

The Dupe, a comedy

Frances Chamberlaine Sheridan

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The Dupe, a comedy

Frances Chamberlaine Sheridan

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PROLOGUE.

*The paths of Truth with Fancy's flowers to strove,
To teach improvement from delight to flow,
The bards of old first bade the Comic strain
With mirth instruct, with moral entertain.
No vice or folly that disgrac'd the age
Escap'd the daring Poet's honest rage;
But Satire, uncontroll'd, pursu'd her plan,
Nor stopp'd at general lines, but mark'd the Man;
Ev'n features, voice, dress, gait, the scene display'd,
And living characters to scorn betray'd.
Such rude attacks be banish'd in our times,
Be persons sacred, but expos'd their crimes:
For wise, and good, and polish'd as we are,
We still may find some vices here and there.
And if a Modern, in this prudent age,
Dares to obtrude a Moral on the Stage,
Critics be mild: tho' unadorn'd our Play,
Nor wisely grave, nor elegantly gay,
How rude soe'er, it shocks not Virtue's eye,
Nor injures the chaste ear of Modesty;
Nor with soft blandishment bids Vice allure,
Nor draws the Good in odious portraiture.
Our Son of Folly is of Vice's brood,
And willingly bids evil be his good.
Is there a wretch that views, without remorse,
The better path, and yet pursues the worse;
Proud of imputed guilt, yet vainly blind,
Call's folly sense; vice, knowledge of mankind;
Dup'd by the knave, he scorns and ridicules,
Rul'd by the Wanton, whom he thinks he rules;
This, this is folly: a determin'd fool
Provokes and justifies our ridicule.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

[A Chamber in Sir John Woodall's House.]

Emily enters, Rose following her.

Em.

Must I be persecuted by every one in the family? Has your mistress ordered you to be rude to me too?

Rose.

I don't know what you mean by rude, not I; so you always call me, when I would advise you for your good.

ACT I.

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Em.

I desire you will not concern yourself about me, Mrs. Rose.

Rose.

I only tell you as a friend, Miss, that if you provoke my mistress, it will be the worse for yourself.

Em.

This is most astonishing insolence! I wish your master were come home.

Rose.

I wish he were, and we'll see whose story will be believed. I only speak for peace—sake. This house will be too hot for some of us before a week's over, that's for certain.

Em.

If you mean for me, I am above your malice; and so my uncle be disabused, I care not what is my lot.

Rose.

Mighty well! If young ladies will be so froptious, let them suffer; but remember I tell you

Em.

I'll hear no more of your impertinence. Begone

Rose.

Ha! a conceited set-up thing! who cares for you?

[Exit Rose.]

Em.

Into what vile hands am I fallen! And my uncle, unhappy infatuated man! to give me up to the conduct of this wicked woman. Yet let me not carry my accusation too far. He thinks at least she is faithful to *him*, and devoted to his interest; but I *will* undeceive him, let the consequence be what it may.

SCENE II.

Enter Mrs. Friendly.

[Em.]

Dear Mrs. Friendly; I thought you had quite deserted me; I am very glad to see you.

Mrs. Fr.

One would not think so, my dear; when you could be a whole month without coming near me: And you are never at home neither.

Em.

Never at home! Bless me, Madam! Why I never

Mrs. Fr.

Nay, nay; young people love young company: And to be sure diversions, and plays, and balls, and shews, and sights, and such things

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Em.

Oh! Madam, you are quite mistaken

Mrs. Fr.

Why, I don't blame you, child. Youth loves pleasure, and if one does n't enjoy it when one's young, why

Em.

But that's not the case, Madam If you'll hear me

Mrs. Fr.

When you come to be of my age, I can tell you, Miss

Em.

There's no stopping her. [*aside*] But, dear Madam, hear what I have to say. I have never stirred out since I saw you last, nor never knew you call'd on me.

Mrs. Fr.

Bless me! you surprise me! utterly amaze me! What has been the matter? Have you been sick? I have call'd at the door a dozen times: I am quite in a labyrinth a wilderness! I can't for my life imagine

Em.

I'll tell you, if you'll allow me

Mrs. Fr.

Ay, pray do By all means I would hear it; though I have very little time to stay with you, and I have a great deal to tell you too, Miss, I can assure you But one thing at a time; and so what were you going to say?

Em.

Why not to trouble you with particulars, I have discovered such irregularities in Mrs. Etherdown's conduct

Mrs. Fr.

A notorious creature I warrant her, though Sir John thinks her a saint Heaven help the poor man, he is bad enough himself.

Em.

I declared I would tell my uncle of her, and from that time I have never spoken to her In resentment for this (as she pretends) I have been made a prisoner; but I fear she has some other wicked view; for ever since, *Sharply*, her brother, that audacious fellow, dares to persecute me with his impudent addresses. *Mrs. Fr.* Sharply! A bold man, or I'm mistaken. There's another of Sir John's favourites; but it's no business of mine; I never meddle in other peoples affairs; but to be sure it was an unchristian thing, and a barbarous thing, and a very unconscionable thing, in Sir John: But Sir John has no conscience, that's what I blame him for.

Em.

Indeed, Madam, his errors as much deserve pity as his faults do blame.

Mrs. Fr.

To send a young creature, an orphan as I may say, hand over head, to town here, into such a family! Little did his poor sister think when she was dying

Em.

Dear Mrs. Friendly, spare me on that topic. I cannot bear to think of it.

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Mrs. Fr.

My dear, I beg your pardon! I did not think to draw tears from you; but I'll make you amends for it: I have such news to tell you! Who do you think is arrived from Germany?

Em.

Dear Madam! how could you keep this from me so long? and now to surprise me so. You are very good, but indeed you have put me all in a flurry.

Mrs. Fr.

I put you in a flurry! Lord, child, for what? If I had been abrupt indeed, and said any particular person was come, you might say so; but so far from that, I intend to make you guess half-a dozen times perhaps before I tell you.

Em.

Oh! 'tis easy to guess: I am interested in too few to be suspended. Captain Wellford is returned.

Mrs. Fr.

The very man, as I am alive. I never was so surprised since the hour I was born. I was combing my hair at the glass

Em.

When did he arrive?

Mrs. Fr.

You shall hear I was combing my hair

Em.

Do tell me; how does he look?

Mrs. Fr.

I'll tell you by-and-bye; but I can't stay with you two minutes, for I have a world of business to do before dinner.

Em.

Well, I'll not detain you; only tell me, if he can devise any means to see me: You know I dare not admit him here.

Mrs. Fr.

Have patience, I was going to describe

Em.

Not now, my dear good creature; only answer my question, and leave out the rest of your narrative till another time.

Mrs. Fr.

I declare and vow now that is so like Mr. Friendly. He can't bear to hear a regular narrative, and when I want to be a little intelligible, with proper explanations and circumstances, and so forth, he always interrupts me.

Em.

That's hard.

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Mrs. *Fr.*

To be sure Mr. Friendly is a very good man, and a very good husband, and all that, and we have been married now let me see

Em. [So she talks 'tis no matter on what subject. *Aside.*]

Mrs. *Fr.*

Two—and—twenty ay, two—and—twenty years; but no matter for that. What were we saying before?

Em.

We were speaking of Capt. Wellford. I am surprised he has not writ to me.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Why, he arrived but this morning, child, and did not know you were in town till he came to my house. He was posting down to the country to see you, till we stop'd him. I vow and swear I think he is grown taller than he was. Bless me! 'tis almost one o'clock; I must run away, for I have a thousand things to buy. What do you think I have to buy now?

Em.

Nay, I can't tell.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Well, I'll reckon them up to you, In the first place

Em.

Are you going to count over the thousand articles on your fingers? For goodness sake, don't lose so much of your time.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Lord! I shall be too late as it is; but I was in such a hurry to tell you the news.

Em.

I wonder you were admitted.

Mrs. *Fr.*

One of the servants was just going out, and in I brush'd, and up I ran, without asking any questions. Wellford would fain have come with me, only Mr. Friendly hindered him. He said he'd write too. And Mr. Friendly bid me tell you, he'd send the chariot for you this evening, to bring you to my house.

Em.

Ay, but the difficulty is to get thither; for it will be impossible to go out without leave, and I cannot bring myself to ask it of such a wretch. I wish you could contrive some means.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Dear child, I am the worst in the world at contriving; I am not one of those that have words at will, and can make a long Canterbury tale out of nothing, and can contrive, and invent, and say this and that and t'other. I am quite in a dilemma for my part.

Em.

I own it goes against me to condescend so far as to ask permission of such a creature; but on this occasion I will

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get the better of my pride, and desire leave to go to your house. If she refuses me, I must be patient till my uncle comes to town, and then I am determined to quit this house at all events.

Mrs. Fr.

When do you expect Sir John? I wonder he is not impatient to see the son that his mistress has brought him since he left town. I'll lay my life he's as fond of it as if it were born in honest wedlock; a naughty man!

Em.

When he sent me to town, he went on a visit to an old acquaintance of his, where it seems he was seized with a fit of the gout, which has detain'd him so long; but he is now well, and we expect him every day.

Mrs. Fr.

Drinking, and rioting, and ranting, no doubt. Poor man! he has no shame in him. Well, I must bid you good-by. The Captain will be on thorns till he sees me.

Em.

True; and therefore I will keep you no longer.

Mrs. Fr.

I had a great deal more to say, if I could remember it.

Em. [I shall never get her away. *Aside.*]

You'll excuse me, my dear Madam, but I have letters to write into the country, by a person who waits for them.

Mrs. Fr.

Oh! to be sure, you have your correspondents, child; why not? Well, I wont interrupt you; and I am so hurried, I have not had time to say a word; and so day, day; for I must go. You'll be sure to send word tho', if you can't get leave to come.

Em.

Oh! undoubtedly.

Mrs. Fr.

Come, come, you sha'nt stir.

Em.

I must wait on you down.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Changes to Mrs. Etherdown's Chamber, she drinking Chocolate, Rose attending.

Mrs. Eth.

I tell you, some thing must be thought of directly to prevent it.

Rose.

I am sure I have thought and thought, and argued and argued, and begg'd and pray'd, as if I had been begging an

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alms. Mrs. *Eth.*
A perverse little vixen!

Rose.

As I said to her this morning, what signifies telling Sir John such a silly thing, only to make mischief in the family? You know my mistress is a great deal younger than him, and it is a common thing for ladies that live with elderly gentlemen to go astray a little now and then, and think no harm.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Psha Was that an argument? You should have frightened her by telling her my influence over Sir John, and that she had best not provoke me to revenge.

Rose.

Why so I did at last.

Mrs. *Eth.*

And what did the unlucky prying hussy say to that?

Rose.

Say! why she said she did not care, not she; that she would not have her uncle deceiv'd, and so she could but see you and your brat (as she called the poor innocent babe) fairly out of the house, she did not care what became of her.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Oh! that brat shall be gall and wormwood to her yet.

Rose.

Ay, if it would induce Sir John to marry you, Ma'am, as you think it will.

Mrs. *Eth.*

And a poor reward enough, Rose, for my three years slavery to his caprice and silly humours: In short, I am so sick of him, and the continual disguise I am obliged to wear, that if I should once accomplish my point, I should rejoice to part from the beast.

Rose.

I wish it were come to that, for then you could leave him with credit: Lady Woodall, and a separate maintenance. Oh that I could see that day!

Mrs. *Eth.*

'Why you don't fancy I have made so bad a use of my time as to depend on that, I hope. No, no, Rose, make the most of the present hour, is my maxim.'

Rose.

'If you have done so then, what need you trouble your head about consequences, but march off and leave him to shake his ears?'

Mrs. *Eth.*

'How do you think I have made my money? Why by dipping him over head and ears in debt; appropriating every shilling he gave me for other purposes to my own use. This, by Sharply's management, has hitherto been kept from his knowledge: but if I were to leave him now, he would not pay sixpence for me, and I should lose the fruits of my industry.'

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Rose.

And how unluckily things have fallen out! I wish Miss Emily had never come into the house, for my part. Mrs.

Eth.

I wish I durst strangle her. I have kept her hitherto from tatling to her croney Mrs. Friendly; but something must now be done to hinder her from blabbing to Sir John: Can you think of nothing? I never saw you so stupid in my life.

Rose.

Why, I have found out something that may turn to account, I think, with good management.

Mrs. *Eth.*

And what an ill-natur'd toad are you to keep it to yourself out with it quickly.

Rose.

No its a secret.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Prithee, dear Rose!

Rose.

'Tis a secret worth gold.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Well here's gold for it.

Rose.

See here, this letter I intercepted a little while ago.

Mrs. *Eth.* [*Snatches it from her and reads.*]

Which way good girl?

Rose.

A footman in a smart livery brought it to the door, and enquired for Miss Emily; I suspecting something, was resolved to find her out, and said I was her own maid, and he might give it to me: he still pressed to see her; I told him she could not be seen; but says I, looking very slyly, don't you think now, I know who you came from? Oh, Oh, cries he winking, then I suppose you expect a fee for delivering this? I laughed and twitch'd it from him, and away he went, mightily pleas'd with his own archness

Mrs. *Eth.*

Clever wench! 'tis from a lover indeed, and you shall hear the contents.

"My impatience to hear from my ever dear Emily, will not suffer me to wait Mrs. Friendly's return. I am permitted to hope for the happiness of seeing you to-day at her house. If nothing should prevent your coming, the chariot will attend you at five o'clock. I will not, till I see you, utter one of the thousand tender things of of which my heart is full. Adieu your ever faithful,"

"R. W."

Here are only the two initial letters of his name. Who can he be?

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Rose.

Nay I can't tell You know I could not ask his man any questions, as that would be shewing him I was not in the secret.

Mrs. Eth.

And so that prating gossip Mrs. Friendly is a go-between after all. Has she been here to-day?

Rose.

Ay, that she has, and slipp'd in unknown to any body, and Miss and she had a long confab. Don't you think you can strike something out of this?

Mrs. Eth.

Certainly. How she purposes to get to her rendezvous tho', I can't imagine; I believe she will hardly ask my leave, and I think she will scarce venture to go without it.

[Enter a Maid and gives a Card to Mrs. Etherdown.]

Ha! ha! ha! A pretty air truly! "Miss Emily sends her compliments to me, and begs I will permit her to pay a visit to Mrs. Friendly this evening." Tell Miss I will consider of it.

[Exit Maid.]

A visit to Mrs. Friendly! yes, yes, we understand your visits; an equivocating little flirt; this letter, then you see, was a mere work of lover's supererogation, and she may never know that it was sent, for the plan seems to be settled already between her and Madam Clack.

Rose.

And do you intend to let her go?

Mrs. Eth.

Yes, at least she shall think I do. Where is Sharply? He is never in the way when I want his assistance.

Rose.

Mr. Sharply! What assistance do you want from him? I am certain Mr. Sharply will give himself no trouble about her. He must be brought into every scrape.

Mrs. Eth.

You seem warm! What, he is a gallant of yours, I suppose?

Rose.

Well, if he be, I have as free liberty to have my gallants as other people, I suppose?

Mrs. Eth. [Provoking hussy, but I'm in her power. Aside.]

Oh! to be sure, Rose, I am far from finding fault with the thing itself, only I thought you wiser than to throw away your favours on such a beggarly fellow.

Rose.

There's nothing in that, if I like him.

Mrs. Eth.

I'll be hanged if he ever knew who his father was, for I could never get him to tell me his real name.

SCENE III.

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Rose.

