

Not So Bad As We Seem

Edward Bulwer Lytton

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Not So Bad As We Seem

Edward Bulwer Lytton

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• "DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

NOT SO BAD AS WE SEEM;
OR, MANY SIDES TO A CHARACTER.
A Comedy in Five Acts

Not So Bad As We Seem

ACT I.

Not So Bad As We Seem

SCENE I.

Lord Wilmot's Apartment in St. James's.—A Breakfast-table laid out.

SMART (as he arranges the breakfast-table).

Just on the stroke of twelve, and my Lord not risen. He never wants sleep more than once a week,—but when he *does* sleep, he sleeps as he does every thing else—better than any man in the three kingdoms. Well, he is a merry fine gentleman, to be sure; so kind-hearted and generous; but, lauk, if one judged by his words, and not by his actions, one would say he was the wickedest dog that—Mum!

Enter Lord Wilmot, in his dressing-gown, from side-door.

WILMOT (stretching himself).

"And sleepless lovers just at twelve—awake!" That little fellow Pope hits us off to a hair. Smart, my chocolate. Any duels to-day? I forget—

SMART (looking at his tablets).

No, my Lord, no duels. Only three drums, four routs, five dinners, and six suppers.

WILMOT.

Is that all? Dull day before me. Not worth getting up for. Smart, you have now lived with me six months; pray, what do you think of me?

SMART.

Oh, my Lord, I think there's not another gentleman in the world like your Lordship—

WILMOT (interrupting).

Take care! I discharged your predecessor for flattery! Go on, and let me see how you get out of that dangerous exordium.

SMART.

Yes, my Lord! not a gentleman like you for speaking ill of yourself and doing good to another.

WILMOT.

This knave has been bribed by my enemies to ruin my character. Doing good to another, you scandalous libeller! Am I not renowned from Soho to the Mall as a headlong—immoveable—reckless—phlegmatical—true King of the *Mode*—frigid as Diogenes the Cynic—and fiery as Timour the Tartar? Learn how the wits of our day represent, on the stage, a fine gentleman; and beware how you disparage your master.

[Seats himself.]

SMART (aside).

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What hard words he does give himself! If hard words could break bones, I would not be in his skin for something.

WILMOT.

What is this note? The hand is unknown. Pshaw! the hand of a woman! It must wait with the rest. Ladies' letters don't cool—man's chocolate does. (*Eating.*) The Frenchman implies that a good digestion is the sign of a bad heart. What a heart I must have! Could digest an anvil!

SMART.

I beg pardon, my Lord; but that note was left by the lady herself.

WILMOT (indifferently).

Oh! young and pretty, of course! Heart not moved in the least! Petrified!

SMART.

She wore the mask ladies sometimes wear, when they go out alone; but I don't think she was very young. She seemed in great distress of mind, for when she gave me the letter, her hand trembled so, that—

WILMOT.

Distress, you blockhead; why the deuce did not you say that before?

(Reads.) "I pray you, my Lord, to forgive this intrusion —noticed you calling at the house of Sir Geoffrey Thornside —[Ha!]-seen you walking in the garden with Mistress Lucy, his daughter—[Hum!]-heard you had rescued that young lady from danger—[What gossip!]-many stories have reached me attesting the honour of your character and the kindness of your heart—[Stuff; where's my purse?]-venture with reluctance to entreat you would honour me with a visit; you could render an inestimable service—perform a most benevolent action—[Wonder if there's eno' in the purse!]-for reasons I cannot explain, would not wish your Lordship to be seen entering my house; therefore, if you grant my request, —any hour in the evening, after dusk—beg your Lordship not to mention the contents of this letter—to Sir Geoffrey—his daughter—to any one; strictly confidential—for same reasons, cannot give you my name—must be content with subjoining my address,—Crown and Portcullis, [Note: Numbers were not then assigned to houses, and some, not known by the names of their proprietors, retained their ancient signs.] Deadman's Lane—"

Deadman's Lane! It must be a churchyard, and the writer a ghost! Smart, are you too lively to know a place on this earth or below it—called Deadman's Lane?

SMART.

Yes, my Lord; it is at the back of Sir Geoffrey Thornside's. (*Knock.*) Is your Lordship at home?

WILMOT.

Yes;—see who it is. (*Exit Smart.*) Very strange letter!— in meaning mysterious—in direction funereal. I will call; were it only for the sweet name of Lucy that I kiss here in effigy! Oh, that divine, innocent charming Lucy!

Enter Smart.

SMART.

Mr. Shadowly Softhead.

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WILMOT.

Softhead, my imitator, my double—who cuts his cloth (his father's a clothier) according to the coat of a Lord; and sets his puny constitution against my frame of a Hercules. The best little man in the world!—ambitious to be thought good for nothing;—upset by a wine-glass, and frightened out of his wits by a petticoat!—(*Enter Softhead.*) Ha, Softhead! my Pylades—my second self! *Animæ* —

SOFTHEAD.

Enemy!

WILMOT.

Dimidium meæ.

SOFTHEAD.

Dimi! that's the oath last in fashion, I warrant. (*With a swagger and a slap on the back.*) *Dimidium meæ*, how d'ye do?

WILMOT.

But what a fellow you are! Slunk off last night at the third bottle. I thought you were a staunch Bacchanalian.

SOFTHEAD.

So I am! staunch to the bone. But I say, don't you sometimes feel rather qualmy the next morning?—queerish and headachy—a sort of uppish, downish, all-overish Bacchanalian sensation!

WILMOT.

I?—never! Oh, if you are capable of such vulgar infirmities after a miserable third bottle or so, never think of living with us: we Lords of Misrule are all made of iron, like the man in Spenser's Fairy Queen.

SOFTHEAD.

And so am I—iron! Nothing ever ails me! I only asked from curiosity—I could have sate you all out; but—

WILMOT.

Ah, I take it, an assignation! Softhead, you know you're a monster.

SOFTHEAD.

A monster! Are you a monster?

WILMOT.

Ay, horrible.

SOFTHEAD.

Dimidium meæ, and so am I!

WILMOT.

As we grow seasoned, 'tis astonishing how much we require. Wine has now no effect upon me! I think of taking to aquafortis. We'll have a bout of it some day. Aqua-fortis! Vigorous fellows, like Sir John Bruin, Colonel Flint, Lord Strongbow, me, and—yourself, could carry off a gallon a-piece!

SOFTHEAD.

Charming!—Excellent!—Aqua-fortis, I'm a dead man!

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WILMOT.

As for women, they are duller than wine. A mere harmless gallantry has no longer a charm for me.

SOFTHEAD.

Nor for me either!—(*Aside.*) Never had.

WILMOT.

Nothing should excite us true men of pleasure but some colossal atrocity, to bring our necks within an inch of the gallows!

SOFTHEAD.

He's a perfect demon! Alas, I shall never come up to *his* mark!

Enter Smart.

SMART.

Mr. Hardman, my lord.

WILMOT.

Hush! Must not shock Mr. Hardman, the most friendly obliging man, and so clever—will be a minister some day. But not one of *our* set.

SOFTHEAD.

Oh, I've often heard of Mr. Hardman. We visit at the same house; the rising member of parliament?

WILMOT.

Rising, yes! Pray what did he rise from? Do you know his origin?

SOFTHEAD.

No.

WILMOT.

He's like the Sibyl of Cuma. Knows all about every one; and nobody knows aught about him.

SOFTHEAD.

Is that like a Sibyl of Cuma? La! there are plenty such Sibyls in London!

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

And how fares my dear Lord?

WILMOT.

Bravely—and you? Ah! you men who live for others have a hard life of it. Let me present to you my friend,

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Mr. Shadowly Softhead.
HARDMAN.

The son of the great clothier who has such weight in the Guild? I have heard of you from Mr. Easy and others, though never so fortunate as to meet you before, Mr. Softhead.

SOFTHEAD.

Shadowly Softhead:—my grandmother was one of the Shadowlys—a genteel family that move about Court. She married a Softhead,—

WILMOT.

A race much esteemed in the city.

HARDMAN.

Esteemed in the city! The Softheads? No race has more votes for it! Your father's the head of that House; a most valuable man! Ah, my Lord! these are critical times: we can't disguise from ourselves that the Jacobites are daring and numerous. Our great Prime Minister needs all the support he can get. You 've no notion, Lord Wilmot, how Sir Robert Walpole esteems you.

WILMOT.

Indeed I have: just like myself! One always esteems a thing—before one has bought it.

HARDMAN.

A sorry joke, Mr. Softhead—I've known him more witty. A new picture, my Lord? I'm no very great judge—but it seems to me quite a master-piece.

WILMOT.

I've a passion for art. Sold off my stud to buy that picture. (*Aside.* And please my poor father.) 'Tis a Murillo.

HARDMAN.

A Murillo! you know that Walpole, too, has a passion for pictures.—In despair at this moment that he can't find a Murillo to hang up in his gallery. If ever you want to corrupt the Prime Minister's virtue, you have only to say, "I have got a Murillo."

WILMOT.

Well, if, instead of the pictures, he'll just hang up the *men* he has bought, you may tell him he shall have my Murillo for nothing!

HARDMAN.

Bought! now really, my Lord, this is so vulgar a scandal against Sir Robert. Let me assure your Lordship—

WILMOT (earnestly).

Nay, it needs not, dear Hardman; the best proof of a Minister's merits is in the zeal and attachment of men like yourself.

HARDMAN (affected).

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I thank you, my Lord.
WILMOT.

But prithee, dear Hardman, where left you your cloak?
HARDMAN.

Cloak? Outside the door.
WILMOT.

Then, outside with the cloak, leave my Lord and your Lordship. Plague on these titles among friends. My Lord with the world; Wilmot with my comrades; Frederick at my father's home; and plain Fred in my bachelor's lodgings.

SOFTHEAD.

And I live to call a man Fred, who's called my Lord by the world! Oh, sir, you don't know my friend Fred as we do. Does he, Fred?

[Hanging on Wilmot.]

WILMOT (looking down on him).

Hum. I'm not sure that two diminutives go well together. But as for titles and all such tedious ceremonials, they die in the air that hallows these rooms to the freedom of youth, and the equality of friendship. And if the Duke of Middlesex himself—commonly styled "the Proud Duke"—who said to his Duchess, when she astonished his dignity one day with a kiss, "Madam, my first wife was a Percy, and *she* never took such a liberty;—" [Note: This well-known anecdote of the Proud Duke of Somerset, and some other recorded traits of the same eminent personage, have been freely applied to the character, intended to illustrate the humour of pride, in the comedy. None of our English memoirs afford, however, instances of that infirmity so extravagant as are to be found in the French. Tallamant has an anecdote of the celebrated *Duchesse de Longueville*, which enlivens the burlesque by a bull that no Irish imagination ever surpassed. A surgeon having probably saved her life by bleeding her too suddenly and without sufficient ceremonial,—the *Duchesse* said, on recovering herself, that "he was an insolent fellow to have bled her—in her presence."]

