men and all by the clock!

[IDLE]

Master Edmond; kind, honest, dainty Master Edmond.

EDMOND

Fogh, sweet captain father-in-law! A rare perfume, i'faith.

PYEBOARD

What, are the brides stirring? May we steal upon 'em, think'st thou, Master Edmond?

EDMOND

Faw, they're e'en upon readiness, I can assure you, for they were at their torch e'en now; by the same token I tumbled down the stairs.

PYEBOARD

Alas, poor Master Edmond.

Enter musicians.

[IDLE]

Oh, the musicians! I prithee, Master Edmond, call 'em in and liquor 'em a little.

EDMOND

That I will, sweet captain father-in-law, and make each of them as drunk as a common fiddler.

Exeunt omnes.

[V.ii. The street before the Widow's house]

Enter Sir John Pennydub, and Moll above lacing her clothes.

[SIR JOHN]

Whew! Mistress Moll, Mistress Moll!

MOLL

Who's there?

[SIR JOHN]

'Tis I.

MOLL

Who? Sir John Pennydub? Oh, you're an early cock, i'faith! Who would have thought you to be so rare a stirrer?

[V.ii. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[SIR JOHN]

Prithee, Moll, let me come up.

MOLL

No, by my faith, Sir John; I'll keep you down, for you knights are very dangerous if once you get above.

[SIR JOHN]

I'll not stay, i'faith.

MOLL

I'faith you shall stay, for, Sir John, you must note the nature of the climates: your northern wench in her own country may well hold out till she be fifteen, but if she touch the south once and come up to London, here the chimes go presently after twelve.

[SIR JOHN]

Oh, th'art a mad wench, Moll; but I prithee make haste, for the priest is gone before.

MOLL

Do you follow him; I'll not be long after.

Exeunt.

[V.iii. A room in Sir Oliver Muckhill's house]

Enter Sir Oliver Muckhill, Sir Andrew Tipstaff, and old Skirmish talking.

[SIR OLIVER]

Oh, monstrous, unheard—of forgery!

[SIR ANDREW]

Knight, I never heard of such villainy in our own country in my life.

[SIR OLIVER]

Why, 'tis impossible. Dare you maintain your words?

SKIRMISH

Dare we? Even to their wezen pipes. We know all their plots; they cannot squander with us. They have knavishly abus'd us, made only properties on's, to advance themselves upon our shoulders, but they shall rue their abuses. This morning they are to be married.

[SIR OLIVER]

'Tis too true. Yet if the widow be not too much besotted on sleights and forgeries, the revelation of their villainies will make 'em loathsome. And to that end, be it in private to you, I sent late last night to an honourable personage, to whom I am much indebted in kindness, as he is to me; and therefore presume upon the payment of his tongue, and that he will lay out good words for me: and to speak truth, for such needful occasions I only preserve him in bond, and sometimes he may do me more good here in the city by a free word of his mouth than if he had paid one half in hand and took doomsday for t'other.

[SIR ANDREW]

In troth, sir, without soothing be it spoken, you have publish'd much judgment in these few words.

[V.ii. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

[SIR OLIVER]

For you know, what such a man utters will be thought effectual and to weighty purpose, and therefore into his mouth we'll put the approved theme of their forgeries.

SKIRMISH

And I'll maintain it, knight, if [ye'll] be true.

Enter a Servant.

[SIR OLIVER]

How now, fellow?

SERVANT

May it please you, sir, my lord is newly lighted from his coach.

[SIR OLIVER]

Is my lord come already? His honour's early.
You see he loves me well. Up before seven!
Trust me, I have found him night-capp'd at eleven.
There's good hope yet; come, [I'll] relate all to him.

Exeunt.

[V.iv. A street, a church appearing]

Enter the two bridegrooms, Captain [Idle] and scholar [Pyeboard]; after them, Sir Godfrey and Edmond, Widow chang'd in apparel, Mistress Francis led between two knights, Sir John Pennydub and Moll[, with Nicholas and other attendants.] There meets them a Nobleman, Sir Oliver Muckhill, and Sir Andrew Tipstaff.

NOBLEMAN

By your leave, lady.

WIDOW

My lord, your honour is most chastely welcome.

NOBLEMAN

Madam, though I came now from court, I come not to flatter you. Upon whom can I justly cast this blot but upon your own forehead, that know not ink from milk? Such is the blind besotting in the state of an unheaded woman that's a widow. For it is the property of all you that are widows, a handful excepted, to hate those that honestly and carefully love you, to the maintenance of credit, state, and posterity, and strongly to dote on those that only love you to undo you. Who regard you least are best regarded; who hate you most are best beloved. And if there be but one man amongst ten thousand millions of men that is accurst, disastrous, and evilly planeted, whom Fortune beats most, whom God hates most, and all societies esteem least, that man is sure to be a husband. Such is the peevish moon that rules [your] bloods. An impudent fellow best woos you, a flattering lip best wins you, or in a mirth, who talks rougliest is most sweetest; nor can you distinguish truth from forgeries, mists from simplicity: witness those two deceitful monsters that you have entertain'd for bridegrooms.