What signifies his name, he is a pretty man, I am sure of that.

Mrs. Eth.

Ha! ha! a pretty man! Hist, I think I hear his voice in the next room. He is talking loud to Emily; laughing too; I'll step to the door and listen to what they are saying. Go you and get things ready for me to dress: make haste, good Rose.

[Exit Mrs. Etherdown.]

Rose alone.

So! you want to get me out of the way, do you? What new piece of roguery can she be contriving, that *I* am not to be let into? Some wicked trick I am sure; and Mr. Sharply is to be her tool, her cat's paw. Now would I give one of my fore-teeth to know what she has to say to him. Ay and I will know too. I have followed your example many a time to keep you in countenance: but I'll make bold to practise the *last* you have set me, to please myself. I think I can *listen* with you for your ears.

[Exit Rose.]

SCENE IV.

Enter Sharply laughing, Mrs. Etherdown following.

Mrs. Eth.

I thought your impudence was not to be parallel'd, but I find your absurdity is even an over-match for it. An idiot to suppose the girl would *marry* you!

Sharp.

Upon my soul I can't help laughing at your folly, as much as that little rustic's impertinence, in rejecting my *honourable* addresses. How she did rant, and pout, and swell, when I proposed marriage! I thought I should have split my sides.

Mrs. Eth.

Why, you sot! to throw away your time upon such an idle project. Did I ever propose any thing but your getting her for a mistress, puppy? that I might have her as much in my power, as I am now in hers. Was not that the plan I laid down for you, and told you how to behave?

Sharp.

And you have really taken me for a puppet all this while, that was to be moved by your pretty finger and thumb! A reasonable expectation to be sure! and because I have hitherto been your instrument to cheat that fool Sir John, you modestly suppose I am to have no will of my own.

Mrs. Eth.

Why, how dare you talk thus to me? *You* a will! that owe the cloaths on your back, nay the very bread you eat to my bounty. Do you remember the figure you cut when I took you up first?

Sharp.

A damn'd shabby one. What then?

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Mrs. *Eth.*

With an old tatter'd regimental, a rusty black crape about your neck to hide the want of a stock, and a pair of greasy high-topp'd gloves to look as if you had a shirt.

Sharp.

I *was* rather bare of linen at one time of my life, that's certain: these premises granted, what would you infer from thence?

Mrs. *Eth.*

And have not I dress'd you out like a gentleman, and taken you into the house, and have not you the credit of passing for my brother?

Sharp.

Ha! ha! ha! Credit quotha. Ho! ho! ho! that kills me quite!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Yes! credit, jackanapes! greater than any of your kin ever had; I am a gentlewoman born.

Sharp.

Oh yes! and bred too. We all know that.

[He makes signs of clapping cloths with his handkerchief.]

Mrs. *Eth.*

You are a slanderous coxcomb. I was as well educated

Sharp.

You were an inimitable clear-starcher, that's certain; and *iron'd* like a cherubim.

Mrs. *Eth.*

You are the most audacious

Sharp.

Dear Ma'am, you flatter.

Mrs. *Eth.*

The most daring

Sharp.

Dear Mrs. Etherdown, you quite overwhelm me!

Mrs. *Eth.*

The most impudent rogue!

Sharp.

Nay, prithee now, don't make one blush! such *extravagant* praise! and to a friend too, fy

Mrs. *Eth.*

What! you pique yourself on it?

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Sharp.

And with reason too. 'Twas the former of those good qualities first procured me the honour of your ladyship's acquaintance the other recommended me to Sir John: since which it has been my business to flatter him, lie to him, applaud his nonsense, act the ninny to his face, and laugh at him behind his back: so much for my roguery. And for my impudence, besides the use aforesaid, 'tis by that I keep you in awe in spite of your insolence, and by that I expected to get Emily for a wife in spite of her pride. But it was not worth while to squander such a precious talent on an intrigue; an heiress was my object, not an amour.

Mrs Eth.

You are a rare projector, to be sure; your impudence has defeated your own purpose, and undone my hopes. What had you to recommend you as a *husband* to such a proud minx?

Sharp.

Front front, which has carried many a wiser woman. *Mrs. Eth.*

"'Tis that has shock'd her. Had you play'd the humble lover, she would have thought it was her person only, not her fortune, that you aimed at; and by this time she might have fallen into the snare; for I think a woman might like you well enough as a gallant.'

Sharp.

'I am rather tolerable, you are of opinion?'

Mrs. Eth.

Duce take you, you have fool'd away your time to no purpose. Things are now come to an extremity: Sir John will certainly be at home to-morrow, perhaps to night; and if Emily's mouth is not stopp'd, I am undone.

Sharp.

And I too, by my soul! for all must out together; so e'en shift for yourself.

[*He offers to go.*]

Mrs. Eth.

But, dear Sharply, sure you can't be so cruel as to leave me thus, standing upon the very brink of ruin. If that vixen cou'd be got out of the way for one week, nay but for two or three days, I shall, by that time, be above the reach of her little spiteful tongue.

Sharp.

Toss her into the Thames.

Mrs. Eth.

Psha!

Sharp.

Or suppose I were to run away with her now, and be hang'd, to do you a pleasure.

Mrs. Eth.

Suppose I were to convince you that you hazard nothing in running away with her, have you address and courage enough to undertake the business?

Sharp.

Courage, you know, is not amongst the accomplishments I value myself *chiefly* upon.

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Mrs. *Eth.*

You will have no farther need of it than to overcome some trifling obstacles; danger there is none at all.

Sharp.

Explain, explain. Barbara Etherdown none of thy tricks will pass upon me.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Emily is no heiress: Sir John has another heir.

Sharp.

Really!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Dare I trust you with an important secret?

Sharp.

If it be for my interest to keep it I am mute as a fish if not, out it comes, by my soul!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Well I must trust you.

Sharp. [Walks about and whistles.]

Well where's the secret?

Mrs. *Eth.*

I hate that audacious cool indifference: prithee be serious a minute, and hear me.

Sharp.

Well!

Mrs. *Eth.*

I am married to Sir John.

[Sharply laughs in her face.]

I knew you would not believe it; but as I have a soul to be saved it is true.

Sharp.

This to me now, Barbara, to me, that knows you!

Mrs. *Eth.*

I have been his wife above a twelvemonth; why don't you think him sot enough to be drawn in?

Sharp.

Yes. Yet I am slow, wonderfully slow of faith in this article.

Mrs. *Eth.*

I took him in a fond hour, and pretending scruples of conscience, declared I would live with him no longer, if he did not marry me.

Sharp.

And he took you at your word?

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Mrs. *Eth.*

Sooner than part with me he at last consented; but so contrived it, that to have the *credit*, as he called it, of passing for a keeper, rather than a husband, 'tis impossible for me to prove our marriage; for I knew neither the parson nor the witness.

Sharp.

If this be so, pray what difference is there between your being his wife or his mistress, *Conscience* out of the question?

Mrs. *Eth.*

You shall hear, he promis'd if I brought him an heir, of which I gave him hopes before he left town, that he wou'd own me for his wife; for the fool is not really so bad as he wou'd fain be thought.

Sharp.

Humph. Well and you *have* brought him one?

Mrs. *Eth.*

And therefore I expect he will acknowlege our marriage as soon as he comes home, provided he has not tales told him.

Sharp.

But if he should; by my soul! he'd rather bastardize his whole generation, than bear to be laughed at for a cuckold; especially by Friendly, with whom he would fain pass for a man of great sagacity.

Mrs. *Eth.*

You see therefore the present necessity of getting Emily out of the way.

Sharp.

Get her out of the way then as fast as you can.

Mrs. *Eth.*

How provoking this is now. You know, I can't without your help.

Sharp. sings.]

Tol, lol, lol.

Mrs. *Eth.*

But, Sharply, if you'll assist me, I'll reward you beyond your hopes.

Sharp.

Open your plan of operations. Now you talk reason, I'll vouchsafe you a hearing. Mrs. *Eth.*

Thus it is then, Emily has desired to go this evening to Mr. Friendly's, on pretence of a visit, but in reality to meet a lover.

Sharp.

A lover! some country booby I suppose, that has scampered after her from Hertfordshire.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Most likely. Friendly's chariot is to call for her at five o'clock; it will be then too dark to distinguish the difference, and there will be no difficulty in putting her into another chariot, and as she does n't know the streets, conducting her to another house, where you may be ready to receive her.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

The thing is not absolutely impracticable: But what am I to get for undertaking this business?

Mrs. Eth.

Have you thought of any place to which you can convey her?

Sharp.

I'll not stir an inch under two hundred pound, one of which I will be paid before-hand.

Mrs. Eth.

You have no more conscience in you But you shall have it. Whither do you mean to carry her?

Sharp.

Mrs. Private, our old acquaintance, has generally a spare room, where I sometimes meditate.

Mrs. Eth.

The best place in the world. Don't you appear till she is in the house; then give her into safe custody, return home, and leave it to me to charge her elopement on this lover, with the connivance of Friendly's family, which will exasperate Sir John against them, and hasten the acknowledgement I want him to make.

Sharp.

Faith, I begin to relish the scheme; for besides the profit, it will gratify my revenge on that little coy puss, for refusing me.

Mrs. Eth.

True; for when you have her there, you know

Sharp.

No farther instructions, dear Madam: I fancy I may be able to proceed without your help.

Mrs. Eth.

One word more, Sharply, and then I've done. I think in a few days my fool and I must separate; for this is but a temporary expedient, and all must soon come to light. The creditors too grow pressing; but before the storm comes, don't you think something might be done for me, by way of settlement?

Sharp.

Ah! thou harpy!

Mrs. Eth.

You shall have poundage, Sharply.

Sharp.

You know how to work upon my good nature. *Mrs. Eth.*

Ay, and that you can lead Sir John with a silk thread.

Sharp.

Oh! curse him; no, an obstinate mule. My way is to persuade him *against* the thing I want to insure the execution of.

Mrs. Eth.

You know his trim; ha! ha!

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

Then does he thunder out ten thousand execrations at me, for a stupid loggerhead; and then I drop my arms, and dangle them this way, and stare at him, and look mightily frightened, and bless myself at hearing such oaths, and stretch out my neck, and call him a sad *wicked* gentleman. That always pleases him. I am an honest ignoramus, he says, and wonders how the devil such a fool could even be taught arithmetic. Then I give a sheepish grin, and tell him he's so pleasant, and so comical, and so witty, there's no being angry with him. He breaks into a horse-laugh, I join in the chorus, and so we get lovingly drunk together.

Mrs. Eth.

Ha, ha, ha! an admirable picture! Well, you had best set about preparing your business, but take care not to let Rose know the least tittle of the matter; her jealousy would blow us all up.

Sharp.

Rose's jealousy!

Mrs. Eth.

Come, come, I know what terms you are upon with her; you need not deny it.

Sharp.

I don't intend to deny it.

Mrs. Eth.

I am only amazed how you could like such a dowdy.

Sharp.

Poh! Any thing to pass away an idle hour.

Mrs. Eth.

But such a vulgar creature! I thought you had a better taste.

Sharp.

Ah, poor devil! she haunted me perpetually, till I shew'd her a little pity.

Mrs. Eth.

Well; I'll now go and give my permission to Miss Emily to go to her rendezvous, and at the same time I'll send Mrs. Friendly word, she can't come. I had best say Sir John is come home, and that will keep the busy body quiet for to-night. Get *you* gone, we have no time to lose.

Sharp.

There's a small point to be adjusted first between you and me.

Mrs. Eth.

What's that?

Sharp. makes signs of counting money on his hand.]

I budge not a foot without it.

Mrs. Eth.

Oh! Come with me into my closet. I had quite forgot.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

Your memory is prodigiously like a sieve;
Your interest it preserves, like weighty grains,
But promises are chaff, it ne'er retains.

[Exit.

[Rose comes from behind a skreen, where she had been concealed.]

Rose.

Now a mischief light on you both, for a couple of false treacherous serpents as you are! Rose's jealousy will blow us up! Yes, yes; I'll blow you up with a witness! That rogue Sharply! Any thing to pass away an idle hour!

And that other ungrateful upstart; a dowdy! a vulgar creature! I'll fit you for your fine contrivance! If I don't make you both smart for this!

[Exit Rose.

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

[Sir John's House. Mrs. Etherdown's Dressing-room.]

Enter Mrs. Etherdown, a Maid following.

Mrs. Eth.

What can become of Rose? Was there ever such assurance as this, to go out without saying a word to me? Is Mr. Sharply come in yet?

Maid.

No, Madam.

Mrs. Eth.

The duce take them both.

SCENE II.

Sir John without.

What the plague's the meaning of this? The house is like an inn I think; all the doors open!

Mrs. Eth.

Here's Sir John, as I live! Quick, quick, hide those things.

[The Maid throws a veil over her toilet.]

Enter Sir John.

Sir John.

ACT II.

The Dupe, a comedy

So, so, so; What, keeping your room still, Bab! Well; and how dost do, girl? [*She runs and falls on his neck.*] I thought you had been gone abroad, for the house seems to be flung out at the windows! Nobody in the way!

Mrs. Eth. [*Speaking faintly.*]

Me! heaven help me! I abroad! I have not been able to go down stairs yet; and I'm s o weak, and s o faint, and so overpower'd with joy, that I ca n't ca n't speak my dear Sir John!

Sir John.

Well, well, well, here; I'm for you again, you poor fond toad you: and how hast done all this while? whimpering, blubbering, like a fool, I suppose, for me.

Mrs. Eth.

Oh Sir John! three long months! I wou'd not live three months again without you! *Sir John.*

That damn'd gout catch'd me by the toe just as I was coming home. If a man will play the devil, why he must pay for it; so there is no more to be said. How does your bantling do?

Mrs. Eth.

My bantling! he's your own dear picture. *Sir John.*

Not the better for that, you know. How does Sharply and Emily?

Mrs. Eth.

And is that all you care about the poor dear child, your own flesh and blood, not to desire to see him, and he's so pretty, and so like yourself! *Sir John.*

I wish he may make a better man, or Lord ha' mercy on your foolish sex, some twenty years hence!

Mrs. Eth.

Ay, as you say, Sir John; if he should have your deluding ways. *Sir John.*

Poh! nonsense! mere stuff! prithee talk a little sensibly, and give me some account of the family; every thing at sixes and sevens I suppose, since I have been gone. You snivling and moping up in your room; Sharply driv'ling and blund'ring on as usual; and Emily giggling and flaunting about the town.

Mrs. Eth.

I declare, Sir John, you know as well how it was, as if you had been at home. I'll have Miss Emily call'd to you, if you please. Go bid her come hither.

[*Exit Maid.*]

Sir John.

I don't want her. I'm monstrously tir'd with my journey. How do Friendly's family?

Mrs Eth.

La! Sir John, I never see any of them; they shun me as if I were a very rattle-snake! *Sir John.*

Oh! Mrs. Friendly is one of your virtuous women; but I'd have her know, I can make you as virtuous as herself when I please. 'Tis but owning you for Lady Woodall, and let me see who'll dispute your virtue.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ay, my dear Sir John, you remember your promise, and my character now, you know Sir *John*.

Burn character! What good does character do any body? give me a good estate and a good constitution, and let character go to

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ay, but your son, you know, Sir John. Sir *John*.