HARDMAN.

Ha! ha! well, if "the Proud Duke"—
WILMOT.

Could deign to come here, we would say, "How d'ye do, my dear Middlesex!"
SOFTHEAD.

So we would, Fred! Middlesex.—Shouldn't you like to know a Duke, Mr. Hardman?
HARDMAN.

I have known one or two—in opposition; and had rather too much of 'em.
SOFTHEAD.

Too much of a Duke! La! I could never have eno' of a Duke!
HARDMAN.

You may live to think otherwise. But, my dear Wilmot, you will soon have occasion for that well-bred familiarity with which you threaten his Grace; for, as I left Lockett's, I saw the Duke stepping into his carriage and heard his lackies order the coachman to drive to your lodgings,—

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stopping first at Bygrave's the gunsmith—(*aside*) who is suspected of selling arms to the malcontents.
WILMOT.

Ha! The proud Duke!

HARDMAN (aside).

And that's one reason why I came hither. I would know what mischief that Jacobite Duke is devising—
[*Knock at the door.*]

WILMOT.

No, it will never do! Smart, I say—not at home! (*Running to the door.*) Confound it!—too late—the Duke's in the hall!

HARDMAN.

But you'll not be so absurd as to do what you boasted!

WILMOT.

Not! If a man with notions of honour not larger than would cover the point of a pin were to boast that he would put the Monument into his pocket—why he must pocket the Monument, or throw himself from the top of it.

SMART.

His Grace the Duke of Middlesex.

Enter Duke.

DUKE.

My Lord Wilmot, your most obedient servant.

WILMOT.

Now then, courage! How d'ye do, my dear Middlesex?

DUKE.

"How d'ye do?" "Middlesex!" Gracious heaven! what will this age come to?

HARDMAN to SOFTHEAD.

Well, it *may* be the fashion,—yet I could *hardly* advise you to adopt it.

SOFTHEAD.

But if Fred—

HARDMAN.

Oh! certainly Fred is an excellent model—

SOFTHEAD.

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Yet, there's something very awful in a live Duke!

HARDMAN.

Tut! a mere mortal like ourselves, after all.

SOFTHEAD.

D'ye really think so?—upon your honour?

HARDMAN.

Sir, I am sure of it,—upon my honour, a mortal!

DUKE (turning stiffly round, and half rising from his chair in majestic condescension).

Your Lordship's friends? A good day to you, gentlemen!

SOFTHEAD.

And a good day to yourself. My Lord Du—I mean, my dear boy!—Middlesex, how d'ye do?

DUKE.

Mid!—Boy!—sex!—dear!—my head is confused. I must be in a dream,—certainly a hideous dream. And that small man is the nightmare! He is coming this way!—Powers above!

SOFTHEAD.

He looks rather puzzled. Taking snuff? Fred making signs—ah, to put him *up to it*. I'll do so in Fred's own easy, elegant way!—You see, as Fred says, ceremonials and titles die in the youth of equality and the friendship of freedom!—No, that comes afterwards!—Prithee, dear Middlesex, where did you leave your cloak?

DUKE.

Middlesex again!—coupled, too, with such incongruous expressions; equality!—freedom!—My Lord Wilmot, permit me to request of your Lordship to order your people to convey to a distance, remote from my person,—that small man.

SOFTHEAD.

Small man!

HARDMAN (aside).

I enjoy this.

WILMOT to HARDMAN.

Make him apologise to the Duke,—then hurry him off into the next room. Allow me to explain to your Grace.

SOFTHEAD to HARDMAN.

But Fred himself—

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HARDMAN.

Fred himself is apologising. Mark how he bows and cringes,—bow and cringe, too.

SOFTHEAD.

But what shall I say?

HARDMAN.

Anything most civil and servile.

SOFTHEAD.

I—I—my Lord Duke, I really most humbly entreat your Grace's pardon, I—

DUKE.

Small man, your pardon is granted, for your existence is effaced. So far as my recognition is necessary to your sense of being, consider yourself henceforth—annihilated!

SOFTHEAD.

I humbly thank your Grace! Annihilated! what's that?

HARDMAN.

Duke's English for excused. (*Softhead wants to get back to the Duke.*) What! have not you had enough of the Duke?

SOFTHEAD.

No, now we've made it up. I never bear malice. I should like to know more of him; one can't get at a Duke every day. If he did call me "small man," he *is* a Duke,—and such a remarkably fine one!

HARDMAN (drawing him away).

You deserve to be haunted by him! No—no! Come into the next room and talk of your father. He carries a great many votes, and Sir Robert shall deal with him for cloth and for any other commodity he may desire to vend to the Premier.

[Exeunt through side-door. Softhead very reluctant to leave the Duke.]

DUKE.

There's something portentous in that small man's audacity. —Quite an aberration of Nature! Such things *do* happen in critical eras of the world, like the present.—Fie, my Lord, how can you associate with such a—very—small man! But we are alone now, we two gentlemen. Your father is my friend, and his son must have courage and honour.

WILMOT.

Faith, I had the courage to say I would call your Grace "Middlesex," and the honour to keep to my word. So I've given good proof that I've courage and honour enough for anything!

DUKE (affectionately).

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You're a wild boy. You have levities and follies. But alas! even rank does not exempt its possessor from the faults of humanity. Very strange! My own dead brother—(*with a look of disgust.*)

WILMOT.

Your brother, Lord Henry de Mowbray? My dear Duke, pray forgive me; but I hope there's no truth in what Tonson, the bookseller, told me at Will's,—that your brother had left behind, certain Confessions or Memoirs, which are all that might be apprehended from a man of a temper so cynical, and whose success in the gay world was so—terrible. (*Aside.* Determined seducer and implacable cut-throat!)

DUKE.

Ha! then those Memoirs exist! My brother kept his profligate threat. I shall be ridiculed, lampooned. I, the head of the Mowbrays! Powers above, is nothing on earth, then, left sacred! My lord, I thank you sincerely. Can you learn in whose hands is this scandalous record?

WILMOT.

I will try. And I hope some honest man has got hold of it,—for Tonson told me he could not yet induce him to sell it. You would wish it suppress?

DUKE.

Suppress! In the bottomless pit!

WILMOT.

And would buy it yourself?

DUKE.

Myself! No. I would mortgage the Castle of Mowbray to save my name from the jests of a ribald,—that ribald, my kinsman! But to buy, myself, what was meant to expose me—, men would say the Duke of Middlesex *feared*—

WILMOT.

Leave it to me. I know Lord Henry bore you a grudge for renouncing his connexion, on account of his faults—of humanity! His wit might not spare you; nor even what is more sacred,—the sex on which his life was one war. I remember an anecdote how he fought with a husband, some poor devil named Morland, for a boast in a tavern, which— Oh, but we'll not speak of that. We *must* get the Memoir. We gentlemen have all common cause here. Woman's name and man's hearth.

DUKE. (taking his hand).

Worthy son of your father. You deserve, indeed, the trust that I come to confide to you. Drop this shameful digression. I have need of all my composure—you, of all your attention.

WILMOT.

What's coming, I wonder.

DUKE. (taking snuff).

There is a Hanoverian gentleman of very good family, in his own country, but a perfect stranger to

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me—George Guelph. Certain persons who call themselves the People— but who, strange to say, did not do me the honour to ask my opinion—have placed this gentleman on the throne of our lawful sovereign, James the Third.

WILMOT.

Hush, Duke, hush! This confidence is really so dangerous!

DUKE.

Dangerous, what one man of honour confides to another! Your interruption's unseemly. To proceed: his Majesty, King James, having been deceived by vague promises in the Expedition of 'Fifteen, has very properly refused to imperil his rights again, unless upon the positive pledge of a sufficient number of persons of influence, to risk life and all in his service. Myself and some others, not wholly unknown to you, propose to join in a pledge which our King with such reason exacts. Your assistance, my Lord, would be valuable, for you are the idol of the young. Doubts were entertained of your loyalty. I have come to dispel them—a word will suffice. If we succeed, you restore the son of a Stuart; if we fail, you will go to the scaffold by the side of John Duke of Middlesex! Can you hesitate; or, is silence assent?

WILMOT.

Assent to surrender my country to the sword and the flames of civil war—for a cause that is hopeless!

DUKE.

Hopeless! But I cannot stoop to argue—'tis eno' for a man like me to invite. Does your Lordship refuse my invitation?

WILMOT.

My dear Duke, forgive me that I dismiss with a jest a subject so fatal, if gravely entertained. I have so many other engagements at present that, just to recollect them, I must keep my head on my shoulders. Accept my humblest excuses.

DUKE.

Accept mine for mistaking the son of Lord Loftus. I have the honour to wish your Lordship good day.

WILMOT.

Lord Loftus again! Stay. Your Grace spoke of persons not wholly unknown to me. I entreat you to explain.

DUKE.

My Lord, I have trusted you with my own life; but to compromise by a word the life of another, permit me once more to repeat to your Lordship that I am John Duke of Middlesex.

[Exit.]

WILMOT.

Go thy ways for the most prejudiced piece of absurdity and bombast, valour and honour, that ever shook a plot from the curls of a periwig, or drew a court sword against the march of a nation. But can he allude to my father? Nay, scarcely; my father would surely have hinted to me if—still, I'm uneasy. How shall I find out?—Ha! Hardman. Hardman, I say! Here's a man who finds everything out.

Enter Hardman and Softhead.

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Softhead, continue annihilated for the next five minutes or so. These books will help to the cessation of your existence mental and bodily. Mr. Locke, on the Understanding, will show that you have not an innate idea; and the Essay of Bishop Berkely will prove you have not an atom of matter.

SOFTHEAD.

But—

WILMOT.

No buts!—they're the fashion.

SOFTHEAD.

Oh, if they're the fashion—

[Seats himself at the further end of the room; commences vigorously with Berkely and Locke, first one and then the other, and after convincing himself that they are above his comprehension, gradually subsides from despair into dozing.]

WILMOT to HARDMAN.

My dear Hardman, you are the only one of my friends, whom, in spite of your politics, my high Tory father condescends to approve of.

HARDMAN (smiling).

Why, there are many sides to a character;

WILMOT.

A favourite saying of mine, too;

HARDMAN.

And if I have a talent it is that of finding the right one.

WILMOT.