WIDOW

Deceitful?

[V.ii. The street before the Widow's house]

PYEBOARD

[Aside] All will out.

[IDLE]

[Aside to Pyeboard] 'Sfoot, who has blabb'd, George? That foolish Nicholas?

NOBLEMAN

For what they have besotted your easy blood withal were nought but forgeries: the fortune-telling for husbands, the conjuring for the chain Sir Godfrey heard the falsehood of, all nothing but mere knavery, deceit, and cozenage.

WIDOW

Oh, wonderful! Indeed, I wonder['d] that my husband, with all his craft, could not keep himself out of purgatory.

SIR GODFREY

And I more wonder'd that my chain should be gone and my tailor had none of it.

MOLL

And I wonder'd most of all that I should be tied from marriage, having such a mind to't. Come, S[ir] John Pennydub, fair weather on our side: the moon has chang'd since yesternight.

PYEBOARD

The sting of every evil is within me.

NOBLEMAN

And that you may perceive I feign not with you, behold their fellow actor in those forgeries, who, full of spleen and envy at their so sudden advancements, reveal'd all their plot in anger.

[Enter Skirmish.]

PYEBOARD

Base soldier, to reveal us!

WIDOW

Is't possible we should be blinded so and our eyes open?

NOBLEMAN

Widow, will you now believe that false which too soon you believ'd true?

WIDOW

Oh, to my shame I do!

SIR GODFREY

But under favour, my lord, my chain was truly lost and strangely found again.

NOBLEMAN

Resolve him of that, soldier.

[SKIRMISH]

[V.ii. The street before the Widow's house]

The Puritan, or The Widow of Watling Street

In few words, knight, then, thou wert the arch-gull of all.

SIR GODFREY

How, sir?

SKIRMISH

Nay, I'll prove it, for the chain was but hid in the rosemary bank all this while, and thou gotst him out of prison to conjure for it, who did it admirably, fustianly, for indeed what need any others when he knew where it was?

SIR GODFREY

Oh, villainy of villainies! But how came my chain there?

SKIRMISH

Where's "Truly-la--indeed--la," he that will not swear, but lie, he that will not steal, but rob: pure Nicholas St. [Tantlings]?

SIR GODFREY

Oh, villain! One of our society,
Deem'd always holy, pure, religious.
A puritan a thief! When was't ever heard?
Sooner we'll kill a man than steal, thou know'st.
Out, slave! I'll rend my lion from thy back
With mine own hands.

NICHOLAS

Dear master, oh!

NOBLEMAN

Nay, knight, dwell in patience. And now, widow, being so near the church, 'twere great pity, nay, uncharity, to send you home again without a husband. Draw nearer, you of true worship, state, and credit, that should not stand so far off from a widow and suffer forged shapes to come between you. Not that in these I blemish the true title of a captain, or blot the fair margent of a scholar, for I honour worthy and deserving parts in the one, and cherish fruitful virtues in the other. Come, lady, and you, virgin: bestow your eyes and your purest affections upon men of estimation both in court and city that [have] long wooed you, and both with their hearts and wealth sincerely love you.

[Sir Oliver and Sir Andrew step forward.]

SIR GODFREY

Good sister, do. Sweet little Frank, these are men of reputation: you shall be welcome at hour, a great credit for a citizen. Sweet sister.

NOBLEMAN

Come, her silence does consent to't.

WIDOW

I know not with what face--

NOBLEMAN

Pah, pah! Why, with your own face; they desire no other.

[V.ii. The street before the Widow's house]

WIDOW

Pardon me, worthy sirs: I and my daughter
Have wrong'd your loves.

[SIR OLIVER]

'Tis easily pardon'd, lady,
If you vouchsafe it now.

WIDOW

With all my soul.

FRANK

And I, with all my heart.

MOLL

And I, Sir John,
With soul, heart, lights and all.

[SIR JOHN]

They are all mine, Moll.

NOBLEMAN

Now, lady,
What honest spirit but will applaud your choice
And gladly furnish you with hand and voice?
A happy change, which makes even heaven rejoice.
Come, enter into your joys; you shall not want
For fathers now; I doubt it not, believe me,
But that you shall have hands enough to give [ye].

Exeunt omnes.

Deus dedit his quoq[ue] finem.

FINIS