Well, well, the thing shall be own'd some time or other; but I can't bear the thoughts of that dogmatical fellow Friendly's grinning at me; and then the curs'd impertinence of his wife too, who is always meddling in other people's affairs. When her tongue is set a going, you may as soon stop a whirlwind. 'S—death I'd as lieve be married to a wild cat as to such a woman.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ay, Sir John, but they have more reasons than one for hating me. You must know Miss Emily is mighty great at their house of late; and to tell you the truth, I believe she is carrying on an intrigue there. Sir *John*.

What, with Friendly? Well

Mrs. *Eth.*

Brute! [*Aside.*] No, no, not with Friendly himself. Sir *John*.

Nay, I should not wonder; his wife is such a chattering devil, he must be sick of her. But who is it with then?

Mrs. *Eth.*

Why, with a shabby young fellow, that is not worth sixpence; but he is a relation of theirs, and Mrs. Friendly's in the secret. Sir *John*.

What, she's a bawd too! I am glad of that; well

Mrs. *Eth.*

Why, as they know that in case you have no lawful issue, Emily is your heir, they think to snap her up, and are mightily afraid of your marrying me. Sir *John*.

What the d I should put it into their heads that I'd marry at all?

Mrs. *Eth.*

I know from what he said to my brother, that Mr. Friendly has a notion you will, one time or other. Sir *John*.

Curse his notions: What does he take me for? Does n't he know that I abominate the very thoughts of matrimony?

Mrs. *Eth.*

He knows it very well, Sir John; yet he said, many a man that hated it as much might enter into the state for convenience. Sir *John*.

Did Friendly say so?

Mrs. *Eth.*

He did indeed; and, says he, as Mrs. Etherdown has always behaved so well, and is so fond of Sir John Sir *John*.

The Dupe, a comedy

Did he? Did Friendly say so?

Mrs. *Eth.*

I am telling you his words; and she is such a careful, prudent woman, and knows her duty so well Sir *John.*

Ah, poor Friendly, poor Friendly! there the shoe pinches; he thought of his own wife there.

Mrs. *Eth.*

That I should not be surprised, says he, if Sir John were to marry her. Sir *John.*

Friendly said so!

Mrs. *Eth.*

His wife was present; and she, forsooth, must put in her word; and said, it wou'd be a base thing, and a wicked thing in Sir *John* ; and Mr. Friendly took her up short, and said, all the world knew Sir *John* did not much value doing a wicked thing. Sir *John.*

Ha, ha, ha! Oh! he knows me, he knows me well.

Mrs. *Eth.*

But, says he, I'll give you leave to hang him, if you catch him doing a silly thing. Sir *John.*

Ha, ha, ha! he's no fool; Friendly's no fool; and he knows me well.

Enter Maid.

Maid.

Madam, Miss Emily is gone out.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Gone out! Where?

Maid.

I have been enquiring for her, Madam; and one of the men says, she went out in a chariot, a little while ago.

[Exit.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Oh! Sir John, Sir John! I am afraid that girl is a young Hypocrite, Sir John. Sir *John.*

By my soul she can't be a better thing; for if I find her out, I'll so claw her.

Mrs. *Eth.*

I did not think to have shew'd it you, Sir John, but I can keep nothing from you; look at this letter that Miss Emily dropt to-day.

Sir John. [Reads.]

Mr. Friendly's chariot will call for you One of the thousand tender things. ha, ha, ha! by the mass, the girl takes after me; she has spirit, and loves intrigue; I wish she don't come upon the town tho'.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Eth.*

No, Sir John, Mr. Friendly's people have other designs; pretty friends they are indeed, to profess such a regard for you, and spirit your niece up to rebellion, and then entice her away; just when you were expected home too, to marry her, I'll lay my life, to their beggarly relation; but they think they can laugh you out of your resentment. Sir *John.*

Laugh! 's—death, let me catch any one daring to laugh at me: laugh! how durst you say such a thing? how durst you think of such a thing?

Mrs. *Eth.*

Dear Sir John, I think of no such thing; but I know Mr. Friendly's gibing way; and if he can but rail at me, and set you against me, he'll expect to enjoy his fine plot in triumph. Sir *John.*

Curse them and their plots too; I'll shew them
I can out—plot them, with a vengeance if the thing be as you suspect.

Mrs. *Eth.*

It is but too sure, Sir John. Sir *John.*

Then I'll convince Friendly at once that he is a blockhead; for I'll tell him I am married, and have a son to inherit my estate; and then, pray, what becomes of his plot?

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ay, there will be a thunder—clap indeed, as you say, Sir *John* . Sir *John.*

I wanted something to provoke me to it; and if it had not been for this scurvy dog's trick of Friendly's I don't think I shou'd have own'd you; not while I liv'd, by my soul.

Mrs. *Eth.*

They'll deny it, as sure as I live, Sir John, and fancy they can impose on you. Sir *John.*

Yes, I am a likely fellow to be imposed on! I have liv'd till this time of day, to be gull'd to be sure!

Mrs. *Eth.*

A probable story, as you say, indeed, Sir *John* . Sir *John* .

I have thought of a way to mortify Friendly horribly. I'll go to him to—morrow; and as if I did not suspect him to have any hand in this affair, I'll pretend to consult him about marrying.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ay, and then he'll begin to slander me. Sir *John.*

And he'll come with his advice, and his objections, and his arguments against it; and when I get him to that point, I'll come slap upon him with owning my marriage; ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. *Eth.*

You have such a contriving brain, Sir John! Sir *John.*

Then I'll laugh in his face, and leave him to consider who plots best, he or I ha, ha, ha!

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ha, ha, ha! and such a malicious wit! Sir *John.*

Ha, ha, ha! how I enjoy the thoughts of plaguing the surly cur! he'll be ready to hang himself. Come, I don't care if I do take a peep at this same brat of ours.

Mrs. *Eth.*

I fancy he's asleep, but you may look at him: Oh! he's a little angel! Sir *John.*

I am delighted to think of Friendly.

Mrs. *Eth.*

My dear Sir *John.* [*Exit, with her arm round his neck.*]

SCENE III.

[*Changes to a Room in Friendly's House.*]

Enter Friendly and Wellford.

Well.

There never was any thing so vexatious! when my impatience, my wishes, and my hopes were all at the utmost stretch, to be disappointed thus! That unseasonable coxcomb to come home at such a juncture!

Fr.

Well, I'll allow you it is a little mal-a-propos. I am glad, however, that he *is* come; and if we can but obtain his consent to your marrying Emily

Well.

Emily has not answered my letter neither! Not to afford me a line! nothing but a cold excuse by word of mouth; it's very strange.

Fr.

Poh! there's nothing strange in it; but you lovers are such restless beings!

Well.

I have loved her almost from my childhood, Friendly! I had her good mother's approbation: I think she loves me too yet

Fr.

Yet what now? You have a suspicion in your temper, Wellford, that will never suffer you to be happy.

Well.

Why, to tell you the truth, Mrs. Friendly has alarmed me exceedingly with something she has told me.

Fr.

Oh! my poor wife! that tongue of her's can never lie still. 'Tis her only fault; but I never expect to cure her of it, as she fancies herself the most silent woman in England. She has told you, I suppose, of Sharply's addresses.

The Dupe, a comedy

Well.

The scoundrel I'll cut his throat!

Fr.

Bounce there it goes off. For shame man, don't be so impetuous. You can't suspect Emily of favouring such a fellow; a mean hanger-on in Sir John's family.

Well.

But your wife says, he's a handsome rascal, and of so plausible a tongue

Fr.

Oh! that's so like her! fy, fy, don't think of him.

Well.

I am ashamed of it, I own, yet passionately as I love Emily, 'tis impossible my heart shou'd be at ease, while she continues in that vile house.

Fr.

Well, well, have patience.

Well.

Patience! Friendly, I believe you never knew what it was to love.

SCENE IV.

Enter Mrs. Friendly, talking as she comes in.

Mrs. Fr.

I never was so amazed and astonished!

Fr.

Ha! ha! I wish Mrs. Friendly were to hear you say so.

Mrs. Fr.

What was he saying, my dear?

Fr.

Only that I never was in love: But what has thrown you into all this astonishment? *Mrs. Fr.* Something about Emily But pray, Captain, let me ask you, what you mean by such an assertion?

Well.

Oh, madam, I was only bantering Mr. Friendly. For heaven's sake, what of Emily?

Mrs. Fr.

I don't pretend to be as young nor as handsome as Miss Emily; but I *have* been young, Sir, and perhaps Mr. Friendly thought me handsome too; and for you to go and assert such a thing so roundly, Mr. Wellford Till you explain your reasons, I shall keep my mind to myself, I assure you, Sir.

Fr.

That I am sure is impossible, my dear wife.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. Fr.

Perhaps, Mr. Friendly, you'll find yourself mistaken; and that I am not so fond of communicating my thoughts, but that I can be silent, and not drop the smallest hint, that a person has behaved in an extraordinary and unexpected manner.

Fr.

What! has Emily done this?

Mrs. Fr.

I named no name, Mr. Friendly.

Well.

Dear madam, don't keep us in suspense; I beseech you, tell us what you mean.

Mrs. Fr.

If you'll answer my question, Sir, then I'll answer yours; if not, I'll let you see I can hold my tongue; but for you to make so strange a declaration, and not to give a reason for it! I swear and protest

Fr.

That's her way of holding her tongue. Why, I tell you there was nothing in what he said; if you'll not believe me, I can't help it. [*Aside to Wellford.*] Let her alone, we shall have it all out presently; she would sooner talk to herself than keep it in. Make yourself easy, man; you may be sure you will see Emily to-morrow.

Mrs. Fr. [*Walking about.*]

Yes, yes; a likely story! Heaven knows what is become of Emily!

Well. [*Turns hastily to her.*]

Madam!

Fr.

Don't mind her. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Fr.

How young creatures can act so unaccountably, that have been educated with so much care!

Well.

Dear Madam, explain yourself.

Mrs. Fr.

I was not saying any thing, Sir. Such a contrivance! it's well if it is not with her own consent, after all.

Well.

For goodness sake, madam, speak out.

Mrs. Fr.

You see, Sir, I can be as dumb as other folks when I please.

Fr.

Yes, yes; that's clear: but there seems to be more in this than I apprehended. Prithee, my dear, now, don't be in a tift about nothing. The whole of the business that you resent so much, was no more than this: I was laughing at Wellford's impatience; and he said, if I knew what it was to be in love, I wou'd not make a jest of it.

The Dupe, a comedy

Well.

This was all, upon my word, Madam.

Mrs. Fr.

And why cou'd not you have said so at first, instead of running on a rig-maroll. I was afraid, indeed, he had observed something that might induce him

Well.

No not in the least, good Madam: tell me now

Mrs. Fr.

Oh! if that was all, why, I will tell you. You know you expected to see Emily here this evening.

Well.

I know it.

Mrs. Fr.

And you know she sent word she cou'd not come, because

Well.

I know I am disappointed: go on, Madam.

Mrs. Fr.

'Tis a disappointment to be sure, as it is so long since you have seen her; fourteen months, I believe: it was in September that you went to

Fr.

What's all this to the purpose? Pray proceed.

Mrs. Fr.

Mr. Friendly, I wish you wou'd not use that phrase so often; I never speak, but you come out with, "What's all this to the purpose?"

Fr.

Well, well, my dear, go on.

Mrs. Fr.

I was sitting at work in the parlour just now, and to tell you the truth, I was thinking of you and Emily. What joy will it be, thought I

Fr.

Prithee don't tell us your thoughts, my dear, but say what has happened.

Mrs. Fr.

Well, no matter then what my thoughts were; tho' perhaps they might be worth knowing too: But who shou'd come in, in a violent hurry, but Rose, Mrs. Etherdown's maid. Lord, Madam, says she, do you know any thing of Miss Emily? (Laying down my spectacles, for I can't work without them) Not I, indeed, says I. Then to be sure, says she, she is gone off with Mr. Sharply, and will undone, if

Well.

Heavens! Madam! how cou'd you delay telling this so long? Oh! Friendly, what do you say to my suspicions

The Dupe, a comedy

now?

Fr.

Where is the woman? is she in the house?

Mrs. Fr.

Ay, to be sure; she's below stairs: I did not stay to ask her any more questions, but ran up directly, to tell you what she said.

Fr.

Yes, and you have made wonderful haste to tell it, with your confounded round-about. I'll bring the maid up, and let her speak for herself.

[Exit Friendly.]

Mrs. Fr.

Why, this is one of the most strange, incomprehensible affairs that ever was, Mr. Wellford. I am quite at my wit's end to unriddle it. Emily sends word she can't come, because Sir John is arrived. I thought that might be true; but then again, it can't be true, because she is actually gone out. And then, that Sharply has had so many opportunities; and he is a very personable man, I can tell you; and young creatures are so giddy now-a-days! It was not so when I was a girl; it was not a handsome face, nor a smooth tongue, that cou'd win me.

Well.

Good madam, you need not aggravate matters; my own apprehensions have already made me but too miserable.

SCENE V.

Enter Friendly and Rose.

Fr.

Come, repeat what you have said to me, before this Gentleman; he is most concern'd to know it.

Rose.

Sir, I am sure Mr. Sharply has carried Miss Emily away; I overheard my mistress and him talking about it. I wou'd have warn'd Miss Emily herself, but she is so proud and so scornful, she won't suffer me even to speak to her.

Fr.

Why did not you come to me directly?

Rose.

My mistress kept me so employed, Sir, I could not for my life get out sooner.

Fr.

Do you know where they are gone?

Rose.

Yes, Sir, I can bring you to the house.

Fr.

Come, Wellford, we have no time to lose.

The Dupe, a comedy

Well.

No, Friendly, I'll not stir: let her enjoy her infamy. I have done with her for ever.

Mrs. Fr.

Gracious! what do you mean, Captain?

Fr.

Are you out of your senses man? don't you hear it's a plot, a wicked contrivance of Sharply's?

Well.

Friendly, I hardly know what I say. Come with me, and if I find that villain has dared to

[He takes up his Sword.]

Rose.

Oh! dear Sir, sure you wou'd not offer to kill him.

Well.

Lead me directly to the house, or

Rose.

I'll go down on my knees to you, Sir, not to hurt him.

Fr.

What! then jealousy, it seems, has urged you to tell this?

Mrs. Fr.

A fine motive! I was wondering indeed what

Well.

Tell me where they are, or by all that's gracious

Fr.

Come, come, I'll answer for it there shall be no harm done; bring us to the house.

Rose.

Well, Sir, I'll depend upon you.

Well.

Begone then, and lead the way.

Mrs. Fr.

My dear, you'll bring Emily home with you, if you find her; I'll order a chamber to be got ready for her.

Fr.

Certainly.

[Exit. Friendly, Wellford, and Rose.]

Mrs. Fr. [Talking to herself as she goes out at the door.]

SCENE V.

The Dupe, a comedy

To be sure it is one of the most perplex'd, unaccountable affairs, that ever was in the world; and I am more surprized

SCENE VI.

Changes to a room in Mrs. Private's house. Emily walks about, Sharply following her.

Sharp.

But, my dear Emily, now prithee hear me, child.

Em.

Hear you! What can you say in defence of so much treachery?

Sharp.

I'll tell you: If I were guilty of treason, perjury, robbery, and so forth, all these things wou'd I justify, to e'er a woman in England, by those three Monosyllables, I love you.

Em.

And do you think that this act of violence won't make me hate you more than ever I did?

Sharp.

No.

Em.

No!

Sharp.

No, I tell you n o; I never knew a man hated for an act of violence of this kind in my life. Besides, as I take it, I am not altogether an object of aversion.

Em.