Ah! talk to my poor father of me; and you are on his blind side in a moment.

HARDMAN.

In truth, he has shown that I have his esteem; First, by asking me to lecture his son; Secondly, by forgiving the ill-success of the lectures.

WILMOT.

Why, look you, this life! it is such a sunny, glorious, thing! It does so leap and sparkle in my veins that I cannot walk the thoroughfares of quiet men with their sober footsteps. Yet, dear as existence, thus joyous, is, I would fling it from me as lightly as I toss this glove, to save that sober, preaching, father of mine from a single peril!

HARDMAN (aside).

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I could almost love this man, if he would let me. Why do you so often belie yourself, by seeming worse than you are?

WILMOT.

Why, don't you think that rogues who pretend to be honest, have had their day long eno'? and if we honest folks set up a counter hypocrisy, and pretend to be rogues, 'gad, we may drive the other fellows out of the fashion! But to come back to my father,—every one knows that his family were stout cavaliers, attached to the Stuarts.

HARDMAN.

(Aside. Ah! I guess why the Jacobite Duke has been here. I must look up David Fallen; he is in all the schemes for the Stuarts.) Well—and—

WILMOT.

And, as you said very justly, the Jacobites are daring and numerous; and,—in short, I should just like to know that my father views things with the eyes of our more wise generation.

HARDMAN.

Why not ask him yourself?

WILMOT.

Alas! I'm in disgrace; he even begs me not to come to his house. You see he wants me to marry. Just like fathers! Ever since Agamemnon set them the bad example of sacrificing Iphigenia for a favourable breeze, they never think they've a chance of smooth sailing till they've bound us tight to the horns of the altar!

HARDMAN.

But your father bade me tell you, he would leave your choice to yourself;—would marriage then seem so dreadful a sacrifice?

WILMOT.

Sacrifice! Leave my choice to myself? My dear Father! *(Rings the hand-bell.)* Smart! *(Enter Smart.)* Order my coach.

HARDMAN.

This impatience looks very like love.

WILMOT.

Pooh! what do you know about love?—you, who love only ambition! Solemn old jilt, with whom one's never safe from a rival.

HARDMAN.

Yes;—always safe from a rival both in love and ambition, if one will watch to detect, and then scheme to destroy him.

WILMOT.

Destroy—ruthless exterminator! May we never be rivals! Pray keep to ambition.

[Retires to complete his dress.]

HARDMAN. (aside).

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But ambition lures me to love. This fair Lucy Thornsides, as rich as she's fair! Woe indeed to the man who shall be my rival with her. I will call there to-day.

WILMOT.

Then, you'll see my father, and sound him?

HARDMAN.

I will do so.

WILMOT.

You are the best friend I have. If ever I can serve you in return—

HARDMAN.

Tut; in serving my friends, 'tis myself that I serve.

[Exit.]

WILMOT (after a moment's thought.)

Pooh! there *can* be no danger. I've been hearing of plots ever since I was born, but nothing ever comes of them; and if I learn from Hardman that my father meditates the innocent amusement of blowing up the country—I'll turn steady myself and shame him out of such pranks! Now to Lucy. Ha! Softhead.

SOFTHEAD (waking up).

Heh!

WILMOT (aside).

I must put this suspicious Sir Geoffrey on a wrong scent. If Softhead were to make love to the girl—violently—desperately.

SOFTHEAD (yawning).

I would give the world to be tucked up in bed now!

WILMOT.

By Pluto and Hecate—the man's actually yawning!

SOFTHEAD.

Is there any harm in that?

WILMOT.

I've a project—an intrigue—be all life and all fire! Why, you tremble—

SOFTHEAD.

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With excitement. Proceed!
WILMOT.

There's a certain snarling suspicious Sir Geoffrey Thornside, with a beautiful daughter, to whom he is a sort of a one-sided bear of a father—all growl and no hug.

SOFTHEAD.

I know him!
WILMOT.

You. How?
SOFTHEAD.

Why, his most intimate friend is Mr. Goodenough Easy.

WILMOT.

Lucy presented me to a Mistress Barbara Easy. Pretty girl!
SOFTHEAD.

You are not courting her?
WILMOT.

Not at present. Are you?
SOFTHEAD.

Why, my father wants me to marry her.
WILMOT.

They are all alike these fathers! That vile Agamemnon! You refused?
SOFTHEAD.

No. I did not.
WILMOT.

Had *she* that impertinence?
SOFTHEAD.

No; but her father had. He wished for it once; but since I've become a man *à-la-mode*, and made a sensation at St. James's, he says that his daughter shall be courted no more by such a fine gentleman. Oh! he's low, Mr. Easy; very good-humoured and hearty, but respectable, sober, and square-toed;—decidedly low!—City bred! So I can't go much to his house; but I see Barbara sometimes at Sir Geoffrey's.

WILMOT.

Excellent! Listen: I am bent upon adding Lucy Thornside to the list of my conquests.
SOFTHEAD.

But—
WILMOT.

But how did I know her? I'll tell you. Between Hyde Park and Mayfair, there lie certain savage recesses, which

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in

some distant age may be brought into fashion, but which now are frequented occasionally by snipes and habitually by footpads. About a week since, I chanced to be passing those desolate wilds when I heard female cries,—ran to the spot,—found two ruffians had stopped a sedan and dragged forth a young lady. Your stout heart conjectures the rest: —a blow to the one and a kick to the other, and I bear off the prettiest trembler that ever leant on the arm of knight-errant,—escorted her home,—called thrice since that fortunate hour, and my angel's name, among mortals, is Lucy Thornside.

SOFTHEAD.

But I don't as yet see how I—
WILMOT.

You are so hot and impatient! Let me speak: her churl of a father has already given me to understand that he hates a lord—

SOFTHEAD.

Hates a lord! Can such men be?
WILMOT.

And despises a man *à la mode*.
SOFTHEAD.

I knew he was eccentric, but this is downright insanity.
WILMOT.

Brief. I see very well that he'll soon shut his doors in my face, unless I make him believe that it is not his daughter who attracts me to his house; so I tell you what we will do; —You shall make love to Lucy—violent love, you rogue.

SOFTHEAD.

But Sir Geoffrey knows I'm in love with the other.
WILMOT.

That's over. Father refused you—transfer of affection; natural pique and human inconstancy. And, in return, to oblige you, I'll make love just as violent to Mistress Barbara Easy.

SOFTHEAD.

Stop, stop; I don't see the necessity of that.
WILMOT.

Pooh! nothing more clear. Having thus duped the two lookers on, we shall have ample opportunity to change partners, and hands across, then down the middle and up again.

[Enter Smart.]

SMART.

Your coach waits, my Lord.
WILMOT.

Come along. Fie! that's not the way to conduct a cane. Has not Mr. Pope, our great poet of fashion, given you the nicest instructions in that art?

SCENE I.

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"Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane."

The cane does not conduct you; you conduct the cane. Thus, with a debonnair swing. Now, t'other hand on your haunch; easy, *dégagé* —impudently graceful; with the air of a gentleman, and the heart of a—monster!
Allons! Vive la joie.

SOFTHEAD.

Vive la jaw, indeed. I feel as if I were going to be hanged. *Allons! Vive la jaw!*
[Exeunt.

END OF ACT I.

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ACT II.

Not So Bad As We Seem

SCENE I.

[Library in the House of Sir Geoffrey Thorside.—At the back a large Window opening nearly to the ground.—Side-door to an adjoining room.—Style of decoration, that introduced from the Dutch in the reign of William III. (old-fashioned, therefore, at the date assigned to the Play)—rich and heavy; oak pannels, partly gilt; high-backed chairs, &c.

Enter Sir Geoffrey and Hodge.

SIR GEOFFREY.

But, I say, the dog did howl last night, and it is a most suspicious circumstance.

HODGE.

Fegs, my dear Measter, if you'se think that these Lunnon thieves have found out that your honour's rents were paid last woik, mayhap I'd best sleep here in the loibery.

SIR GEOFFREY. (aside).

How does he know I keep my monies here?

HODGE.

Zooks! I 'se the old blunderbuss, and that will boite better than any dog, I'se warrant!

SIR GEOFFREY.

(Aside. I begin to suspect him. For ten years have I nursed that viper at my hearth, and now he wants to sleep in my library, with a loaded blunderbuss, in case I should come in and detect him. I see murder in his very face. How blind I've been!) Hodge, you are very good—very; come closer.—(Aside. What a felon step he has!) But I don't keep my rents here, they're all gone to the banker's.

HODGE.

Mayhap I'd best go and lock up the pleate; or will you send that to the banker's?

SIR GEOFFREY.

(Aside. I wonder if he has got an accomplice at the banker's! it looks uncommonly like it.) No, I'll not send the plate to the banker's, I'll—consider. You've not detected the miscreant who has been flinging flowers into the library the last four days?

HODGE.

Noa, Sir Geoffrey; I'se got 'em all safe in the coal-hole! —but there beant any gunpowder in 'em. What your honour took for the head of an adder was—a sweet-pea!

SIR GEOFFREY.

(Aside. Ugh!—just like servants! If they saw their master in the folds of a boa constrictor, they'd tell him it was a climbing honeysuckle.) Well, and of course you've not observed any one watching your master, when he walks in his garden, from the window of that ugly old house in Deadman's Lane?

HODGE.

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With the sign of the Crown and Poor—Culley! Why, it maun be very leately. 'Tint a week ago sin' it war empty.
SIR GEOFFREY.

(Aside. How he evades the question!—just as they do at the Old Bailey.) Get along with you, and feed the house—dog —*he's honest!*

HODGE.

Yes, your honour.

[Exit.

SIR GEOFFREY.

How eagerly he said "Yes"—very suspicious. Perhaps he wants to poison the dog—not a doubt of it. Hodge!—Hodge!—*(Enter Hodge.)* Don't feed the dog; I'll feed him myself.

HODGE.

Yes, your honour.

[Exit.

SIR GEOFFREY.

I'm a very unhappy man, very! Never did harm to any one—done good to many. And ever since I was a babe in the cradle, all the world have been conspiring and plotting against me. It certainly is an exceedingly wicked world; and what its attraction can be to the other worlds, that they should have kept it spinning through space for six thousand years, I can't possibly conceive—unless they are as bad as itself; I should not wonder. That new theory of attraction is a very suspicious circumstance against the planets—there's a gang of 'em! *(A bunch of flowers is thrown in at the window.)* Heaven defend me! There it is again! This is the fifth bunch of flowers that's been thrown at me through the window—what can it possibly mean?—the most alarming circumstance! *(Cautiously poking at the flowers with his sword.)*

MR. GOODENOUGH EASY *(without).*

Yes, Barbara, go and find Mistress Lucy. Never mind announcing me, Hodge, I'm at home here. *(Entering.)* How d'ye do, my hearty?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! hearty, indeed!