You are too modest, Sir.

Sharp.

Middling as to that; tho' faith it is a fault too, as you observe, but then it's easily mended, my dear; for example now [*Offers to throw his arms round her; she pushes him away.*]

Em.

Intolerable impudence!

Sharp.

Why, what the duce wou'd you be at? I wish you knew your own mind; just now I was too modest, and now I am too impudent; I wou'd fain please you if I knew how.

Em.

Audacious man!

Sharp.

Come, come, I know you don't dislike me at the bottom of your heart: you think me saucy, but agreeable, a

The Dupe, a comedy

devilish agreeable fellow. Ah, you little rogue! there is an arch smile of assent under that angry brow, that makes you look so enchantingly!

Em.

My contempt for you is so great, that it has banish'd even my fears of you.

Sharp.

Fears! Lord, my precious, you have nothing to fear! I'll be as constant as a dove, and never tell a word of the matter to mortal; I scorn to blab.

Em.

Thou most abandoned!

Sharp.

Come, don't be peevish: you can't imagine how much prettier you are when you smile. Besides, child, you should consider, that I am at present lord and master of thy destiny; and if you provoke me, who knows what may follow?

Em.

You wretch, how dare you talk thus! Alone and helpless as I am, I feel myself so superior to you, that I as much despise your threats, as if I were this minute arm'd with the power to crush you for them.

Sharp.

Why, to say the truth, I had rather owe my happiness to your own voluntary kindness; for mutual love you must know Miss, is the prettiest thing in the universe, and when uncompell'd by duty, the source of ten thousand pleasures that lovers only know, and wives and husbands never dream of: (By my soul I believe you were in the right *not* to marry me) Think of the delightful billet-doux, the transports of meeting, and even in absence, the millions of little, sweet, charming anxieties! then when we happen to meet in publick, I, unexpectedly perhaps, strike your eyes; you with a beautiful consciousness withdraw them, and throw them round the company; your face in a fine glow all the while probably you see the women coquettishly trying to engage my attention; Ay, ay, say you, you may ogle as much as you please, but he's all my own.

Em.

Detestible monster!

[He catches her in his arms.]

Sharp.

Adorable creature! how! in tears! Oh, wou'd I were that lover whom you were to have met this evening at Friendly's, then wou'd my visionary scene be realized!

Em.

Do you then know whom I was to have met?

Sharp.

Alas! not I.

Em.

Know then, that it is one, who will make you dearly repent of this outrage; tho' you fled to the remotest part of the earth.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

Oh lud! oh lud! prithee who is this mighty giant?

Em.

Do you know captain Wellford?

Sharp.

Wellford! S'death! [*Aside.*] Is *he* the man?

Em.

Yes, wretch; and assure yourself, he will call you to a severe account for this.

Sharp.

Ha, ha, ha! now do you fancy I have been serious all this while? why Lord, Madam, Wellford and I are as intimate as two Brothers. I had only a mind to startle you a little; but to convince you I had not the least design to injure you, I will immediately restore you to your lover.

Em.

Is this possible! can I believe you speak seriously?

Sharp.

As seriously as if I never were to speak more. Captain Wellford is the man in the world I shou'd wish to oblige, and shall be proud to deliver you up safe to him. I'll conduct you directly to Mr. Friendly's.

Em.

Let me go then instantly. Bless me, what noise is that? I wish I were out of this house. If you deceive me again

[*A noise of talking heard without.*]

Sharp.

By this fair hand, I will not; we shall find chairs at the door, I'll lead you to one.

Em.

You may depend on all the grateful returns I can make.

[*She gives him her hand, and while she speaks Wellford enters, followed by Friendly and Rose.*]

Em.

Ah! Wellford! is this your greeting, Sir? This *can't* be Wellford!

[*She runs to him, and he turns from her.*]

Well.

Yes, it *is* he, who came hither to deliver you from the hands of a vile ravisher; but I see I wrong him by the epithet, and might have spared myself the trouble, light ungrateful creature!

Em.

Injurious man!

Well.

What! is it you, Randel? thou despicable wretch! how I blush for the woman who cou'd thus debase herself.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

Captain One word with you in private,

Well.

Impudent ruffian, stand off. Look at this sword, it once preserved your coward life; it came now prepared to revenge my own, and that lady's wrongs; but the cause is beneath it, so I leave you to your fortune.

[Exit Wellford.]

Fr.

What, Sir, it seems that you don't value your neck, that you have ventured thus.

Sharp.

You are a reasonable man, Sir, and I'll talk with you, if you'll give me the opportunity.

Fr.

Hold your tongue, rascal you shall give an account of yourself in another place.

Sharp. [To Rose.]

Thou unlucky devil! Miss Emily, pray speak for me: was not I going to carry you to Mr. Friendly's house?

Em.

He said he would Sir, I must do him that justice.

Fr.

A mere pretence, in order to decoy you, perhaps, to a more convenient place.

Sharp.

Let me perish, if I did not mean to bring her safe to you; I was compelled to take the steps I have done, but I no sooner heard of Captain Wellford, than gratitude, as well as honour

Fr.

Gratitude and honour! how dare such a fellow as thou art pretend to either? Say rather your fears, if there be any truth in you.

Sharp.

Call it what you please, Sir; but if you stand my friend, I have something to tell you perhaps

Fr.

This is no fit place to talk with you; you shall come along with me, Sir, and you too, Mrs. Rose, for I am determined to sift this black affair to the bottom. *[To Emily.]* Madam, I ordered my chariot to follow me, which shall carry you to my house; for these gentry, I shall take care to convey them thither myself.

[He gives his hand to Emily.]

Sharp.

Sir, I am ready to attend you any where.

Em.

And for me, Mr. Friendly, I am now indifferent whither I go.

SCENE VI.

The Dupe, a comedy

Fr.

Come, Madam, all, I hope, will be clear'd up.

[He leads her out.]

Rose. [To Sharply as she got out.]

Oh, thou villain?

Sharp. [Following her, shakes his fist at her.]

a h!

[Exeunt.]

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

[A chamber in Friendly's house.]

Mrs. Friendly and Emily sitting. Wellford leaning on the back of Emily's chair.

Mrs. Fr.

Well, but child, now that the Captain is convinced that his suspicions were foolish, and groundless, and idle, and ridiculous, and every thing; you ought to forgive him, and make up your quarrel.

Em.

No, Madam, what I have declared, was but in justice to my own character; for the rest, I am little solicitous to satisfy a man, capable first of suspecting, and then of accusing me, as he has done.

Mrs. Fr.

Very true, my dear, capable of suspecting and accusing; but jealousy you know is of all things

Well.

Blind, blind and infatuated!

Em.

To think I cou'd favour such a mean impostor! a cheat even to his very name!

Mrs. Fr.

Ay, a paltry subaltern fellow! that was broke for cowardice! after the Captain, as he tells me, had saved him from being killed by another officer.

Well.

I acknowledge my fault with all its aggravations; yet I thought my penitence, my grief, for having so justly provoked this lady's resentment, might have attoned for an offence, which nothing but the strongest love cou'd have occasion'd.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Fr.*

I can't think what Sharply

Well.

For heaven's sake, Madam! don't name a wretch any more, that has occasioned so much mischief!

Mrs. *Fr.*

Bless me, Captain! don't be so sudden! I declare you startle one in a manner! I say, I wonder what can keep Sharply and Rose so long with Mr. Friendly! they have been lock'd up now almost

Em.

You'll soon know, Madam. Here is Mr. Friendly.

SCENE II.

Enter Friendly.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Lord! Mr. Friendly, what have you been about all this while?

Fr.

Sharply has told me something that has surprized me exceedingly.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Ay! what can it be? but pray, my dear, first tell me, were the candles li't in the drawing room as you came by? for I expect company.

Fr.

Psha; I don't know.

Well.

What has he told you?

Fr.

Why, nothing less than that Sir John

Mrs. *Fr.*

Any body's question will be answered before mine.

Fr.

I wish your drawing room and your company were Sir John is married!

Em.

Married!

Will.

To whom, in the name of wonder?

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Fr.*

Now don't tell him, Mr. Friendly, but let me guess; you know I have an excellent guess.

Fr.

Prithee, my dear, give me leave; why to that compound of mischief and wickedness, Mrs. Etherdown.

Well.

You amaze me!

Mrs. *Fr.*

It does not amaze me in the least now; I knew it wou'd come to that as well as if

Em.

Sure, Sir, this must be an invention of Sharply's?

Mrs. *Fr.*

Don't you remember, my dear, I told you about a month ago, when you and I were talking of Sir John; don't you remember I said, says I

Fr.

Ay, ay, I remember your prophesy.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Now you see just the same way I foretold Mr. Testy's marriage with the widow; and Mrs. Lofty's with

Fr.

For heaven's sake, good wife! give others leave to speak as well as yourself.

Mrs. *Fr.*

Pray, Captain, do I hinder him? I declare one would imagine that

Well.

Dear Madam, let me ask Mr. Friendly a question or two.

Mrs. *Fr.*

There now again, as if *I* stopp'd you! wou'd not one think that I kept all the discourse to myself? and now, pray Mr. Wellford, all the while we were at piquet after dinner, did I say a syllable but what was absolutely necessary, except two or three times that I ask'd you, What you were thinking of? And you said, Of your cards; and I said

Fr.

There's no bearing this; come with me into my study, Wellford; her tongue's wound up for an hour, and she must let it run down.

Enter a Servant.

Serv.

The ladies are come, Madam.

Mrs. *Fr.*

I'll wait on them. A fine character I should get indeed, if people were to take Mr. Friendly's word!

SCENE II.

The Dupe, a comedy

[Exit Mrs. Friendly.

Well.

How long does that fellow say, Sir John has been married?

Fr.

Above a year, he tells me; and if it be true, the son he has by Mrs. Etherdown is legitimate, and Emily's hopes are cut off at once.

Well.

I am glad of it.

Em.

How, Sir! that I'm not worth a shilling.

Well.

No, Madam; but that I can now convince all the world, I love you for your own sake only. You, I hope, wanted no such proof of the sincerity of my affection. Oh! Friendly! I have offended, too justly provoked my Emily's resentment! persuade her to forgive my fault, and let me call her mine.

Fr.

What say you, Madam? This generosity deserves a kind return; and if Sir John consents

Em.

Hold, Sir! I own I have pride perhaps too much; and cannot bear to lay myself under obligations, where I once hoped to have the power of conferring them.

Fr.

But, Madam

Em.

Excuse me, Mr. Friendly: Let me only beg the protection of your roof till my uncle's return: I dare say, when he hears how cruelly I have been treated, he will provide for me somewhere: Perhaps I may trouble you but for a night or two.

Well.

And whither will you then go? By heaven! you shall never be at the mercy of those abandoned wretches, while I have life or power to succour you. Oh! Emily, this is not the return I expected from your tenderness! To whom ought you to fly for shelter, but to the man that loves you with such an honest and disinterested passion as I do?

Em.

No, Wellford, no; you ought to know me better. The woman whom you have debased by your mean suspicions, will not, on such terms, condescend to be your wife.

[Exit Emily.

Fr.

A noble girl, by my soul! 'twere pity you should lose her.

Well.

Lose her! I'd lose my life as soon. Dear Friendly, if you wou'd preserve *that*, do you and your wife use all your

The Dupe, a comedy

influence on her. That pride too, which would deform another woman, makes her still more beautiful. What is fortune in comparison with such a mind?

Fr.

Why, all this is very fine, I grant you; but the loss of a good estate is a damned baulk notwithstanding, Wellford.

Well.

By all that's good, Friendly, I despise it; let me but possess my Emily, and

Fr.

You'll live in a cottage on love determined like a true Arcadian swain; but it won't do in this part of the world, let me tell you, boy. But to be serious; what Sharply has told me, he has no other authority for, than Mrs. Etherdown's own word; though he adds, that Sir John, on account of this child's birth, means directly to own his marriage. However, I'll suspend my belief till I am better inform'd.

Well.

But have you let Sharply escape? I had forgot to inquire after him.

Fr.

Oh! I have made him my own. I got him to draw up in writing a full account of Mrs. Etherdown's scheme concerted with him against Emily; together with some other curious anecdotes, to which Rose and he are privy: Which notable confession I have made them both sign.

Well.

And what use do you purpose to make of it? 'Tis of little consequence now, methinks, to separate Sir John and his precious bargain.

Fr.

I have a design in my head to bring that worthless puppy, if possible, to a sense of his folly. I cannot now explain the whole of my plan to you, for I mean to go immediately to Sir John's, who they tell me is expected home every minute; but Emily shall not know this, as I wish for your sake to detain her a while.

Well.

I have but little hopes, for I know the firmness of her temper.

Fr.

Come, come, courage, man; you know you have a friend within; I'll venture to bring you to her.

Well.

Do what you will with me.

[Exeunt Friendly and Wellford.]

SCENE III.

[Changes to Sir John's House.]

Enter Sharply and Rose.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

Have done, have done, wench, with your silly reproaches; Emily will be kind to *you*, tho' in regard to your motive, she is but little obliged to you for her fancied deliverance.

Rose.

Fancied!

Sharp.

Yes, fancied, ye mischievous baggage! Why, to what end do you imagine I ran away with that girl?

Rose.

To what end, traitor! Why did you carry her to that house? Answer me that, varlet.

Sharp.

Thou art a poor shallow-pated gipsey; very unfit to share the counsels of the wise; but for once I'll inform you. I meant first to be well paid for my trouble, then to discover the whole secret (that trifling circumstance excepted) to Friendly, and fairly to deliver Emily into his hands, making a merit of my own great integrity; and lastly, I meant (that I own I did) to rumple the young baggage a little, partly out of spite, and to shew my power, which would have enhanced the worth of her deliverance.

Rose.

And you did so, I warrant, Mr. Impudence?

Sharp.

Why no, faith, I don't know how that happened; these honest girls have a damn'd impertinent way of keeping a man in awe; besides, when I heard that hot-headed fellow Wellford was her lover, I confess it did damp my courage a little. But no matter, your curst intermeddling has undone my whole plan, and what would have appeared an act of virtue, seems now the result only of fear.

Rose.

And how was I to know all this? I am sure, only I thought you were going to leave me, I had as soon have been burnt

Sharp.

Well, well, I'm not now at leisure to hear your excuses. I suppose Sir John has sworn a thousand oaths by this time, at my being out of the way; 'tis well if you have not been missed too.

Rose.

If I should, I have an excuse ready. Well, Mr. Sharply, sha'nt we be friends again?

Sharp.

Not now, you puppy, 'twould take up too much time; hereafter perhaps I may take you into favour. But get you to your mistress; I must change my clothes, and then go to Sir John.

[Exit Sharply.]

Rose.

Marry, hang you! I believe that will be your fate at last.

[Exit Rose.]

The Dupe, a comedy

SCENE IV.

A Chamber. A Table with Bottles and Glasses. Mrs. Etherdown sitting at it. Sir John half nodding in an elbow Chair.

Sir John.

I am so tired I can hardly keep myself awake. No news of this blockhead Sharply yet? Come, why don't you take your glass?

Mrs. Eth.

La! Sir John, you know I hate it of all things. *Sir John.*

What then, you abstemious jackanapes; one glass to welcome me home: it won't poison you, will it?

Mrs. Eth.

Ay, as you say, Sir John; I can't refuse that, tho' it shou'd poison me. *[She fills a little drop. He nods again; and she fills a bumper and drinks.]* *Sir John.*

Take off your glass, I say.