EASY.

Why, what's the matter? what are you poking at those flowers for; is there a snake in them?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Worse than that, I suspect! Hem! Goodenough Easy, I believe I may trust you—

EASY.

You trusted me once with five thousand pounds.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Dear, dear, I forgot that. But you paid me back, Easy?

EASY.

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Of course; but the loan saved my credit, and made my fortune: so the favour's the same.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! Don't say that; favours and perfidy go together! a truth I learned early in life. What favours I heaped on my foster-brother! And did not he conspire with my cousin to set my own father against me; and trick me out of my heritage?

EASY.

But you've heaped favours as great on the son of that scamp of a foster-brother; and he—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ay! but he don't know of them. And then there was my —that girl's mother—

EASY.

Ah! that was an affliction which might well turn a man pre-inclined to suspicion, into a thorough self-tormenter for the rest of his life. But she loved you dearly once, old friend; and were she yet alive, and could be proved guiltless after all—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Guiltless! Sir—?

EASY.

Well—well! we agreed never to talk upon that subject. Come, come, what of the nosegay?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Yes, yes, the nosegay! Hark! I suspect some design on my life. The dog howled last night. When I walk in the garden, somebody or something (can't see what it is) seems at the watch in a window in Deadman's Lane—pleasant name for a street at the back of one's premises! And what looks blacker than all, for five days running, has been thrown in at me, yonder, surreptitiously and anonymously, what you call—a nosegay!

EASY.

Ha! ha! you lucky dog!—you are still not bad-looking! Depend on it, the flowers come from a woman.

SIR GEOFFREY.

A woman!—my worst fears are confirmed! In the small city of Placentia, in one year, there were no less than seven hundred cases of slow poisoning, and all by women. Flowers were among the instruments they employed, steeped in laurel-water and other mephitic preparations. Those flowers are poisoned. Not a doubt of it!—how very awful!

EASY.

But why should any one take the trouble to poison you, Geoffrey?

SIR GEOFFREY.

I don't know. But I don't know why seven hundred people in one year were poisoned in Placentia. Hodge! Hodge!

Enter HODGE.

Bring a shovel and brush!—sweep away those flowers!—lock 'em up with the rest in the coal-hole. I'll

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examine them all chemically, by and by, with precaution.

[Exit Hodge.]

EASY.

But, Geoffrey, when a man has a daughter of an age in which flowers are not locked up in a coal-hole, mayn't he suspect that such mephitic preparations are intended for her?

Enter Hodge to remove the flowers.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh!—as if I had not thought that at first; but why should they always be thrown into *my* special sitting-room, at the very hour I enter it, only when I'm alone? *(To Hodge.)* Don't smell at 'em; and, above all, don't let the house-dog smell at 'em.

EASY.

Ha! ha!

SIR GEOFFREY.

(Aside.) Ugh!—that brute's laughing!—no more feeling than a brickbat! Goodenough Easy; you are a very happy man.

EASY.

Happy, yes. I could be happy on bread and water!

SIR GEOFFREY.

And would toast your bread at a conflagration, and fill your jug from a deluge! Ugh! I've a trouble you are more likely to feel for, as you've a girl of your own to keep out of mischief. A man named Wilmot, and styled "my Lord," has called here three times; he pretends he saved my—ahem!—that is Lucy, from footpads, when she was coming home from your house in a sedan chair. And I suspect that the man means to make love to her!—

EASY.

Egad! that's the only likely suspicion you've hit on this many a day. I've heard of Lord Wilmot. Softhead professes to copy him. Rather a madcap. But his companions adore him. Wish you joy!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Joy!—you have the strangest expressions!—there's no wringing sympathy out of you. Joy, indeed! a gay man *à la mode!* I've seen eno' of such villains. No girl whom I can control shall ever marry one of those heroes of Congreve and

Wycherley. Ugh! you did right, for once in your life, when you broke off the match between Mr. Softhead and Barbara, on the ground that the fool had become—a fine gentleman!

EASY.

O Lord, just the reverse!—that the fool could never become a fine gentleman! I'm not severe; but I *am* independent. If there's a thing I despise in the world, 'tis a simpleton led away by example. Every class has its faults and its merits. Let each stick to its own. Softhead, the son of a trader! *he* be a loungee at White's and Will's, and dine with wits and fine gentlemen! *He* live with lords!—*he* mimic fashion! No! I've respect for even the faults of a man; but I've none for the tricks of a monkey.

SIR GEOFFREY.

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Ugh! you're so savage on Softhead, I suspect 'tis from envy. Man and monkey, indeed! If a ribbon is tied to the tail of a monkey, it is not the man it enrages; it is some other monkey whose tail has no ribbon!

EASY. (angrily).

I disdain your insinuations. Do you mean to imply that I am a monkey? I won't praise myself; but at least a more steady, respectable, sober—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! sober!—I suspect you'd get as drunk as a lord, if a lord passed the bottle.

EASY.

Now, now, now. Take care;—you'll put me in a passion.

SIR GEOFFREY.

There—there—beg pardon. But I fear you've a sneaking respect for a lord—

EASY.

Sir, I respect the British Constitution and the House of Peers as a part of it; but as for a lord in himself, with a mere handle to his name, a paltry title! *That* can have no effect on a Briton, of independence and sense. And that's just the difference between Softhead and me. But as you don't like for a son-in-law, the real fine gentleman; perhaps you've a mind to the copy. I am sure you are welcome to Softhead.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! I've other designs for the girl.

EASY.

Have you? What? Perhaps your favourite, young Hardman?—by the way, I've not met him here lately.

Enter Lucy and Barbara.

LUCY.

O, my dear father, forgive me if I disturb you; but I did so long to see you!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Why?

LUCY.

Because Hodge told me you'd been alarmed last night— the dog howled! But it was full moon last night, and he will howl at the moon!

SIR GEOFFREY.

How did she know it was full moon? I suspect she was looking out of the window—

Enter Hodge announcing Lord Wilmot and Mr. Shadowly Softhead.

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SIR GEOFFREY.

Wilmot! my suspicions are confirmed; she *was* looking out of the window! This comes of Shakspeare having written that infernal incendiary trash about Romeo and Juliet!

Enter Wilmot and Softhead.

WILMOT.

Your servant, ladies;—Sir Geoffrey, your servant. I could not refuse Mr. Softhead's request to inquire after your health.

SIR GEOFFREY.

I thank your lordship; but when my health wants inquiring after, I send for the doctor.

WILMOT.

Is it possible you can do anything so dangerous and rash?

SIR GEOFFREY.

How?—how?

WILMOT.

Send for the very man who has an interest in your being ill!

SIR GEOFFREY.

That's very true. I did not think he had so much sense in him!

WILMOT.

I need not inquire how you are, ladies? When Hebé retired from the world, she divided her bloom between you. Mistress Barbara, vouchsafe me the honour a queen accords to the meanest of her gentlemen.

[Kisses Barbara's hand, and leads her aside, conversing in dumb show.]

SOFTHEAD.

Ah, Mistress Lucy, vouchsafe me the honour which—But she don't hold her hand in the same position.

LUCY. (turning round).

What did you say, Mr. Softhead?

SOFTHEAD.

Hem! How was it?—oh, the meanest of your majesty's gentlemen.

[Imitates Wilmot.]

EASY.

Bravo!—bravo! Master Softhead!—*Encore!*

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SOFTHEAD.

Bravo!—*Encore!* I don't understand you, Mr. Easy.

EASY.

That bow of yours! Perfect! Plain to see you have not forgotten the old Dancing Master in Crooked Lane.

LUCY.

Fie, Mr. Easy!—your bow's charming, Mr. Shadowly.

SOFTHEAD.

It is not a common bow, I confess; I and Lord Wilmot— that is my friend, Fred, yonder, have a bow of our own. We are so alike in all things. We are often mistaken for each other—(*Aside*—I'm not an inconstant man; but I'll show that City fellow, there are other ladies in town besides his daughter)—*Dimidum meæ*, how pretty you are, Mistress Lucy!

[Walks aside with her.]

EASY.

Ha! ha! Geoffrey, I said you were welcome to Softhead. Quick work. One would think he'd overheard, and was taking me at my word.

SIR GEOFFREY.

And I see that popinjay of a lord is more attentive to Barbara than ever he was to the other.

EASY.

Hey! hey! D'ye think so?

SIR GEOFFREY.

I suspect he has heard how rich you are. He seems a brisk, lively rogue. Best look sharp,—just one of those Hymen—men, who knock down a father before he knows where he is, with 'Stand and deliver! your child *and* your money!'

EASY.

Certainly I should scorn to ask a lord to marry my daughter; but if he were to ask *me*—'Pon my life, I think there's something in it.

Wilmot and Barbara approaching.

BARBARA.

Papa, Lord Wilmot begs to be presented to you.

[Bows interchanged. Wilmot offers snuff-box. Easy at first declines, then accepts—sneezes violently; unused to snuff.]

SIR GEOFFREY.

He! he! quite clear!—titled fortune-hunter. Over head and ears in debt, I dare say. Found out from poor Softhead that Easy's as rich as a Jew; and now the mercenary wretch is trying to supplant his own friend. If so,

SCENE I.

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Lucy's safe! Nobody knows how rich I am—take very good care of that. But I'll make all sure. (*Takes Wilmot aside.*) Pretty girl, Mistress Barbara! Eh?

WILMOT.

Pretty! Say beautiful!

SIR GEOFFREY.

He! he! Her father will give her fifty thousand pounds down on the wedding day. Better off than my girl, who (if she marry with my consent) would only have a poor little property of the worst land in Norfolk, and not a rood of that till I'm dead. And, zounds my lord! I'm vigorous, and intend to live these thirty years.

WILMOT.

(*Aside.* The paternal enemy falls into the ambush.) Fifty thousand pounds on the wedding day! She's the loveliest creature I ever saw!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Tho' her father's in commerce, you fine gentlemen don't live as if you had much respect for your ancestors: you are too liberal to think that a man's want of birth should prevent him from satisfying your want of money.

WILMOT.

Indeed I am, and I venerate the British merchant who can give his daughter fifty thousand pounds! What a smile she has! (*Hooking his arm into Sir Geoffrey's.*) I say, Sir Geoffrey, you see I'm very shy—bashful indeed—and Mr. Easy is watching every word I say to his daughter: so embarrassing! Could'nt you get him out of the room?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Mighty bashful indeed! Turn the oldest friend I have out of my room, in order that you may make love to his daughter! (*Turns away.*)

WILMOT. to EASY.

I say, Mr. Easy. My double there, Softhead, is so shy—bashful indeed—and that suspicious Sir Geoffrey is watching every word he says to Mistress Lucy: so embarrassing! Do get your friend out of the room, will you?

EASY.

Ha! ha! Certainly, my Lord. (*Aside.* I see he wants to be alone with my Barbara. What will they say in Lombard-street when she's my Lady? Shouldn't wonder if they returned me M.P. for the City). Come into the next room, Geoffrey; and tell me your designs for Lucy.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Oh, very well! You wish to encourage that pampered young—Satrap! How he does love a lord, and how a lord does love 50,000*l.*! He! he! I know a little of the world. He! he! (*Exit within.*)

EASY.

Monstrous fine young man that, Mistress Lucy,—not a bit proud—no airs and graces.

SOFTHEAD.

Oh, the best little fellow in the world, my friend Fred—

EASY.

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Your friend Fred! Mr. Softhead, I despise the man who has his head so turned by a lord.
[Exit after Sir Geoffrey.]

WILMOT (running to LUCY, and pushing aside SOFTHEAD).

Return to your native allegiance. Truce with the enemy, and exchange of prisoners.
[Leads Lucy aside—She rather grave and reluctant.]

BARBARA.

So, you'll not speak to me, Mr. Softhead; words are too rare with you fine gentlemen, to throw away upon old friends.

SOFTHEAD.

Ahem!

BARBARA.

You don't remember the winter evenings you used to pass at our fireside? nor the mistletoe bough at Christmas? nor the pleasant games at Blind-man's Buff and Hunt the Slipper? nor the strong tea I made you when you had the migraine? nor how I prevented your eating Banbury cake at supper, when you know it always disagrees with you?— But, I suppose you are so hardened that you can eat Banbury cake every night, now!—I'm sure it is nothing to me!

SOFTHEAD.

Those recollections of one's early innocence are very melting! One renounces a great deal of happiness for renown and ambition.—Barbara!

BARBARA.

Shadowly!

SOFTHEAD.

However one may rise in life,—however the fashion may compel one to be a monster—

BARBARA.

A monster!

SOFTHEAD.

Yes, Fred and I are both monsters! Still—still—still— 'Ecod, I do love you with all my heart, and that's the truth of it.

BARBARA.

Oh, Shadowly! that dear Lord Wilmot!

SOFTHEAD (alarmed and clapping his hand to his sword).

Ha! the villain!

BARBARA.

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He says he's sure you've never been false.
SOFTHEAD.

Fred's a jewel! what a pity your Cit of a father can't abide the upper walks of society.

Wilmot and Lucy advancing.

LUCY.

Nay, my Lord, this looks so like deceit!
WILMOT.

But you must pardon a deceit that's so harmless. Sir Geoffrey's prejudice against me must be humoured till I've time to remove it. I cannot live without seeing you—you have bewitched me!
LUCY.

Ah—my Lord! I'm afraid you've been very often— bewitched!
WILMOT.

Fie! you are as suspicious as your father.

LUCY (curtseying).

Your Lordship's reputation is far beyond—suspicions
WILMOT.

She's been inquiring into my reputation. An excellent symptom! But, my charming Lucy—when one takes up the character of a servant, 'tis a sort of etiquette to engage him.
LUCY.

Surely that depends on the character?

WILMOT.

And what can be said against mine?
LUCY.

Only that your Lordship is not—a very faithful servant!
WILMOT.

Her archness delights me. I have found what I have sought all my life, the union of spirit and sweetness, innocence and gaiety. Oh, Lucy, if the renunciation of all youthful levities and follies, if the most steadfast adherence to your side—despite all the chances of life, all temptations, all dangers—
[Hardman's voice without.]

BARBARA.

Hist! some one coming.

SCENE I.

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WILMOT.

Change partners; hands across. My angel Barbara!

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

Lord Wilmot here!

WILMOT.

What! does *he* know Sir Geoffrey?

BARBARA.

Oh yes. Sir Geoffrey thinks there's nobody like him.

HARDMAN. (who has been saluting LUCY).

Footpads! Hum! And pray how long since?

WILMOT.

Well met, my dear Hardman. So you are intimate here?

HARDMAN.

Ay; and you?

WILMOT.

An acquaintance in its cradle; just a week old. Droll man, Sir Geoffrey; I delight in odd characters. Besides, here are other attractions.

[Returning to Barbara.

HARDMAN (aside).

If he be my rival! Hum! I hear from David Fallen that his father's on the brink of high treason! That secret gives a hold on the son.

[Joins Lucy.

WILMOT to BARBARA.

You understand; 'tis a compact. You will favour my stratagem?

BARBARA.

Yes,; and you'll engage to cure Softhead of his taste for the fashion, and send him back to—the City.

WILMOT.

Since you live in the City, and condescend to regard such a monster!

BARBARA.

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Why, we were brought up together. His health is so delicate; I should like to take care of him.
WILMOT.

If that is not woman all over, I don't know what is!
BARBARA.

And he's not so bad as he seems. Heigho! I am afraid 'tis too late, and papa will never forgive his past follies.
WILMOT.

Yet papa seems very good-natured. Perhaps there's another side to his character?
BARBARA.

Oh yes! He is such a very independent man, my papa! and has *such* a contempt for people who go out of their own rank, and make fools of themselves for the sake of example.

WILMOT.

Never fear; I'll ask him to dine, and open his heart with a cheerful glass.
BARBARA.

Cheerful glass! You don't know papa—the soberest man! If there's any thing on which he's severe, 'tis a cheerful glass.
WILMOT.

So, so! Does not he *ever*—get a little excited?
BARBARA.

Excited! Don't think of it! Besides, he is so in awe of Sir Geoffrey, who would tease him out of his life, if he could but hear that papa was so inconsistent as to—as to—
WILMOT.

As to get—a little excited? (*Aside.* These hints should suffice me! 'Gad, if I could make him tipsey for once in a way—I'll try.) Adieu, my sweet Barbara, and rely on the zeal of your faithful ally. Stay; tell Mr. Easy that he must lounge into Will's. I will look out for him there in about a couple of hours. He'll meet many friends from the City, and all the wits and fine gentlemen. Don't forget. (*Aside.* Yes, I shall find Tonson at Will's. Let me see. Set Hardman to keep my wise father from mischief;—get at that diabolical Memoir;—intoxicate Easy;—cure Softhead of Fashion;—call to-night on the Lady of Mystery, Deadman's Lane;—meanwhile stole a march on General "Ugh! I suspect;"—and half-way to a wife! 'Gad, 'tis not such a dull day after all!) *Allons! Vive la joie!* Softhead, we'll have a night of it!
SOFTHEAD.

Ah! those were pleasant nights when one went to bed at half after ten. Heigho! Adieu, Barbara.

BARBARA.

Adieu, Shadowly.

[*Exit Wilmot and Softhead.*]

LUCY.

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Where are you going, dear?
BARBARA.

Just into the garden, to have a good cry. I'll be back presently.
[Exit. Lucy takes her work, and sits.]

HARDMAN.

Hum! I'm perplexed. Can it be Barbara? Yet Lucy looks changed since I saw her last—since Wilmot has known her—more grave. I dread to—

LUCY (sighing heavily).

Ah, Mr. Hardman!
HARDMAN.

Why that sigh? You, sad, whose happy mirth—

LUCY (coming forward).

Is not always sincere. Ah, Mr. Hardman, my father confides to you many of his secrets. Did he ever tell you what fault I can amend, so that he might love me better? Not once from my cradle has he even called me by the sweet name of child.

HARDMAN.

Nay, 'tis but his humours that conceal from you his heart. A parent's love is too precious a thing to be doubted lightly. But perhaps it is a mother that you miss?

LUCY.

I never remember to have seen one; but I miss her daily. *(Aside. And never more than now!)*

HARDMAN.

Be comforted. My lot is harder than yours. Far as I can look back into childhood—motherless, fatherless, homeless, friendless, lonely—

LUCY.

Poor Mr. Hardman. I did not dream that you had such cause for sorrow. Seeing you so occupied and ambitious, one would not guess you concealed feelings thus deep.

HARDMAN.

What! are deep feelings the monopoly of triflers? Does the heart only beat under the velvet and laces of those spoiled darlings of fortune?

LUCY.

What spoiled darlings of fortune?

HARDMAN.

Men like the sleek lord whom I found here! Men who are born to the hill top that we sons of labour reach but

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to die. Ah, were the world but a stage, they might have their first choice of the pageant and wardrobe; I would grudge not the spangles and tinsel.

LUCY.

Dear Mr. Hardman; you—(*Aside.* I never saw him so before!)

HARDMAN.

But the world's something more than a stage. Man is not always an actor. And woe to those darlings of fortune, when in the great war of the passions they strive, breast to breast, with us, stern sons of labour! They, unnerved by the sunshine,—we, braced by the storm. Ha! Ha!—we are stronger than they!

LUCY.

You are strangely moved, Mr. Hardman. Have you any quarrel with *him*—with Lord Wilmot?

HARDMAN.

(*Aside.* I betray myself like an infant.) Lord Wilmot! 'Twas an old, very old, but very sore recollection of very different persons—mere triflers—that made me unjust for a moment—to a man of the rarest accomplishments. Pray, what do *you* think of Lord Wilmot?

Enter Barbara.

LUCY (resuming her work with her face turned away).

Indeed I can't say; I have seen him so seldom.

BARBARA.

I think him—

HARDMAN (turning round).

You! yes, you think him?—

BARBARA.

The most charming, irresistible—heigho!

HARDMAN.

Indeed! he seemed most attentive to you. Now I look at the girl, she's not ugly. I trust that the feeling's reciprocal?

BARBARA.

It ought to be—if there's any believing the promises and vows of you dangerous, deceitful men.

HARDMAN.

Promises—vows! Now I look again, the girl's pretty— decidedly pretty! exceedingly pretty! Why not she, after all?

BARBARA (glancing slyly towards LUCY).

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Do you think a poor innocent girl may safely trust her heart to Lord Wilmot?
HARDMAN.

Indeed I do; the most honourable of men! (*Seating himself.*) (*Aside.* Even were it so, dare I hope for myself? So fair, and an heiress! Tut! Have I ever yet failed in my struggle through life, aided but by my will and my brain? And now this two-fold prize. Love for my happiness—wealth for my ambition. Scheme now, plotting brain,— dare now, stubborn will!

Enter Sir Geoffrey and Easy.

SIR GEOFFREY.