Mrs. Eth.

I vow I can't touch any more, Sir John; it gives one such a flushing in one's face, when one isn't us'd to it. *Sir John.*

Ay, this comes of your drinking water; nothing but water will go down forsooth: why it is enough to kill you, you fool. I am as sleepy as if I had taken opium. *[He nods again, and Sharply peeps in at the door and creeps over.]*

Sharp.

What, fast!

Mrs. Eth.

Hush what has kept you so long?

SCENE V.

Sharp.

Is t'other hundred ready? We are secure I warrant you.

Sir John rouzes himself.]

Secure! what are you secure of? Ha! Sharply, is it you? Shake hands, you whelp.

Sharp.

A h, Sir John, did you pretend to be asleep! you are so full of tricks!

Sir John.

Where have you been all this while? What the d l has your blund'ring head been about now?

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

Been! why, I have been and dun'd every tenant you have in London, from top to bottom, this good day; and if I can get a cross from them, I wish I may never be worth one. I have been out since morning: my sister there can tell.

Mrs. Eth.

It's true, indeed, Sir John. Sir *John*.

What were you saying about being secure?

Sharp.

Oh! ay, we are secure enough for that matter. I was saying I had got security from that scurvy fellow there, that owes you a hundred pound. He that keeps the great inn there in what-de-call-um

Sir John.

In Holborn! ay, that's a sad dog! a sad dog! must turn him out. But you are such a poor, soft, easy, quiet mungrel, let them but warm your heart with a bowl of punch, and make a poor mouth, and call you your honour, they may keep me out of my rent till dooms-day for you.

Mrs. Eth.

Ay, as you say, Sir John, he little knows the world. Sir *John* .

I'll turn you off, by my soul, Sharply, if you don't learn to know the world.

Sharp.

I strive. Ask my sister else.

Sir John.

Strive! poor devil; you do your best, I believe. Come, I'm glad your come in; can't drink by myself; and Madam here, won't touch a drop. Sit down there. Do you know that Emily is run away?

Sharp.

Miss Emily, Sir! our Miss Emily?

Sir John.

Ay, our Miss Emily, Sir. How Sharply gapes at the news?

Mrs. Eth.

No wonder, Sir John.

Sharp.

Its only one of your jokes, may be, Sir John: you are such a joker! But I don't believe every thing you say for all that.

Mrs. Eth.

Its too true, as Sir John says. Sir *John*.

The Dupe, a comedy

I have found out the whole plot, tho', you must know; and to-morrow I intend so to work Friendly about it.

Sharp.

Mr. Friendly! ay, to be sure, he is a knowing man, and can give fine advice when a body's in trouble.

Sir John.

Confound your loggerhead! do you think I *want* advice, or would *take* advice, and from *him*? Why, he is the whole contriver of the thing, man.

Sharp.

Who! Mr. Friendly, Sir?

Mrs. Eth.

Yes: Mr. Friendly! as Sir John says.

Sharp.

Lord! I'd never ha' thought that of him!

Sir John.

You'd never ha' thought! Why, you numscull, how the plague shou'd *you* think, that mind nothing but dunning of tenants, and then excusing them their rent? A good joke, i'faith.

Mrs. Eth.

That's true, indeed, Sir John; he knows nothing, poor soul, but the keeping his own books. *Sir John.*

And a miracle 'tis to me, that he can do even that! Take him out of his figures, and my coach dog has more sagacity.

Sharp. laughs foolishly.]

Ha! ha! ha! Well, well, I wou'd not give my figures for all your wit: now, Sir John, there's for *you*.

Sir John.

True! there you're right, Sharply. Every man has his talent.

Enter a Servant.

Serv.

Mr. Friendly's come to wait on you, Sir.

Sir John.

What the plague can Friendly want with me now?

Mrs. Eth.

To try how the land lies, I suppose. *Sir John.*

He'll find himself cursedly bit. I think, I am a match for Friendly. Give me but a clue, and let me alone to unwind a piece of knavery. Get you both into the next room. Desire Mr. Friendly to walk in. Ha! ha!

SCENE IV.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

I wou'd not stand in Mr. Friendly's shoes, no, by the sun and moon, not for all the money in his pocket. You'll work him, Sir John.

Mrs. Eth.

Ay, Sir John, now's your time. Sir *John*.

Yes, yes: I think I am a match for Friendly.

[Exit Sharply and Mrs. Etherdown.]

SCENE VI.

Enter Friendly.

Sir John.

Your servant, Sir.

Fr.

How do you do, Sir John? I heard, by accident, you were arrived, and just call'd in as I pass'd by.

Sir John.

Oh, I thank you, Sir.

Fr.

You seem out of humour, Sir John.

Sir John.

Perhaps I really am so, Sir.

Fr.

I am sorry you have any occasion; but you need not shew it to your friends. Prithee, what has ruffled you so?

Sir John.

Nothing worth ruffling *my* temper, or any man's temper; women will be women.

Fr.

Something about Mrs. Etherdown, I suppose.

Sir John.

No, Sir, it is not; you are always supposing in the wrong place. There's my niece

Fr.

The Dupe, a comedy

What of her?

Sir John.

Run away that's all.

Fr.

Run away! impossible! with whom?

Sir John.

How the d I should I know? with a man, I suppose.

Fr.

It can't be! When did she go? Have you sent to enquire after her?

Sir John.

Ounds! what a catechising is here! I don't know when she went, nor where to look for her.

Fr.

I presume she'll come back again!

Sir John.

Ay, when she's ready for the magdalen-house, I suppose she may.

Fr.

Fy, fy, Sir John! how can you talk with so much levity of so good a girl, and so near a relation?

Sir John.

Prithee, Friendly, none of your sanctified airs. A good girl! and a near relation! I warrant you'd have me be mighty anxious about her *virtue* now, and try to recover her, for fear she shou'd be ruin'd, as you call it. Not I, by the mass! if the wench has a mind to take her fling, e'en let her, for me.

Fr.

But have you no regard for

Sir John.

The *Honour* of my family, I hope you are going to say uph, uph, uph Yes, I'll tell you how far I regard it: as I shou'd not chuse to have my estate squandered away upon beggarly rascals, with handsome faces, (the use to which, I suppose, my hopeful niece wou'd apply it) this frolic of her's has determined me

Fr.

To what?

Sir John.

To what goes plaguely against my stomach; but necessity

The Dupe, a comedy

Fr.

What do you mean?

Sir John.

I'd as lieve be a slave in the gallies; but since the young hussy has provoked me to it, I am resolved

Fr.

On what, prithee?

Sir John.

To marry, Sir, if you must know.

Fr.

The Duce you will! you'd as soon hang yourself!

Sir John.

Ay, ay, that's true; I do hate the thoughts of it most *con*sumedly, you know I do; but when a man's ill us'd in his own family and to tell you the truth, Friendly, I don't find myself so young as I was some years ago.

Fr.

No! that's strange!

Sir John.

And faith, I begin to think it's time to settle, and live a little honestly; a man can't hold out always, to drive such a career. I have been a sad dog, that's the truth on't.

Fr.

Oh, you intend to mend then?

Sir John.

No, hang it, I don't say that neither; I don't know whether I *can* mend or not; what's bred in the bone, you know the old leaven, I'm afraid; but a man may try. Come, Friendly, let me have a little of thy advice. I have a mind to marry, as I told you; what sort of a woman, now, do you think wou'd suit me?

Fr.

Why, if you are actually resolved

Sir John.

Peremptorily.

Fr.

In the first place then, I wou'd not have you marry one that's over young.

Sir John.

The Dupe, a comedy

Right not a giddy girl. [Bab's thirty at least. *Aside.*]

Fr.

In the next place, one whom you think doesn't marry you merely for the sake of your fortune; but a woman who can have some regard for your person.

Sir John.

Ah! good! [*Aside.* Bab again, she adores me!]

Fr.

One of a mild and gentle temper, who can bear with all your odd humours.

Sir John.

Excellent! [*Aside.* Still Bab.]

Fr.

One who wou'd be prudent in the management of your family, and not given to expensive pleasures. *Sir John.*

Oraculous! [*Aside.* Bab's the very thing.] Well, and what more?

Fr.

Nay, I think that's enough, you need not desire money.

Sir John.

Give me your hand. [*Aside.* Bab to a tittle; she's not worth a groat.] Egad, Friendly, you never talked so sensibly in your life; and now, who do you think answers this description in every point?

Fr.

Nay, I can't tell; I suppose there are women enough to be found who do.

Sir John.

Suppose I were to name one: what think you of Bab?

Fr.

Mrs. Etherdown! marry Mrs. Etherdown!

Sir John.

What! you don't approve of it?

Fr.

I do not, indeed, Sir John.

Sir John.

[*Aside.* Oh! I thought so.] But why not? I always intended to marry her, when I grew weary of her.

SCENE VI.

The Dupe, a comedy

Fr.

That's a strange paradox.

Sir John.

Not at all; for may be, in a cross fit, I might turn her off; and then I know I shou'd repent it, I am so used to her little coaxing ways.

Fr.

Why, do you know the consequence of marrying a kept mistress?

Sir John.

What! if I keep her myself, man?

Fr.

That makes very little difference, Sir John.

Sir John.

No! [*Aside.* Now it begins to work.]

Fr.

No! believe me, a woman who has been used to consider a man as a kind of property, of whom she is to make the most, while his inclination to her lasts, will not easily be brought to think, that there is but one common interest between them, as man and wife.

Sir John.

Ah! she won't?

Fr.

Nor can she who has been accustomed to caresses, and flattery and stuff, as a mistress, descend to the meek, the tender, the complying duties of a wife.

Sir John.

Indeed! [*Aside.* How I'll surprize him just now.] Why, Bab has always been the most obliging, submissive creature in the world to me.

Fr.

She finds it her interest to be so, but if once she were sure of you, she'd change her note.

Sir John.

You don't tell me so! [*Aside.* How he'll stare presently!]

Fr.

Take my word for it, Sir John, if you were to marry that woman, you'd repent it before a week were at an end. Sir John.

The Dupe, a comedy

Ha! ha! ha! ha! poor Friendly! thou art, generally speaking damnably out of thy judgment; but were never more so in thy life than now! For you must know: ha! ha! ha! excuse my laughing at you, you must know, that I have been married to her above two and fifty weeks, and have never repented of it yet. Ha! ha! ha!

Fr.

Oh, Sir John enjoy your laugh; but that joke won't take.

Sir John

Oh the devil! what, because I am a facetious puppy, and now and then a little sarcastical, do you think I am *never* serious?

Fr.

I understand you, Sir John; you want to trick your niece out of her inheritance; and Mrs. Etherdown and you have entered into a confederacy to say you are married.

Sir John.

Ah! do you begin to feel?

Fr.

Who do you think will take *your* word?

Sir John.

I'm an unlucky dog in point of character, that I own; but I can prove this, honest Friendly.

Fr.

I defy you.

Sir John.

Ah! does it sting? can name the parson and the witness.

Fr.

You may name a parson that has been transported, and a witness, may be, that has been hang'd.

Sir John.

What do you think of my little topping curate, of Woodall Green; is he transported? and our old friend in equity, Tom Shifter, is he hang'd?

Fr.

Were they your operators?

Sir John.

Ask them.

Fr.

Ha! ha! ha! ha!

The Dupe, a comedy

Sir John.

Ha! ha! ha! Who's the fool now, Friendly?

Fr.

'Tis even so then well, peace be with you.

Sir John.

Poor devil! how he's mortified! don't go, man.

Fr.

What am I to stay for?

Sir John.

I want a little more of your advice.

Fr.

Confound you.

Exit Friendly.

Sir John.

I wish you joy of your heiress, Friendly! Ha! ha! a turbulent booby! I'll go and tell Bab tho'.

SCENE VII.

Sharply and Mrs. Etherdown enter as he goes out.

Sir John.

Oh! are you there! come in. He's gone. E'gad I have given it to him!

Mrs. Eth.

I cou'd hear you, Sir John, laughing at him as he went out. *Sir John.*

But the best joke of all is, he pretends not to believe what I told him.

Mrs. Eth.

And here's this wiseacre does n't believe it neither.

Sharp.

No, nor wont unless Sir John says it; ay, and swear to it too, that's more, for all you think me so easy.

Sir John.

The Dupe, a comedy

And why not, Sharply? come, let's have your wise reasons.

Sharp.

Sir John, now mind me; only mind what I am going to say

Sir John.

Observe his important face. Now, for a weighty sentence of sound argument! out with it, Sharply.

Sharp.

Sir John, I have known you early and late; and tho' I am one that don't very well comprehend that is, I am not very capable I mean, I can't so very well express

Sir John.

Ha! ha! poor Sharply! ha! ha! ha!

Sharp.

There it is now, you always dash one in the middle of an argument; and because you have more learning, and can talk like a satyr, a body must not speak plain sense before you.

Sir John.

Call it a satyr the next time, Sharply.

Sharp.

You may call it what you please; but reason is reason, and truth is truth, and so I don't believe a word of the matter.

Sir John.

Fact tho', for all that, Sharply.

Sharp.

My sister Lady Woodall! O h!

Sir John.

The dog's proud of it, you see.

Mrs. Eth.

My dear Sir John! you are so good!

Sharp.

Good! by all the flesh of my back, I wou'd not be such a sinner! no, not for all his land! Take that now, Sir John: you find I can be smart when I please. Ha! ha! ha!

Sir John.

The Dupe, a comedy

Ha! ha! ha! scurrilous varlet; but you are right, Sharply, I have done such things in my time! Ha! ha! ha! did I ever show you my list? no, I believe not; hang it, I never loved boasting there were not above nine of them that I did not turn off next day tho'.

Sharp.

Nine! I don't know what nine you mean.

Sir John.

Only of the girls that I have had; none of them behaved like my old girl here.

Sharp.

She's a sensible woman to be sure, for all she's my sister.

Sir John.

No, no, Sharply, no; not much of that neither: But she is docile; a teachable wench enough; and with a little of my training we do pretty well: e'nt it so, Bab?

Mrs. Eth.

Ay, as you say *Sir John.*

[They sit down at the table.]

Sir John.

Come, here's your health. I can't but think of that booby, Friendly, how he must be gall'd! and his meddling fool of a wife, I wish she would cuckold him, that I might laugh at him about her virtue. Here's his health tho', I have known him these twenty years.

Rose comes to the door.

Rose.

I'd speak with you, Madam.

Sir John.

Where now, Bab?

[Mrs. Eth. rises.]

Mrs. Eth.

Only to give some orders to Rose, Sir John.

[She makes signs of drinking to Sharply, and Exit.]

Sharp.

Married!

Sir John.

Faith, Sharply, I began to think it high time to wipe off the score.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

And my sister Lady Woodall!

Sir John.

Confound you, leave off your exclamations, and put the bottle about.

Sharp.

And all unknown to me!

Sir John.

The dog's beginning to get drunk! and I shall be overwhelm'd with a deluge of folly and impertinence.

Sharp.

And I'll warrant, you have settled the Lord knows what upon her!

Sir John.

What's that to you, Sir?

Sharp.

Sir John, now mind what I say. You know, I am very apt to give a little good advice now and then, and tho' you rail at me so, I can't for the blood of me keep it. Now, I wou'd not have settled sixpence on her, were I you, for all she's my sister. I'd know how to manage a wife, I warrant: I am sharp enough in some things. She's as proud as Lucifer, tho' she's *my* sister.

Sir John.

That's a lie; if she has any thing good, 'tis her humility and meekness, buzzard!

Sharp.

And an extravagant woman, tho' I say it.

Sir John.

Another lie! if she has any virtue, 'tis her good oeconomy. I'd trust her with all I'm worth.

Sharp.

By the sun that shines then, so would not I, nor e'er a woman that ever wore a head; I have a little judgment too.

Sir John.

Judgment! *you* judgment!

Sharp.

Sir John, listen to me now, and let me advise you

Sir John.

By my soul, I'll break your head, if you begin to advise, Sharply.

SCENE VII.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

By this good day, I never was in such a humour for giving advice in my life.

Sir John.

You are ever so when you are drunk, you dog; tho' you can't speak a sentence of common sense when you are sober.

Sharp.

Then 'tis my duty never to be sober; for I find myself at this minute as wise as any oracle that ever was born, and therefore my advice is *pro* and *con* No settlement. Mark what the oracle says.

Sir John.

I do, I do; and to shew what prodigious influence your sage counsel has on me, I intend

Sharp.

Ha, ha, ha! I knew you'd come about; you find I have judgment.

Sir John.

Tho' I never *thought* of doing it before, I shall settle a hundred a-year upon her, for all she's your sister.

Sharp.

What, after all my arguments against it! By this hand of mine then, I'll have nothing to say to it. Mr. Friendly wou'd no more do such a thing than he'd eat fire. Sir John, I say thirty pounds a-year; observe me now; and that only during pleasure, do you mind?

Sir John.

Two hundred a-year, by the Lord! and that settled irrevocably, since you provoke me to it.

Sharp.

Mercy upon me! Well, don't be too hasty now, Sir John, in this affair, but think a few days, and consult

Sir John.

Burn you! whom should I consult?

Sharp.

Mr. Frie no, not Mr. Friendly, I don't mean him but argue, and think, and reason with yourself *Sir John.*

You know I always take your advice, and therefore it shall be done directly.

Sharp.

What, not to night, Sir John; you are not bewitch'd sure.

Sir John.

Sharply depart in a whole skin, and take a walk to Mr. Bustle's, you'll find him in his chambers at this hour.

SCENE VII.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sharp.

Won't next week do as well, Sir John?

Sir John.

Utter one word more, and I break every bone in your body. The thing shall be done now, immediately, this identical night, and I'll surprise my Lady Woodall with it to-morrow. I'll write a line to my lawyer, and you shall carry it, to shew you of what importance you are. So come to me in half-an-hour; in the mean while, go and sleep yourself sober, most oraculous Sharply.

[Exit Sir John.

Sharp.

Ha, ha, ha, ha! thou incorrigible coxcomb! thou empty, vain, bragging sot! whose greatest boast is the being a rascal, whilst in reality your greatest vice is being a fool.

[Exit Sharply.

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

[Friendly's House.]

Enter Wellford and Mrs. Friendly.

Well.

I wish Mr. Friendly were returned, tho' I expect nothing but a confirmation of Sir John's marriage; but any thing is better than suspense.

Mrs. Fr.

I declare and vow, Captain, I am as restless, and as unsettled, and as perturbed, as I may say, on poor Emily's account; but Mr. Friendly will come at the truth, depend upon it he will. I remember just such an affair once, it was the most dark intricate business, and so tedious; I'll tell you the whole story You must know

Well. [Aside.

Oh! thank my stars, here's Friendly come to relieve me.]

SCENE II.

Enter Friendly.

Mrs. Fr.

I'll tell you another time, Captain. Well, my dear, what news?

Fr.

'Tis even as Sir John said; he is actually married. I have found out the person who was present.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. Fr.
And he own'd it to you?

Fr.
He scrupled at first, but finding I was let into the secret, he confirmed every thing that Sir John told me. I am heartily sorry for it for Emily's sake. Have you seen her this morning, Wellford?

Well.
Not yet; but I purpose presently going to take my leave of her; for I am determined to set out this night in order to join my regiment; and if nothing happens to change my fortune, why then

Fr.
What then, man, thou wilt not hang thyself on a willow!

Mrs. Fr.
Heaven forbid! you have more grace than to do so, I hope.

Well.
I hope so too, Madam; but I shall be but little solicitous to preserve a life, that without her will be a burden.

Mrs. Fr.
I declare and protest I am so grieved for you I am ready to cry perfectly; but who knows what may happen? Emily may still change her mind.

Well.
Oh! I have not the least expectation of that; one thing however let me request of you both before I go.

Fr.
What is it, Wellford? you know you may command us.

Well.
That you will take Emily under your protection. To what must she be exposed in such a world as this? young and beautiful as she is an orphan without fortune Let me not have the grief to add, without friends too.

Fr.
You need not doubt my tenderness for her.

Well.
Will you, my dear Mrs. Friendly, be a mother to my Emily?

Mrs. Fr.
Will I! my own daughter shall not be more welcome to me, I assure you, Mr. Wellford. I protest I am so troubled; I never was more troubled in my life.

Well.
I beg pardon for thus distressing you. We'll talk no more on the subject; the few hours I have to stay ought not to be spent in fruitless vexation.

Fr.
A few hours sometimes produces strange revolutions, especially in a woman's mind Emily's may alter.

The Dupe, a comedy

Well.

Oh! you don't know her as well as I do.

Fr.

Well, I'll not oppose you, only beg for the present you'll clear up your brow a little. I have a mind to have some mirth with Sir John this morning, which shall however only be a prelude to a more serious scene. I shall go to him presently, and pretending not to believe a syllable in regard to his marriage, I will, by way of prevention, lay open all Mrs. Etherdown's conduct.

Well.

This may entertain you, Friendly; but what is it to me?

Mrs. Fr.

I wish, my dear, it was consistent for me to go with you, that I might help you to talk to him properly.

Fr.

Oh! you shall have an opportunity: I find he is possessed with a belief that Emily has been inveigled away thro' mine and my wife's means.

Mrs. Fr.

Our means, my dear? Why, can he suppose

Fr.

Ay; but when he finds that his own dear Bab is at the bottom of it, I'll answer for it, that my Lady Woodall will be turn'd off with disgrace.

Well.

What does that signify now? She has done all the mischief she could already.

Mrs. Fr.

For my part, I think it will be doing an act of charity to rid Sir John of such a notorious body.

Well.

No doubt, Madam, it is a christian office to part a man and his wife.

Mrs. Fr.

From *such* a wife I think it is, Mr. Wellford.

Fr.

Right, my dear, Wellford is out of humour, and wou'd pervert our meaning. Leave the management of the business to me; I think I shall entertain you.

Well.

I fancy not; but take your own way. You'll excuse me; I must go and give orders about my journey, and then I'll come, and bid Emily adieu.

Fr.

Perhaps you don't go, Wellford.

The Dupe, a comedy

Well.

Certainly, Friendly.

[Exit Wellford.]

Mrs. Fr.

Poor man! I vow I pity him. If you are going to Sir John's, my dear, I'll step up stairs to Emily.

Fr.

Ay; go and comfort the sweet girl.

[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE III.

Changes to Sir John's. Mrs. Etherdown at her Toilet, Rose attending.

Mrs. Eth.

A penurious wretch! two hundred a year, and his estate as many thousand!

Rose.

You may thank your stars you have got so much, Madam. I reckon Mrs. Friendly has blazed your marriage all over the town, for here have been I don't know how many people with their bills this morning already. Here's a comfortable breakfast for him.

[Rose takes out a parcel of papers.]

Mrs. Eth.

They are sent in by my own direction, lay them down there. I now only want to provoke him to part with me, but it shall be his own act and deed.

Rose.

Ay, for then, I suppose, he must give you a separate maintenance.

Mrs. Eth.

Right; for if you are faithful, nothing can be proved against me; and then you and I, Rose, will live together, and so enjoy ourselves.

Rose.

Ay, that will be charming.

Mrs. Eth.

Did you order the jeweller to call?

Rose.

I did, Ma'am; he will be here presently.

The Dupe, a comedy

SCENE IV.

Enter Sir John, speaking as he comes in.

Sir John.

Bab, Bab, my Bab! What, what, what have we got here? What's all this bedazzening for? Patch'd! and painted *too*, I believe, by my soul!

Mrs. Eth.

Sir John, you will oblige me, if for the future you will knock at the door before you come in. *Sir John.*

Hey! knock at the door! it was not that you said, I hope?

Mrs. Eth.

It is not manners to come so abruptly into a lady's dressing-room; 'tis not indeed, Sir John. And let me beseech you not to be so vulgarly familiar. Lady Woodall hereafter, if you please. *Sir John.*

Rose, can you tell what ails your mistress?

Rose.

There's nothing ails my lady, that I know of, Sir.

Sir John.

No! Why but, Bab?

Mrs. Eth.

Bab, again! In two words, Sir John, I expect to be treated with a little more ceremony. *Sir John.*

Hey day, mad, by my soul! fit for Bedlam! This comes of my owning her! I must take her down a peg or so. Get you out of the room.

[Exit Rose.]

I gave you a paper this morning; a little parchment, you know; a settlement on you, Bab. [I'll take it from her, by the Lord. *Aside.*]

Mrs. Eth.

Well, Sir! what then?

Sir John.

Why, there was a mistake committed in the drawing of it up; let me have it again, that I may get it rectify'd.

Mrs. Eth.

I have n't it about me, Sir John.

[Enter Rose.]

Rose.

Here's Mr. Brilliant, Madam.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Eth.*
Bid him come in. Sir *John.*

Mr. Brilliant! who the d l's he?

Rose.
My lady's jeweller, Sir.

Sir *John.*

My lady's jeweller, quotha? We'l, I'll treat you with a ring, since you put me in mind of it.

[*Enter Jeweller.*]

Mrs. *Eth.*
Servant, Mr. Brilliant What have got there?

Jew.
I made bold to bring your ladyship a few things, that I fancy will please you.

Mrs. *Eth.*
Let's see.

Jew.
Here's a pair of ear-rings will come cheap; I can let your ladyship have them for two hundred and eighty pound.

Mrs. *Eth.*
Baubles! How do you like, Sir John? Sir *John.*

'Pshaw! If you have got ever a neat diamond hoop, of about nine or ten guineas, my wife may be a purchaser.

Jew.
None so low as that, Sir; I have from fifteen to twenty will your ladyship please to look at these?

Sir *John.*

No, no; you have nothing here that we want.

Jew.
I have brought a bill, according to your orders, Madam.

Mrs. *Eth.*
Give it to Sir John. Sir *John.*

I have no occasion for it, Sir; I suppose I can furnish myself at any other shop as well as at yours.

[*Throws down the bill, without looking at it.*]

Mrs. *Eth.*
That's no reason you shou'd not pay him, Sir John. Sir *John.*

The Dupe, a comedy

Pay him! for what?

Mrs. *Eth.*

A few trifles that I have had of him.

Jew.

You'll find my charges very reasonable, Sir.

Sir *John.*

Well, well, Sir, you may carry your trinkets away.

Jew.

If Sir John does n't like the jewels, madam, I shall be very ready to take them again, with some allowance. Mrs.

Eth.

Sir, I shall keep them and Sir John will pay you for them another time Next week you shall have your money.

Jew.

It's very well, Madam.

[*Exit Jeweller.*

Sir *John.*

So Bab! egad, this was a good bold push and you really thought I was to be drawn in to buy you some of these gym-cracks!

Mrs. *Eth.*

No, no; I know you too well for that; but I think you ought to be ashamed not to pay your honest debts. Sir *John.*

Debts!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ay, there are all the people's bills. Sir *John.*

Bills!

[*He takes them up.*]

Mrs. *Eth.*

And vastly reasonable they are, in my mind I don't suppose the whole [*He examines them.*] amounts to above fifteen hundred pound You find I have not been extravagant, Sir John. Sir *John.*

Why, what! you don't mean, I suppose, that these are debts!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Real debts contracted by me your lawful wife. Sir *John.*

And that I am to pay them! you don't mean that?

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Eth.*

Undoubtedly who else shou'd pay a woman's debts, but her husband? Sir *John.*

And I am *your* husband, and you are *my* wife; and all these are real, actual debts, you say?

Mrs. *Eth.*

All reality, substantial truth, as you will find to your cost Ha, ha, ha! the farce is at an end between us; and you will find me quite a different creature from what you supposed, I assure you.

Sir John. [*Stands and stares at her.*]

Why why why what the devil are you? a woman or a fiend?

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ha, ha, ha! a woman, a woman of spirit, a woman of fashion, a woman of pleasure, expence, profusion, luxury! what do you think of me now? Sir *John.*

Why, you are an imp of hell, I believe; where's your sawcer eyes, and your cloven feet and, and, and, and your horns, pray?

Mrs. *Eth.*

Oh! I leave *them* for you, my dear Sir John. Sir *John.*

Dear! damnable!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Why, do you fancy I could ever have any regard for such a *thing* as you are? Sir *John.*

Curse me, but I have a good mind to to

Mrs. *Eth.*

To beat me, I hope: ha, ha, ha! do, at your peril! Who is it that you threaten with your anger? Do you take me for the tame fool I have appeared all this while? And do you fancy I'll submit to your absurd humours, merely for a maintenance? No, no, Sir; let me tell you, I shall enter upon a new system; I must have my separate purse, separate chariot, separate bed, my morning concerts, routs, visiting days and if you expect I should live with you Sir *John.*

Live with me! fire and sulphur! I'd as soon I'll lock you up in a dungeon feed you on bread and water bastinado you!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Ha, ha, ha, ha! Sir *John.*

Starve you make you lie on straw

Mrs. *Eth.*

I despise your menaces: I am your wife, acknowledged in the face of the world; and I'll make you know it too. Sir *John.*

I'll turn you out of my doors; expose you, brand you! confound me if I don't. And that scoundrel Sharply, I'll kick him out of my house too.

SCENE IV.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Eth.*

Impotent threatening! we both laugh at you. Sir *John.*

I'll make you an example to all the

[*Enter Servant.*]

Serv.

Mr. Friendly, Sir, is come to wait on you.

Sir *John.*

I won't see him, Sirrah.

Serv.

He's coming up, Sir.

Sir *John.*

You dog, how dare you let him in?

[*Enter Friendly.*]

Fr.

Good-day to you, Sir *John.*

Sir *John.*

So, Sir.

Fr.

Why so gruff, Sir *John*? What's the matter now?

Sir *John.*

Poh! nothing at all.

Fr.

Nothing at all! that can't be; you have too much sense and too much temper to be out of humour at nothing.

Sir *John.*

'Pshaw it is next to nothing only a little foolish debate here, between Madam and me.

Fr.

A *debate* between you!

Sir *John.*

Ay, she has been playing the wag a little with me this morning, that's all. What sort of weather is it abroad, Friendly?

SCENE IV.

The Dupe, a comedy

Fr.

Nay, Sir John, I am afraid there's more in this; you don't use to wear so angry a brow.

Sir John.

'Pshaw I tell you I am not in the least angry: will you drink a dish of chocolate, Friendly?

Fr.

Not any, Sir John. And you, Madam, seem extremely ruffled.

Mrs. Eth.

Mr. Friendly, I'll appeal to you, whether Sir John uses me well: he has refused to pay a debt for me this morning, and has been so peevish about it!

Fr.

Oh fy, Sir John! there I must take your lady's part; so prudent a woman as Lady Woodall! such an oeconomist! 'tis but a trifle, I'll lay my life now.

Mrs. Eth.