There he is—seated apart—will not even speak to that girl in my absence. So punctiliously honourable!

HARDMAN (aside).

But the father's consent! Bah! I've already got at the right side of his character.
SIR GEOFFREY.

Hush! Muttering some speech in defence of his country.

HARDMAN (aside).

If, too, I could get that place in the Treasury!—Make my suit less presumptuous. Shall I write to Sir Robert?—

SIR GEOFFREY (advancing).

He! he! my dear Hardman. We guess your thoughts.
HARDMAN.

Heh! Sir Geoffrey, you startle me.
EASY.

Hope it will succeed.

HARDMAN (falteringly).

What succeed?
EASY.

Pooh! don't look so embarrassed and awkward. I'm a bit of an orator myself, and we all know that young members get their speeches by heart.
HARDMAN.

Oh! you are so shrewd, Mr. Easy.

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EASY (taking him aside).

Not I; but you *do* know everything. Intimate with Lord Wilmot, eh? Fine young man! Smitten with my little girl! But that suspicious old snarler says, 'tis all for her money. Should not like that. My Lord's not in debt, eh?

HARDMAN.

Debt! he abhors it. Generous; but prudent. I know all his affairs.

As Hardman leaves Easy,

SIR GEOFFREY (seizing him).

He! he! I did it. Said she'd fifty thousand pounds.

HARDMAN.

You *are* the most sagacious, incomparable man! (*Aside.* I am assured! Wilmot is not my rival. I'll save his father. David Fallen meets Lord Loftus at Will's. I'll be there.) My dear Sir Geoffrey! (*Shakes hands.*)

SIR GEOFFREY.

I'm not like Easy. I have a pedigree, as long as a Welchman's—much good it ever did me! I'd rather give my heiress to a man who made his own way through life than to a—

HARDMAN.

You would? (*Aside.* I will write to Walpole at once for that place.) Bless me, how late it is! I must be off. Goodbye, Mr. Easy. My heartfelt congratulations. I shall be at Will's myself—later. Good—bye, Sir Geoffrey.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! always in a hurry.

EASY.

But always getting on. What's your secret?

HARDMAN (holding up his watch).

This. The way to get on is to be never behind time. More than that, Mr. Easy—what is mind without action? a watch without hands!—the wheels may go round, the chainwork may lengthen—what use in either unless the hands make us sure of the moment and hour? Wheel and hands—thought and action—brain and will. Your hand, Mistress Lucy!

[Exit.

EASY.

Quite the man of business! So—what I call—*practical!* Very clever fellow!

BARBARA (aside to LUCY, her finger on her lip).

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Yet, I think I have puzzled him.

LUCY (aloud and thoughtfully).

I am sure he himself is a puzzle.
SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! as honest as Truth—
EASY.

And as deep as her well!
END OF ACT II.

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ACT III.

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SCENE I.

Will's Coffee-house; occupying the depth of the stage. Various groups; Lord le Trimmer, Sir Thomas Timid, Colonel Flint, Jacob Tonson, &c; some seated in boxes, some standing. In a box at the side, David Fallen seated, writing. Enter Easy.

EASY (speaking to various acquaintances as he passes to the background).

How d'ye do?—Have you seen my Lord Wilmot?—Good day.—Yes; I seldom come here; but I've promised to meet an intimate friend of mine—Lord Wilmot.—Servant, sir!—looking for my friend Wilmot:—Oh! not come yet!—hum —ha!—Charming young man, Wilmot:—head of the mode; generous, but prudent. I know all his affairs.

Enter Newsman.

Great news! great news! Suspected Jacobite Plot!—Fears of ministers!—Army to be increased! Great news!

[Coffee-house frequenters gather round Newsman—take papers—form themselves into fresh groups. Enter Hardman.

SEVERAL VOICES.

There's Hardman—the rising Member of Parliament—hand in glove with Sir Robert!—knows everything!
[Crowd round Hardman, and seem to question him in dumb show.

HARDMAN.

Ha! ha!—Sir Robert Walpole alarmed? Never saw him in such spirits. Oh, sir, must not believe any newspaper except the ministerial!—Funds fallen, you say?—Well, I should not let out state secrets; but this I *will* tell you in confidence—keep in Sir Robert, and the Funds will be up ten per cent. in a fortnight. *(Takes aside Lord Le Trimmer.)* My dear lord, you 're the very man I want to see. The Lieutenancy for your county is just vacant. In these critical times, who but your lordship should have that office? Go and call on Sir Robert. He only wants that attention to make you the offer.

LORD LE TRIMMER.

Me! But I don't quite agree with—

HARDMAN.

Make haste; or your neighbour, Lord Graspall, will be there before you.

LORD LE TRIMMER.

Graspall should not have it, if I went on my knees for it. A thousand thanks to you, Mr. Hardman.

[Exit, hastily.

HARDMAN.

Secured a waverer. *(Takes aside Sir Thomas Timid.)* Sir Thomas, a word with you. I am a plain man, and I love

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you. There's a conspiracy afloat; your name is suspected. There's been talk of the Tower.
SIR THOMAS.

Suspected! The Tower! What am I to do?
HARDMAN.

Vote with ministers for increasing the army, and you are safe.
SIR THOMAS.

Why, as to increasing the army—
HARDMAN.

When a man is suspected by the Government, there is but
one course to pursue. For that Government he must vote thick and thin.
SIR THOMAS.

I'm eternally obliged to you, Mr. Hardman. The Tower! What an escape I have had?
HARDMAN.

You may just give a hint to your friends. (*Sir Thomas retires to the background.*) Frightened a conspirator, and
fright is contagious. Hit them both on the right side of the character. (*Advancing.*) I serve Walpole well. The
means may be doubtful; I'm content with the end. For at heart I love England and freedom, and Walpole steers
both through Charybdis and Scylla—civil war and the Stuart. I have sent off my letter; this place,—he must give
it; the first favour I have asked. Hope smiles; I am at peace with all men. Now to save Wilmot's father.
(*Approaches the box at which David Fallen is writing, and stoops down, as if arranging his buckle.*) (*To Fallen.*
Hist! Whatever the secret, remember, not a word save to me)

[*Passes down the stage, and is eagerly greeted by various frequenters of the
Coffee-house.*

Enter Lord Loftus.

LORD LOFTUS.

Drawer, I engage this box; give me the newspaper. So— 'Rumoured Jacobite plot—'

Enter the Duke of Middlesex.

DUKE.

My dear lord, I obey your appointment. But is not the place you select rather strange?
LOFTUS.

Be seated, I pray you. No place so fit for our purpose. First, because its very publicity prevents all suspicion.
We come to a coffee-house, where all ranks and all parties
assemble, to hear the news, like the rest. And, secondly, we could scarcely meet our agent anywhere else. He is a
Tory pamphleteer; was imprisoned for our sake in the time of William and Mary. If we, so well known to be
Tories, are seen to confer with him here, 'twill only be thought that we are suggesting some points in a pamphlet.
But you have read the papers; a plot is suspected. You are sure that King James is a Protestant?

DUKE.

SCENE I.

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Assured of it. I could not serve him if he were not. My ancestors took part in the Reformation.
LORD LOFTUS.

The army's to be increased.
DUKE.

Let a thing called a Government levy its hirelings; the true force of the country is with the Barons of England. We proved that—in the days of King John.

LOFTUS (aside).

That's a long time ago! 'Tis my honour I obey, not my reason. Thank heaven, in affecting to banish my Frederic from my house, I have kept him clear from even a suspicion that may attach to myself. My gallant, joyous son! May I beckon our agent?
DUKE.

Certainly. He risks his life for us; he shall be duly rewarded. Let him sit by our side.
[LORD LOFTUS motions to David Fallen, who takes up his pamphlet and approaches openly.

DUKE.

I have certainly seen somewhere before that very thin man. Be seated, sir. Honourable danger makes all men equal.

FALLEN.

No, my Lord Duke. I know you not. It is the Earl I confer with. *(Aside. I never stood in his hall, with lackeys and porters.)*
DUKE.

Powers above! That scare-crow rejects my acquaintance! —Portentous!
[Stunned and astonished.

LOFTUS.

Observe, Duke, we speak in a sort of jargon. Pamphlet means messenger. *(To Fallen, aloud.)* Well, Mr. Fallen, when will the pamphlet be ready?

FALLEN (aloud).

Tomorrow, my Lord, exactly at one o'clock.

DUKE (still bewildered).

I don't understand—
LOFTUS.

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Hush! Walpole laughs at pamphlets, but would hang messengers. (*Aloud.*) To-morrow, not to-day? Well, more time for—

FALLEN.

Subscribers. Thank you, my Lord. (*Whispering.*) Where shall the messenger meet you?

LOFTUS.

At the back of the Duke's new house in Bond Street, there is a quiet, lone place—

FALLEN (whispering).

By the wall of Lord Berkely's garden? I know it. The messenger shall be there. The signal word, 'Marston Moor.' No conversation should pass. But who brings the packet? That's the first step of danger.

DUKE (suddenly rousing himself, and with dignity).

Then 'tis mine, sir, in right of my birth.

FALLEN (aloud).

I'll attend to all your lordship's suggestions; they're excellent, and will startle this vile administration. Many thanks to your lordship.

[Returns to his table and resumes his writing. Groups point and murmur. Jacob Tonson advances.]

EASY.

That pestilent scribbler, David Fallen! Another libellous pamphlet as bitter as the last, I'll swear.

TONSON.

Bitter as gall, sir, I am proud to say. Your servant; Jacob Tonson, the bookseller,—at your service. I advanced a pound upon it.

EASY.

I really wonder Walpole does not prosecute.

HARDMAN.

Prosecute? He would rather pay for it. 'Tis his maxim, that one scurrilous pamphlet saves a country from fifty conspiracies. You look surprised, gentlemen: why, I remember, three months ago, when our friend Mr. Easy here was teased with the nettle-rash, that his doctor said— 'Don't complain, Mr. Easy, a strong constitution throws out an eruption; a weak one would have smouldered away in a fever.' Disaffection when printed is only a nettle-rash, and the life of nations is saved when disease is thrown out on the surface.

EASY.

He knows I had the nettle-rash! Wonderful man, knows everything!

DUKE.

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I will meet you in the Mall to-morrow, a quarter after one precisely. We may go now? Powers above—his mind's distracted—he walks out before me!

LOFTUS (drawing back at the door).

I follow you, Duke.

DUKE.

My dear friend—if you really insist on it?

[Exeunt, bowing.]

HARDMAN.

Mr. Easy, I'll bet you ten guineas I find out what those Tories told David Fallen to put in his pamphlet.

EASY.