But seven hundred pound, I assure you. *Sir John.*

Seven hundred devils! don't believe her a word she says, man.

Fr.

Seven hundred pound! that's a good round sum! but I suppose my lady has made some pretty little purchase now, for your use; and you are so testy because you did not do it yourself Come, own, is not that the case now? What is it, Madam? a bit of land in the country? or a house in town?

Sir John.

Poh! split your enquiries Why, there's not a syllable of truth in the thing.

Mrs. Eth.

Nay, Sir John, you can't deny that you refused the man payment; the jewels, I am sure, are cheap of the money; and if I am not to appear like other people of my rank, I might as well be Mrs. Etherdown still as lady Woodall.

Fr.

Oh! what it was for trinkets then? humph; to be sure, Sir John, you ought to pay your wife's debts; and in my opinion

Sir John.

Rot your opinion, Sir! keep it to yourself 's curse, you are so inquisitive, and so troublesome, one wou'd take you for your wife that had got into breeches.

Mrs. Eth.

Lud! Sir John, how can you be so ill bred? you have not the least idea of good manners: You can't imagine, how rude he was to *me* just now.

Fr.

Rude to your lady! Oh monstrous! and to such a meek woman too!

SCENE IV.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sir *John*.

S'death, Sir, I'll be angry when I please; and reconciled when I please; without asking your leave.

Fr.

Come, come, if my lady has offended you, she'll ask your pardon; she's all submission and obedience. Mrs. *Eth.* I ask his pardon! if he had any shame in him, he wou'd down on his knees to ask mine.

Fr.

And she has such little coaxing ways, you know.

Sir *John*.

This is damn'd hard, that a man must be besieged with such impertinence in his own house; prithee, Friendly, mind your own affairs.

Fr.

Come, Sir John, all jesting apart; I will now do the office of a friend by you.

Sir *John*.

Sir, I want none of your offices.

Fr.

Look ye, Sir John, as I did not think you wou'd have persisted in this ridiculous pretence of your being married, I wou'd not, last night, add to the vexation of your niece's being stolen from you, the knowledge of this vile woman's conduct.

Mrs. *Eth.*

You are an officious fellow, Sir; and if this be your business, I desire you will leave my house directly. Sir *John*.

Your house!

Mrs. *Eth.*

Yes, *my house*, Sir.

Fr.

Madam, Madam! this affair is growing too serious: I know Sir John is not married to you; we don't take him for such a fool neither.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Sir, I shall call a servant to shew you the door.

Fr.

I shou'd not wish to expose you, bad as you are, if I were not afraid, that my friend's utter disgrace wou'd be the consequence of his suffering you to pass for his wife.

Mrs. *Eth.*

Are not you ashamed, Sir John, to stand by, and listen to his scurrility? Sir *John*.

The Dupe, a comedy

E'gad, I think you seem to be a match for him.

Fr.

Sir John, this woman, I speak it before her face, has betray'd and deceiv'd you in every article.

Mrs. Eth.

I scorn all that your malice can invent.

Fr.

But I can prove it, Madam: nay, what's more, that it was by your contrivance Emily was spirited away by that rascal Sharply.

Sir John.

Ha! ha! ha! Emily spirited away by Sharply!

Fr.

Yes, Sir John: that scoundrel, that vile tool, that abettor in all *her* iniquity, has conveyed your niece away, and married her by this time, for ought I know.

Mrs. Eth.

Ha, ha, ha! much good may do him with her. *Sir John.*

What, in the name of Beelzebub, *is* all this?

Fr.

'Tis all as I tell you, Sir John; this precious hypocrite here, you see, does n't deny it.

Mrs. Eth.

Sir John, you are the greatest poltroon in Europe, if you don't fight him for abusing your wife thus. *Sir John.*

Wife! the vengeance! I don't believe you *are* my wife, if you go to that; I – I never was married get out of my house this minute.

Mrs. Eth.

Ay, deny me, if you dare: I am Lady Woodall in spite of you, all the town knows it now. Thanks to your wife, the publick cryer cou'd not have proclaimed it more effectually.

Fr.

Come, courage, Sir John; don't let the termagant frighten you, speak boldly and say at once, she is not your wife.

Mrs. Eth.

Ay do, encourage him to expose himself, *honourable, honest* Mr. Friendly! *Sir John.*

O nz! I believe she is *not* my wife.

Fr.

Believe! are not you certain of it, Sir John?

Sir John.

SCENE IV.

The Dupe, a comedy

I wish I was; but I am *not* certain, there's the curse of it.

Fr.

What! married to such a creature as this?

Mrs. Eth.

Yes and this creature will force you, ay, *you* Sir, in spite of your turbulence, to the full proof of what he has acknowledged to you. Sir *John*.

Get you out of my doors, thou fiend!

Mrs. Eth.

Oh! it is mighty well, Sir! remember you turn me out of your doors! yes, I *will* quit your house, and leave you to the scorn and laughter of mankind. When next you hear from me, it shall be with an authority that neither you nor your friend there, that meddling, cynical, *informing* coxcomb shall dare to dispute; and so, with the utmost contempt, I turn my back upon you both.

Fr.

Is this really so, Sir John?

[Exit Mrs. Etherdown.

Sir John.

Really so, Sir John! what the d l signifies your coming with your queries now? cou'd n't you have told me this before?

Fr.

Before what? don't you say, you have been married above this twelvemonth?

Sir John.

Death and fire, Sir! it is enough to distract a man to hear such things That woman is turned into a fury, I think It's all magic and witchcraft.

Fr.

I am very sorry, Sir John

Sir John.

Burn your sorrow, Sir, keep it to yourself Unfaithful to me! Friendly, this is damn'd odd of you to say so.

Fr.

True, believe me, Sir John.

Sir John.

And Emily ran away with by Sharply!

The Dupe, a comedy

Fr.

Fact and by your wife's contrivance.

Sir John.

Oh the infernal sorceress! but it can't be, man! the thing's impossible! the fellow's almost an idiot!

Fr.

Oh, you are as much deceived in that as in the rest I tell you, he has own'd it all.

Sir John.

A dog! but I have one comfort left, the rascal's bit in his hopes; he thought Emily was to be my heir I have a son, tho' his mother may be a But I don't believe a word you say, Friendly Do now, own that it's all a confounded lye of your own inventing; do, dear Friendly.

Fr.

I wish it were for your sake; but it's all too true, Sir John; and what is still worse, Sharply *will* possess your estate in spite of you. That boy which has been palm'd upon you for your own, is not even your wife's; but some brat brought in on purpose to induce you to own your marriage.

Sir John.

Death, Sir! do you take me for a stock, or an idiot! that you attempt to make me swallow such impossibilities?

Fr.

Read this paper, Sir John 'Tis Sharply's full confession of the whole plot Rose, who was her mistress's agent in the conveyance of the child, (tho' she herself was ignorant of the design) in her days of fondness for Sharply let him into the cheat You will find the whole account there, when you are calm enough to peruse it.

Sir John.

And the villain knowing this, has married Emily! I'll have him hang'd as sure as fate he swings for this That's a comfort He has stolen an heiress, *knowing* her to be such. And that wicked she imp I'll be divorc'd from her. You can prove her an adultress, you say? You shall prove it, and I'll be divorc'd that's another comfort.

Fr.

There, I'm afraid, Sir John, we shall find a difficulty; for, tho' we have the strongest presumptive proof in the world against her, yet the law requires more in those cases.

Sir John.

Sir, it shall have all, and more than it requires.

Fr.

There is not the least doubt of your being (I am sorry to say) a cuckold, Sir John; yet the crime can't be proved against your wife.

Sir John

Furies, Sir! how dare you call me a cuckold? If any thing would make me fight you You are a barbarous

The Dupe, a comedy

unworthy fellow, so you are.

Fr.

Why is not your wife ?

Sir John.

Wife! Uph uph Oh! Friendly, that word is worse than ten thousand daggers.

Fr.

Now, Sir John, you see the consequence of your foolish as well as criminal affectation, of wanting to pass for a worse man than you are.

Sir John. [Walking about.]

The fiends! the vipers! the monsters!

Fr.

Do you think that a woman who could submit to live with you, under the infamous imputation of being kept, could have any principles?

Sir John.

Hell-hounds! robbers! and murderers!

Fr.

Or that a low rascal, like Sharply, the mean flatterer of your follies, and the real practiser of your imaginary vices, whose sole business in your family was to prey on your fortune, and make a jest of your person, was to be bound by any ties of gratitude?

Sir John.

Scorpions! serpents! furies!

Fr.

Or could you expect that an inexperienced young creature like Emily could be trusted in the house with two such wretches as I have described, and not be undone?

Sir John.

Oh! Friendly, Friendly, Friendly!

Fr.

Do you see your folly?

Sir John.

My folly! my purgatory! my hell! Don't let your wife come near me, nor Sharply, nor Emily, nor my own everlasting torment I'll cut my own throat My estate shall be forfeited I'd be burnt at a stake, rather than let them have it!

The Dupe, a comedy

Fr.

Will you at last submit to be advised by me?

Sir John.

What can advice do now? Am not I married to a strumpet?

Fr.

Turn her off.

Sir John.

Suppose I do, I can't marry again, can't hope for an heir, and my estate will go to a scoundrel, that has ruined my poor niece. Oh! Friendly, I am punished for the sins of my youth!

Fr.

Indeed, Sir John, I pity you.

Sir John.

S'death! have I lived to be pitied too! Sir, you sha'nt pity me; I won't be pitied by e'er a man alive. And now I am recovered from my surprise, you shall see the justice I will do myself on that crocodile and her brother. Who's there!

Enter a Servant.

Bid your mistress come hither.

Fr.

Her brother! Why Sharply's no more her brother than he is mine; he has acknowledged that he was only a creature of her's entertained under that notion to impose on you.

Sir John.

Mercy on me! mercy on me!

Enter a Servant.

Serv.

Sir, my lady is just gone out, and said she should not return.

Sir John.

What's to be done now, Friendly?

Fr.

Why now, Sir John, I think we must see what can be done with Sharply; if you'll step with me to my house, I'll send for a friend of mine, a man deeply skilled in the law, who we'll consult on the occasion.

Sir John.

The Dupe, a comedy

Ha! good; I'll do it, Friendly. I'll hamper him, by the mass!

Fr.

Ay, Sir John, we'll teach him to run away with heiresses!

Sir John.

Come along, Friendly; I'll hamper him.

[Exeunt.]

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Room in Friendly's House. Emily sitting alone reading. Enter to her Wellford. She rises.

Well.

Forgive me, Madam, for thus intruding; but I am now come to take my leave of you, to bid you farewell, perhaps for ever.

Em.

My good wishes, Sir, shall always attend you.

Well.

And is that all, Madam?

Em.

My prayers too, for your happiness.

Well.

Unkind Emily! we met but yesterday, after a long, long absence; and is it *thus* we part to day?

Em.

How did we meet yesterday? Wellford, remember that.

Well.

I thought, Madam, that a few rash words which jealous love forc'd me to utter might have been forgiven.

Em.

Think how you reproached me!

Well.

I was in hopes my sorrow for having offended you might

Em.

How you scorn'd, and left me!

ACT V.

The Dupe, a comedy

Well.

Since my crime is too great for pardon, Madam, I can plead no more in my defence.

Em.

I could have born with patience every misfortune but that the loss of parents, friends, fortune!

Well.

And can you, Emily, let that stubborn cruelty banish for ever from your presence a man who loves you as I do? Cold unrelenting creature! but I have done Fare—you–well

Em.

Wellford! I forgive you.

Well.

Speak that again!

Em.

I pardon your unkindness to me; and now we'll part like friends.

Well.

Part! did you say, part! sooner with my eyes, my life, my very soul! No, Emily, no; since you forgive me, we never more will part!

Em.

Indeed we must.

Well.

By heaven, we won't! What is there now wanting to compleat our felicity?

Em.

Ah! Wellford your ardor makes you forget it now; but will you always speak thus, when the burden of a wife makes you feel the want of fortune?

Well.

For shame, my love, what a thought is that to mix with our new-kindled flames? No, Emily, the world contains not any thing that I would not give in exchange for you! why do you hang your head?

Em.

Wellford, this generosity of yours has quite conquered my resentment, but it shall not overcome my resolution. My heart is yours for ever. Were I mistress of a crown, you should share it with me; but you shall not be partaker of my poverty: And now fare you well at once.

[Exit Emily.]

Well.

Barbarous creature!

The Dupe, a comedy

SCENE II.

Enter Mrs. Friendly.

Mrs. Fr.

What! not reconciled yet? Well, you lovers have such preposterous notions!

Well.

Oh! Madam, all my hopes are now at an end! Emily has forgiven me, yet peremptorily refuses to be mine

Mrs. Fr.

Well, that is to me now so unaccountable! Where is she? let me give her a lecture.

Well.

She's just now retired to her chamber. I thank you for your good intentions; but as I know your attempt will be in vain, I will not wait the issue.

Mrs. Fr.

You won't go till you see Mr. Friendly, sure?

Well.

You'll pardon me, Madam; my own thoughts have rendered me unfit for any other company. I shall set out immediately on my journey, and so my good old friend, adieu.

[Exit Wellford.]

Mrs. Fr.

Now, as I live and breathe, I'll go to Emily, and rattle her for this!

[Exit Mrs. Friendly.]

SCENE III.

Changes to the Street before Friendly's House. As Wellford comes out, enter Sir John and Friendly.

Fr.

Where now, Wellford?

Well.

I am this minute going to leave town, Friendly; and am glad I have met you to bid you good-bye.

Fr.

I have something to say to you; you must not go yet.

Well.

Indeed you must excuse me.

Fr. *[Aside.]*

Sir John, do you insist on his staying; this is the gentleman I mentioned to you.]

The Dupe, a comedy

Sir John. [Aside.

What the d l, a lawyer in militaries! he holds well; but I have been so masqueraded, that e'gad I am surprised at nothing I see] Pray, Sir, step in with us, I have material business with you; my name is Woodall.

Well.

I'll attend you, Sir. [Friendly, what can this mean? *Aside to Friendly.*]

Sir John. [Aside.

Mind that, Friendly. A whimsical dog I suppose.]

[They all enter Friendly's House.

SCENE IV.

Mrs. Friendly and Emily.

Em.

But, dear Madam, would you have had me, thus situated, throw myself on a young man who has nothing but his sword to carve him out a maintenance? Suppose we should have a family?

Mrs. Fr.

Why, that's true too; and to be sure you would have one; I was not near so young as you when I married, and yet I have had nine children, no less I assure you, all alive, and christened.

Em.

Well, Madam, and does n't this

Mrs. Fr.

I have but three left now; the other six are better provided for, and very thankful I am that they are so.

Em.

Why, does n't this strengthen my argument *against* marrying Wellford? You know he is liberal to a fault, he loves pleasure too

Mrs. Fr.

Young men to be sure will be gay; I remember Mr. Friendly, when he was a young man, why he

Em.

But, good Madam, you will not hear *my* reasons against a thing that you urge me to comply with, and yet are offering strong ones against it yourself.

Mrs. Fr.

Lord, child, I have not said a syllable either for or against it! To be sure, Wellford is as pretty a young man, and as good a young man I have known him from his childhood; Mr. Friendly had the care of him when he was a boy; my Harry and he are just of an age. I wou'd be glad he were married to a princess for that matter; but what must be will be; and as you are a prudent young creature, you may have your reasons, and so

Em.

May have! Why, Madam, I have been endeavouring to give them to you, if you would hear them.

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Fr.*

But I must needs say, if your rejecting him should drive the poor young man to desperation; for to tell you the truth he look'd so when he went away, that he made my very heart ake.

Em.

Is he gone?

Mrs. *Fr.*

Gone! ay, to be sure, I thought I had told you so before.

Em.

Poor Wellford!

Mrs. *Fr.*

You might well say poor indeed, if you had seen him. I warrant you could sit down now, and cry your eyes out for vexation. This comes of being positive; but all's for the best, and so, my dear, you must think no more of it, but be merry and chearful, and here will be Mr. Friendly home presently, and we shall hear all about Sir John. I vow here he is! and Sir John with him, as I live!

Em.

My uncle!

SCENE V.

Enter Friendly and Sir John.

Fr.

Now, Sir John, are you satisfied?

Sir John.

How came you here, Emily?

Mrs. *Fr.*

That's a very extraordinary question, Sir John; but I'll tell you. *Sir John.*

Hang me if you shall. I'd rather remain in ignorance till doom's-day. Let the girl speak for herself. Was it Sharply who carried you away from my house?

Em.

It was, Sir; and by Lady Woodall's contrivance: I am sorry to add, she had reasons for it, very disgraceful to herself and you.

Mrs. *Fr.*

There's for you, Sir John; very disgraceful reasons you find a blessed bargain you have made of it truly to go to bring such a woman to be a mistress of your family, and an aunt to your poor niece, and a mother to

Fr.

The Dupe, a comedy

My dear, don't teaze him.

Sir *John*.

Answer me one question, Emily, and speak truth: Did that same lady of mine ever entertain a gallant or so, in my absence?

Em.

She did, indeed.

Mrs. *Fr*.

Several, I warrant.

Em.

But, Sir, out of respect to you, I now wish the story to be buried in silence.

Fr.

Why, she has turned out a very tygress, and behaved worse since he has own'd her, than she did before.

Sir *John*.

I have turned her off tho': why don't you tell that too, Friendly?

Mrs. *Fr*.

I am heartily glad of it. I knew it wou'd come to this.

Em.

I am sorry, Sir, that matters are gone so far, for the sake of your child.

Sir *John*.

Child! why, Friendly says it's none of mine.

Mrs. *Fr*.

There I knew it. Oh! Sir John, who wou'd have thought you cou'd have been made such a fool of! If you had taken Mr. Friendly's advice; but you were *so* obstinate, and *so* refractory, and thought yourself *so* wise
Sir *John*.

Prithee, Madam, hold your tongue. Friendly, have you no command in your own house?

Mrs. *Fr*.

And pray whose *is* this child, Sir John, that you are to father? Sir *John*.

Your husband's, I believe.

Mrs. *Fr*.

My husband, Sir John! he have an intrigue! Mr. Friendly have a correspondence with a loose woman! Sir *John*.

Why not? where wou'd be the wonder, pray?

The Dupe, a comedy

Mrs. *Fr.*

Sir John, you are very uncivil, let me tell you; and if you make nothing of such wickedness Sir *John*.

Heaven help me! *my* wickedness is a lasting topic with these good sort of gentlewomen. Pray, Friendly, desire your wife not to abuse me.

Fr.

My dear, you wrong Sir John; he is very far from being wicked; he has indeed been grossly deceived.

Sir *John*.

Don't provoke me, Friendly, don't!

Fr.

Provoke you, Sir John! does the vindicating your character provoke you?

Sir *John*.

My character, Sir, is very well known; I want none of your palliations if I have been an idle fellow, what's that to any man? perhaps I may reform, if I take it into my head.

Fr.

As you please for that, Sir John. In the mean while, you must give me leave to bring in a friend of mine.

[*Exit Friendly.*

Em.

Whom does Mr. Friendly mean? do you know, Madam? Mrs. *Fr.*

Not I, I protest, my dear. Sir *John*.

Wickedness, and wickedness! I must be twitted forsooth every where I go with my wickedness!

Mrs. *Fr.*

I can't say but I am very sorry for you too, Sir John; you have been sadly abused, no one can deny that; but many an honest man has been made a fool of before now. Sir *John*.

O ds, Madam, who do you call an honest man?

Mrs. *Fr.*

Why, to do you justice, Mr. Friendly says, there is no great harm in you after all. Sir *John*.

Curse me, Madam, but you are very absurd, and I won't bear this!

Mrs. *Fr.*

Nay, Sir John, don't be in a passion; if you are a Dupe, it was not *I* that made you one. Sir *John*.

Dupe! Dupe! 's—death, do you know what you are saying? do you know the meaning of that word, that you use as familiarly indeed, as if as if you knew what you said?

Mrs. *Fr.*

Yes, Sir John, I do know the meaning of it; you see I do; it means being made a fool of; and it means that you are

The Dupe, a comedy

a weak man, and a credulous man, and one that is easily overseen, and one that does n't know the difference between right and wrong, and one that thinks Sir *John*.

That thinks you are possessed with ten thousand talking devils; and that I had rather be buried alive than listen to you.

SCENE VI.

Enter Friendly and Wellford.

Fr.

How now, Sir John! quarrelling with my wife!

Sir John.

By my soul there's no bearing her, Friendly: I wish you were as well rid of her as I am of my plague.

Mrs. Fr.

Your plague! I scorn the comparison, Sir John; and Lord, Mr. Wellford, are you here!

Em.

I thought he had been gone!

Fr.

Why, I luckily intercepted him in his flight, and have, within this quarter of an hour, unravelled a mystery to Sir John, and made him acquainted with this gentleman.

Sir John.

Well, Captain, are you disposed to marry, notwithstanding the sad example you have before you, in me and poor Friendly here?

Mrs. Fr.

Poor Friendly! Sir John!

Fr.

Don't worry him, my dear.

Well.

Sir John, if this lady can be prevailed on to accept of me

Sir John.

What do you say, Emily? Friendly has given me a good account of this young fellow; and since he is willing to take you without a fortune, I have no objection; I'll hinder no body from playing the fool that has a mind to it.

Em.

Mr. Wellford, Sir, already knows my determination on that subject.

Sir John.

The Dupe, a comedy

You won't have him then? a spirited wench, by my soul; I like her for that too. How puzzled she looks tho', Friendly!

Fr.

Come, I'll explain: Emily, you are your uncle's sole heir. Sir John is convinced that his supposed son is an impostor, brought in by Mrs. Etherdown, to answer her own ends. You will pardon me for making this experiment on your firmness of temper; and you, Wellford, for thus trying the sincerity of your love. Sir *John*.

So now, there's a surprize, you! egad, I think I carried on the joke very well.

Em.

Uncle, is it possible this can be true?

Sir John.

Faith I don't know whether it is possible or not; but I believe it to be fact. It has been a strange damn'd whimsical affair, from beginning to end.

Mrs. Fr.

Why, I am quite in amaze, Mr. Friendly!

Fr.

Softly, my dear.

Em.

Wellford, here's my hand; and since my uncle approves

Sir John.

Ay, ay, with all my heart; and since I am my own master again, I'll try what living a little virtuously will do.

Fr.

Well said, Sir John, resolved like a wise and a worthy man; and let me tell you that is a better character than that of a fool and a rake; the first of which titles was all you got by affecting the last.

Sir John.

None of your grave saws, Friendly; the wisest man may be deceived, if he deals with greater knaves than himself.

Em.

Uncle, if you will permit me to return to your house, I shall endeavour by the most dutiful behaviour

Sir John.

Ay, ay, you are all fine promisers. I'll consider of it; but let nobody interpose, you know I hate that. I'll have a bonfire to-night, and get drunk, for joy that I am rid of my wife.

Fr.

And here's Wellford and I will get drunk for joy with you.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sir *John*.

Oh! brave Friendly! Ah! you rogue, you wou'd not let me be good, if I had a mind to it! but I will in spite of your teeth; I'll let you see I can be just what I please.

Fr.

There's no contending with you, Sir John, once you are resolved; that I know.

Sir *John*.

You allow *that*, I believe, Friendly; a determin'd dog, *that* you'll grant.

Fr.

Here are two criminals without, Sir John, that are afraid to appear in your presence; but since they have been so instrumental in detecting your wife's baseness

Sir *John*.

Oh! you mean Sharply and Rose as precious a brace as ever were unhang'd What wou'd you advise me to do with them, Friendly? I can transport them, at least.

Mrs. *Fr.*

And I think you would do right, Sir John. Sir *John*.

You do! then to let you see I am a better Christian than you, I will forgive them both. What do you say to me now, Friendly?

Fr.

Faith, Sir John, I think you are even with her. Shall I call them? Who's there?

[Enter a Servant, Friendly whispers to him.]

Sir *John*.

Ay, do poor paultry devils not worth my resentment; tho' that Sharply is a sad rascal too, for I was always kind to him.

Fr.

And he has repaid your kindness, Sir John; for if it had not been for him, you would not be the free man that you now are.

Sir *John*.

Faith, that's true *[Rose and Sharply come to the door.]* Come in, you sneaking scoundrel you.

[Sharply enters.]

What, my oracle! my adviser! Hey, how's this? what the plague's become of your fool's face?

Sharp.

That was but a mask, Sir John, which I wore occasionally, for your entertainment, but have now no farther occasion for it.

SCENE VI.

The Dupe, a comedy

Sir John.

The d I ow'd me a spite, and he has paid me with a vengeance; so I am not angry with *you*, I don't think you worth it. [*Aside.* Is not that right, Friendly?]

Fr.

Perfectly. You see how much he's asham'd, poor bashful fellow.

Sir John.

As for you, Rose, you are a poor ignorant wench, and did as your mistress bid you. I suppose you did not think you were doing any great harm, so I forgive you too. [*Aside.* Am I right, Friendly?]

Fr.

Never more so in your life. Come, Mr. Sharply, since Sir John has pardon'd you your crimes against him, the rest of the company must own themselves obliged to you.

Em.

I have promised that he shall not find me ungrateful.

Rose. [*Apart to Emily.*]

Good Madam, if you wou'd but make Mr. Sharply keep his promise to me!

Em.

Did he promise you marriage?

Rose.

He did indeed, Madam, or I am sure I should never

Sir John.

And you want him to keep his word, I hope?

Rose.

Yes, Sir, if you please.

Sir John.

Go, go, you silly slut, you are better as you are. What do you think, Friendly?

Fr.

I think, Sir John, the woman's a fool who subjects herself for life to a man who must despise her.

Sir John.

Right. What do you think, Emily?

Mrs. Fr.

I think, Sir John, the man's a greater fool that ventures to take a woman who he knows to be *Sir John.*

The Dupe, a comedy

Stop, stop, stop; 's death! I have raised a wasp's nest about my own ears What do you think yourself, Sharply?

Sharp.

I think, that having many sins to repent of, Sir John, I'll throw my vows to Mrs. Rose in amongst the rest; but will not impose such a pittance on myself as to fulfil them.

Sir John.

Well said, Sharply. Egad he's no fool after all. Rose, you see the bans are forbid on all sides. No more matrimony, as you love me.

Fr.

No, no; no wedding, Rose.

Well.

By no means, it would spoil both their fortunes.

Fr.

Come, Sir John, if you weigh the good against the bad, you will find that you are arrived at a happy period of your life; for you have, within these four-and-twenty hours, acquired a piece of knowledge that you were ignorant of all your days before.

Sir John.

I have paid devilish dear for my knowledge tho', Friendly, and have learnt nothing by it, but that there is no truth in man or woman.

Fr.

You mistake me, Sir John; the knowledge I mean is that of knowing yourself.

Mrs. Fr.

Ay, Sir John, know yourself, as Mr. Friendly says.

Fr.

And now, Sir John, I give you joy?

Sir John.

Of what, pray?

Fr.

That you have recovered your senses.

Sir John.

I'd rather recover my money tho', by the mass!

Mrs. Fr.

Sir John, as you have lost nothing, but a little money and a bad wife, and this affair has ended so well, I assure you it will give me great satisfaction to relate it in the most particular and circumstantial manner to every body in the world. *Sir John.*

The Dupe, a comedy

Prithee, Friendly, put a padlock on your wife's mouth, and then I shall be glad of her company and yours to dinner.

Mrs. Fr.

And so I am neither to eat nor speak; I thank you for your invitation, Sir John.

Fr.

We'll attend you, and celebrate Wellford's union and your separation together.

Sir John.

Agreed. And to anticipate all Mrs. Friendly can say of me for the remainder of her life, I will here acknowledge that I have been a sot, a fool, a dupe, a most egregious ass; that my wife was an artful wicked strumpet; that Sharply was an hypocritical rascal; Rose a cozening baggage; poor Emily an injured innocence; the Captain there a generous lover; Friendly a zealous honest fellow; his wife a discerning and prudent matron; and for myself, that, after passing through the fiery trial, I am come out (it is to be hoped) a discreet and sober gentleman Now, Madam, have you any thing more to add? I'll lay you fifty pounds, Friendly, she has not another word to say.

Well.

Take up his bett, Friendly, and I'll go your halves.

Fr.

Done, Sir John!

Mrs. Fr.

Sir John! I thought after all the money you had squander'd away, and all you were cheated of, and all the debts you have to pay, and all

Fr.

Well said, my dear; go on

Sir John.

S'death! Friendly, let me off for half my bett.

Mrs. Fr.

No, no, Sir John, I have not half done.

Fr. [Lays his hand on her mouth.]

Peace, peace, my dear! let us devote this day to mirth; and that Sir John may not be out of humour at his own lot, let him reflect how many are in the same predicament with himself, without ever finding it out.

Sir John.

True, Friendly; but I hope I may at least serve as a warning to my brethren.

Taught by example better than by rules,
One dupe expos'd may save an hundred fools.
END of the FIFTH ACT.

SCENE VI.

The Dupe, a comedy

EPILOGUE, By a FRIEND. Spoken by Mrs. CLIVE. [By unknown]

Ladies methinks I hear you all complain,
Lord! here's the talking creature come again!
The men seem frighted for 'tis on record
A prating female will have the last word.
But you're all out; for sure as you're alive,
Not Mrs. Friendly now, I'm Mrs. Clive;
No character from fiction will I borrow,
But if you please, I'll talk again to-morrow.
Then you conclude, from custom long in vogue,
That I come here to speak an Epilogue,
With satyr, humour, spirit, quite refin'd,
Double-entendre too, with wit combin'd,
Not for the ladies but to please the men
All this you guess and now you're out again;
For to be brief, our author bid me say
She tried, but cou'd n't get one to her play.
No Epilogue! why, Ma'am, you'll spoil your treat,
An Epilogue's the cordial after meat;
For when the feast is done, without all question,
They'll want liquors to help them to digestion;
And critics, when they find the banquet light,
Will come next time with better appetite;
So beg your friends to write for faith 'tis hard,
If 'mongst them all you cannot find one bard.
She took the hint Will you, good Sir? or you, Sir?
A sister scribbler! sure you can't refuse her!
Some lawyers try'd not one cou'd make an end on't,
They'd now such work with plaintiff and defendant.
A poet tried, but he alleged for reason,
The Muses were so busy at this season,
In penning libels, politics and satyrs,
They had not leisure for such trifling matters.
What's to be done, she cry'd? can't you endeavour
To say some pretty thing? I know you're clever.
I promis'd but unable to succeed,
Beg you'll accept the purpose for the deed;
Tho' after three long hours in play-house coop'd,
I fear you'll say you've all been finely dup'd.

FINIS.