Well, you are certain to win, but I can afford to lose; and I should like to know. Done!

HARDMAN.

Drawer, a bottle of Claret—at this table.

[Bows to Fallen and sits down; Fallen scowling at him.]

EASY.

What a clever imperturbable dog it is—so thoroughly practical! Finds out everything, that Hardman! Sure to rise, eh!

[Coffee-house frequenters evince their admiration and assent.]

HARDMAN (as the Drawer places the wine, &c. on the table.)

Let me offer you a glass of wine, Mr. Fallen—*(Aside.)* Well?—

[Fallen, who has been writing, pushes the paper towards him.]

HARDMAN (reading).

"At one to-morrow—the wall by Lord Berkely's—Marston Moor—The Duke in person"—So! We must save these men. I will call on you in the morning, and concert the means.

FALLEN.

Yes, save, not destroy, these enthusiasts. I'm resigned to the name of a hireling—not to that of a butcher!

HARDMAN.

You serve both Whig and Jacobite; do you care then for either?

FALLEN.

Sneering politician! what has either cared for me? I entered the world, devoted heart and soul to two

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causes—the throne of the Stuart, the glory of Letters. I saw them both as a poet. My father left me no heritage but loyalty and learning. He sold all he had to levy troops for King Charles, and buried his gold in the red field of Marston Moor. Charles the Second praised my verse, and I starved: James the Second praised my prose, and I starved; the reign of King William—I passed *that* in prison!

HARDMAN.

But the ministers of Anne were gracious to writers.

FALLEN.

And offered me a pension to belie my past life, and write Odes on the Queen who had dethroned her own father. I was not then disenchanted—I refused. That's years ago. If I starved, I had fame. Now came my worst foes, my own fellow-writers. What is fame but a fashion? A jest upon Grub Street, a rhyme from young Pope, could jeer a score of grey labourers like me out of their last consolation. Time and hunger tame all. I could still starve myself; I have six children at home—they must live.

HARDMAN.

This man has genius—he might have been a grace to his age. I'm perplexed; Sir Robert—

FALLEN.

Disdains Letters—I've renounced them. He pays services like these. Well—I serve him. Leave me; go!

HARDMAN (rising).

Not so bad as he seems—another side to the character: this moves me; I've been a writer myself. But the remedy? A state may but humble by alms; a minister corrupt by a bribe: what Patron then for Letters!—The public?—yes, for the Author, whose talents the Public may chance to appreciate. And for those who, with toils as severe, but

with genius less shaped to the taste of the many, can win not the ear of the day, why perhaps in some far distant age, when eno' of the strong have dropped to death broken-hearted, and eno' of the weak (bowed down by the tyrant Necessity,) have veiled in shame and despair the eyes that once looked to the stars; these rival children of light may learn at last, that the tie they now rend should be the bond to unite them, and help one another. I have lost the bet, Mr. Easy.

EASY (pocketing the money).

Hardman's not so clever as I thought he was, by ten guineas.

[Coffee-house frequenters evince their assent, but no longer their admiration.]

Enter Drawer, with a letter to Hardman.

HARDMAN.

From Walpole! Now then! my fate—my love—my fortunes!

EASY (peeping over HARDMAN'S shoulder).

He has got a letter from the Prime Minister, marked 'private and confidential.' (*Great agitation.*) After all, he

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is a very clever fellow.

[Coffee-house frequenters evince the readiest assent, and the liveliest admiration.]

HARDMAN (advancing and reading the letter).

"My dear Hardman,—Extremely sorry; in these times Government must strengthen itself amongst the doubtful. Place in question absolutely wanted to conciliate some noble family otherwise dangerous. [Note: As Walpole was little inclined to make it a part of his policy to conciliate those whose opposition might be dangerous, while he was so fond of power as to be jealous of talent not wholly subservient to him, the reluctance to promote Mr. Hardman implied in the insincerity of his excuse, may be supposed to arise from his knowledge of that gentleman's restless ambition, and determined self-will.] Another time, more fortunate. Fully sensible of your valuable services.—Robert Walpole."

—Refused! Let him look to himself! I will—I will—Alas! he is needed by my country; and I am powerless against him.

[Seats himself.]

Enter Wilmot and Softhead.

WILMOT.

Drawer! a private room—covers for six—dinner in an hour! [Note: It was not the custom at Will's to serve dinners; and the exception in favour of my Lord Wilmot proves his influence as a man *à la mode.*] And—drawer! Tell Mr. Tonson not to go yet. Softhead, we'll have an orgy to-night, worthy the days of King Charles the Second. What's your favourite wine?

SOFTHEAD.

For Heaven's sake, not that diabolical Burgundy!

WILMOT.

Disloyal to Burgundy! the only wine now in fashion,— unless, by the bye, you prefer aqua-fortis? Drawer!

SOFTHEAD.

No—no—no! Let it be Burgundy! Homicide!

WILMOT.

Just as you like. Let me see—there'll be six of us—a dozen to each. Drawer,—send to Lockett's for six dozen of Burgundy—other wines in proportion. By the way, Softhead, you smoke, of course?

SOFTHEAD.

Smoke! that filthy tobacco! Not I. Tried it once at the Twopenny Club, [Note: Perhaps the club thus designated in the "Spectator."] and felt as if on board ship, with the sea rolling mountains! The beastliest thing—

WILMOT.

Not smoke, and pretend to be a man *à la mode*?

SOFTHEAD.

Come, come, that's too good! All the fishwomen in Billingsgate smoke—seen them myself, and heard them, too— railing, abusive, impudent creatures!

WILMOT.

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Of course, they are. The impudence of Billingsgate gives the mode to St. James's! only here, names are different. There abuse, and here scandal. There railing,—here wit.

SOFTHEAD.

As for wit, I'm a match for the best of you!—but tobacco—

WILMOT.

Is to wits the ambrosia. See, there Mr. Addison smokes, and writes "Cato." See there, Mr. Pulteney makes verses like Martial, speeches like Cicero, and smokes—like Mount Etna; while the great Duke of Wharton, who is the duke among wits, and the wit among dukes, has just written an Ode upon Pigtail, in imitation of Pindar!—Drawer, don't forget pipes and tobacco! the strongest Virginia!

SOFTHEAD.

Pindar! What's that, I wonder! Something more demoniac than all. Stop! If the Duke of Wharton is here, can't you present me to him? You see I did not get eno' of the other duke this morning.

WILMOT.

Not eno' of him! You are a cormorant of dukes, and deserve to be haunted by one.

SOFTHEAD.

Hardman's very words! Haunted by a Duke. No such good luck.

WILMOT.

(who has been shaking hands and talking apart with Lord Strongbow, Sir John Bruin, and Colonel Flint; showing, by his bye-play, that he lets them into his plot against Softhead and Easy.)

Softhead, I must present you to our boon companions; —my friend, Lord Strongbow (hardest drinker in England); Sir John Bruin, best boxer in England—threshed Figg; quarrelsome, but pleasant: Colonel Flint—finest gentleman in England, and, out and out, the best fencer; mild as a lamb, but can't bear contradiction, and, on the point of honour, inexorable. Now, for the sixth. Ha, Mr. Easy! (I ask him to serve you.) Easy, your hand! So charmed that you've come. You'll dine with us—given up five invitations on purpose. Do—*sans cérémonie*.

EASY.

Why, really, my Lord, a plain sober man like me would be out of place—

WILMOT.

If that's all, never fear. Live with us, and we'll make another man of you, Easy!

EASY.

What captivating familiarity! Well, I cannot resist your lordship. *(Strutting down the room, and speaking to his acquaintances.)* Yes, my friend Wilmot—Lord Wilmot—*will* make me dine with him. Pleasant man, my friend Wilmot. We dine together to-day.

SOFTHEAD.

Easy invited? La! how flattered he looks,—"asked to serve me," ha!—I understand—such a sober, steady fellow: never smokes, never drinks, and so despises those who imitate others, that he'll keep me company in shirking that villanous Burgundy, and eschewing that damnable pigtail. Very considerate in Fred.—He's not so bad as he seems.

[Softhead retires to the background with the other invited guests; but, trying hard to

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escape Sir John Bruin, the boxer, and Col. Flint, the fencer, fastens himself on Easy with an air of patronage.

WILMOT.

Ah, Mr. Tonson. (*Aside.* Now to serve the dear Duke.) You have not yet bought the Memoir of a late Man of Quality?

TONSON.

Not yet, my Lord; just been trying; hard work. (*Wipes his forehead.*) But the person who has it is luckily very poor; one of my own authors.

WILMOT.

His eye turns to that forlorn looking spectre I saw him tormenting. That must be one of your authors; he looks so lean, Mr. Tonson?

TONSON.

Hush! That's the man; made a noise in his day; David Fallen.

WILMOT.

David Fallen, whose books, when I was but a school-boy, made me first take to reading,—not as taskwork, but pleasure. How much I do owe him!

[Bows very low to Mr. Fallen.]

TONSON.

My lord bows very low! Oh, if your lordship knows Mr. Fallen, pray tell him not to stand in his own light. I would give him a vast sum for the Memoir,—two hundred guineas; on my honour I would! (*Whispering.*) Scandal, my lord; sell like wild-fire.—I say, Mr. Hardman, I observed you speak to poor David. Can't you help me here? (*Whispering.*) Lord Henry de Mowbray's Private Memoirs! Fallen has them, and refuses to sell. Love Adventures; nuts for the public. Only just got a peep myself. But *such* a confession about the beautiful Lady Morland.

HARDMAN.

Hang Lady Morland!

TONSON.

Besides—shows up his own brother! Jacobite family secrets. Such a card for the Whigs!

HARDMAN.

Confound the Whigs! What do I care?

WILMOT.

I'll see to it, Tonson. Give me Mr. Fallen's private address.

TONSON.

But pray be discreet, my Lord. If that knave Curll should get wind of the scent, he'd try to spoil my market with my own author. The villain!

WILMOT.

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(*Aside.* Curll? Why, I have mimick'd Curll so exactly, that Pope himself was deceived, and, stifling with rage, ordered me out of the room. I have it! Mr. Curll shall call upon Fallen the first thing in the morning, and outbid Mr. Tonson.) Thank you, sir. (*Taking the address.*) Moody, my Hardman? some problem in political ethics?

HARDMAN.

Ay, the oldest of all!—the grand social beehive; the toil and the idleness—the bee and the drone.

WILMOT.

And thinking, no doubt, that the bee has the best of it! We may yet toil together, my Hardman.

HARDMAN.

This, in you, is new language and noble!

WILMOT.

It comes from Love, the ennobler! You turn away,—you have a grief you'll not tell me—why, this morning I asked you a favour; from that moment I had a right to your confidence, for a favour degrades when it does not come from a friend.

HARDMAN.

You charm, you subdue me, and I feel for once how necessary to man is the sympathy of another. Your hand, Wilmot. This is secret—I, too, then presume to love. One above me in fortune; it may be in birth. But a free state lifts those it employs to a par with its nobles. A post in the Treasury of such nature is vacant; I have served the minister, men say, with some credit; and I asked for the gift without shame—'twas my due. Walpole needs the office, not for reward to the zealous, but for bribe to the doubtful. See, (*giving letter*) "Noble family to conciliate." Ah, the drones have the honey!

WILMOT (reading and returning the letter).

And, had you this post, you think you could gain the lady you love?

HARDMAN.

At least it would have given me courage to ask. Well, well, well,—a truce with my egotism,—you at least, my fair Wilmot, fair in form, fair in fortune, you need fear no rebuff where you place your affections.

WILMOT.

Why, the lady's father sees only demerits in what you think my advantages.

HARDMAN.

You mistake, I know the man much better than you do; and look, even now he is gazing upon you as fondly as if on the coronet that shall blazon the coach of my lady, his daughter.

WILMOT.

Gazing on me?—where?

HARDMAN.

Yonder—Ha! is it not Mr. Easy, whose—

WILMOT.

Mr. Easy! you too taken in! Hark, secret for secret— 'tis Lucy Thornside I love.

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HARDMAN.

You—stun me!

WILMOT.

But what a despot Love is, allows no thought, not its slave! They told me below, that my father had been here; have you seen him?

HARDMAN.

Ay.

WILMOT.

And sounded?

HARDMAN.

No—better than that—I have taken precautions, I must leave you now; you shall know the result to-morrow afternoon. (*Aside.* Your father's life in these hands—his ransom what I please to demand.—Ah, joy! I am myself once again. Fool to think man could be my friend! Ah, joy! born but for the strife and the struggle, it is only 'mid foes that my invention is quickened! Half way to my triumph, now that I know the rival to vanquish!) (*To Fallen.* Engage the messenger at one, forget not. Nothing else till I see you.) (*To Wilmot.*) Your hand once again. Today I'm your envoy; (*Aside:* to-morrow your master.)

[*Exit.*

WILMOT.

The friendliest man that ever lived since the days of Damon and Pythias; I'm a brute if I don't serve him in return. To lose the woman he loves for want of this pitiful place. Saint Cupid forbid! "Conciliate some noble family," Walpole has been trying these two years to conciliate Fred Wilmot. Knows there are at least six young puppies who would vote as I asked 'em; just to be brought into fashion. But I can't sell myself. Let me consider! Many sides to a character—I think I could here hit the right one better than Hardman. Ha, ha! Excellent! My Murillo! I'll not sell myself, but I'll buy the prime minister! Excuse me, my friends; urgent business; I shall be back ere the dinner hour; the room is prepared. Drawer, show in these gentlemen: Hardman shall have his place and his wife, and I'll bribe the arch-briber! Ho, my lackies, my coach, there! Ha, ha! bribe the prime minister! There never was such a fellow as I am for crime and audacity.

[*Exit Wilmot.*

COLONEL FLINT.

Your arm, Mr. Softhead.

SOFTHEAD.

Thank you, I'll follow—

COLONEL FLINT (*curling his moustache, and one hand on his sword-hilt*).
Am I to understand that the arm of Colonel Flint is disdained by Mr. Softhead?

SOFTHEAD.

Disdained; which arm—left arm—right arm?

COLONEL FLINT.

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Left, sir, the sword side; dangerous side of my character, sir! I ought to have observed, that, in points of honour, I'm touchy!

SOFTHEAD.

And Fred leaves me in the very paws of this tiger!

[Exeunt.]

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SCENE II.

The Library in Sir Geoffrey's House.

Enter Sir Geoffrey.

I'm followed! I'm dogged! I go out for a walk unsuspectingly; and behind creeps a step, pit, pat; feline and stealthy; I turn, not a soul to be seen—I walk on; pit, pat, stealthy and feline; turn again; and lo! a dark form like a phantom, muffled and masked—just seen and just gone. Ouf! The plot thickens around me—I can struggle no more.

[Sinks into a seat.

Enter Lucy.

—A step; ha, again; who is there?

LUCY.

But your child, my dear father.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Child, ugh! What do you want?

LUCY.

Ah, speak to me gently. It is your heart that I want!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Heart—I suspect I'm to be coaxed out of something!— Eh; eh! Why she's weeping. What ails thee, poor darling?

LUCY.

So kind. Now I have courage to tell you. I was sitting alone, and I thought to myself—'my father often doubts of me—doubts of all'—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh—what now?

LUCY.

'Yet his true nature is generous—it could not always have been so. Perhaps in old times he has been deceived where he loved. Ah, his Lucy, at least, shall never deceive him.' So I rose and listened for your footstep—I heard it—and I am here—here, on your bosom, my own father!

SIR GEOFFREY.

You'll never deceive me—right, right—go on, pretty one, go on. (*Aside.* If she should be my child after all?)

LUCY.

There is one who has come here lately—one who appears to displease you—one whom you've been led to believe comes not on my account, but my friend's. It is not so, my father; it is for me that he comes. Let him come

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no more—let me see him no more—for—for—I feel that his presence might make me too happy—and that would grieve you, O my father!

SIR GEOFFREY.

(Aside. She must be my child! Bless her!) I'll never doubt you again. I'll bite out my tongue if it says a harsh word to you. I'm not so bad as I seem. Grieve me?—yes, it would break my heart. You don't know these gay courtiers—I do!—Knew just such another—they have no honour—no mercy—not one of them—tut—tut—tut—don't cry. What shall I say to console her?—Oh, he's not the only man in the world—I'll find you another, who will love you in earnest; who *will* make you happy;—worthy, excellent man! Why, she's crying worse than before!

HARDMAN'S voice without.

Is Sir Geoffrey at home?

[Lucy starts up. As Hardman enters, a figure draped and masked passes by the open window and looks in.—Twilight—during the preceding dialogue in the scene, the stage has gradually darkened.]

LUCY.

My heart is less heavy! Grief does not weigh like deceit!

HARDMAN.

Excuse this late hour. Ah—what is that yonder?—Look!

[The figure disappears.]

SIR GEOFFREY.

What?—where?

HARDMAN.

At the window. It is gone. Nay, but an idler's curiosity. *(Sir Geoffrey runs to the window and looks out).*—I have not very long since left my Lord Wilmot. Hey! Did you ask where?

LUCY (faintly).

No.

HARDMAN.

I thought you did. 'Twas at his haunt in a coffee-house; preparing for what my lord calls an orgy.

[Exit Lucy.]

SIR GEOFFREY (catching hold of him which prevents his observing Lucy as she goes out).

I don't see any one.

HARDMAN.

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A chance passer by, I assure you. Sir Geoffrey, you were deceived; Lord Wilmot has no thought of Mr. Easy's daughter.

SIR GEOFFREY.

He!—he!—I know that—no one could long deceive *me!* Lucy has told me all, and begged me not to let him come here again.

HARDMAN (joyfully).

She has! Then she does not love this Lord Wilmot?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Love; nonsense! She has not seen him six times. Can't say how it might be if she saw more of him; but that will not be. It is not so hard to say "Get you gone" to a suitor!

HARDMAN.

But the arts of corruption—the emissary—the letter—the go-between—the spy?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Arts! Spy! Ha! if Easy was right after all. If those flowers thrown in at the window; the watch from that house in the lane; the masked figure that followed me; all bode designs but on Lucy—

HARDMAN.

Flowers have been thrown in at the window? You've been watched? A masked figure has followed you? One question more. All this since Lord Wilmot knew Lucy?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Yes, to be sure; how blind I have been!

[Masked figure reappears.]

HARDMAN.

'Twas a face with the vizard women wear now—a-days, that I saw at the window. Ha! Look again. Let me track this mystery (*Figure disappears*): and if it conceal a scheme of Lord Wilmot's against your daughter's honour, it shall need not your sword to protect her.

[Leaps from the window.]

SIR GEOFFREY.

What does he mean? Not *my* sword? 'Zounds! he don't think of his own! If he does, I'll discard him. I'm not a coward, to let other men risk their lives in my quarrel. Served as a volunteer under Marlbro', at Blenheim; and marched on a cannon! Whatever my faults, no one can say I'm not brave. (*Starting.*) Ha! bless my life! What is that? I thought I heard something—I'm all on a tremble! Who the deuce *can* be brave when he's surrounded by poisoners—followed by phantoms; with an ugly black face peering in at his window?—Hodge! come and bar up the shutters—lock the door—let out the house—dog! Hodge! Hodge! Where on earth is that scoundrel?

Exit.

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SCENE III.

The Streets—in perspective an Alley inscribed Deadman's Lane—a large, old-fashioned, gloomy House in the Corner, with the door on the stage, above which is impanelled a sign of the Crown and Portcullis. Enter a Female Figure, masked—looks round, pauses, and enters the door.

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

Ha! enters that house. I have my hand on the clue! Some pretext to call on the morrow, and I shall quickly unravel the skein.

[Exit.

GOODENOUGH EASY (singing without).

"Old King Cole
Was a jolly old soul,
And a jolly old soul was he—

[Entering, with Lord Wilmot and Softhead, Easy, his dress disordered, a pipe in his mouth, in a state of intoxication, hilarious, musical, and oratorical—Softhead in a state of intoxication, abject, remorseful, and lachrymose—Wilmot sober, but affecting inebriety.

He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three!"

WILMOT.

Ha, ha! I imagine myself like Bacchus, between Silenus and his—ass!
EASY.

Wilmot, you're a jolly old soul, and I'll give you my Barbara.

SOFTHEAD (blubbing).

Hegh! hegh! hegh! Betrayed in my tenderest affection.

WILMOT.

My dear Mr. Easy, I've told you already that I'm pre-engaged.

EASY.

Pre-engaged! that's devilish unhandsome! But now I look at you, you do seem double: and if you're double, you're not single; and if you're not single, why you can't marry Barbara, for that would be bigamy! But I don't care; you're a jolly old soul!

WILMOT.

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Not a bit of it. Quite mistaken, Mr. Easy. But if you want, for a son-in-law, a jolly old soul—there he is!

SOFTHEAD (bursting out afresh).

Hegh! hegh! hegh!
EASY.

Hang a lord! What's a lord? I'm a respectable, independent family Briton!—Softhead, give us your fist: you're a jolly old soul, and *you* shall have Barbara!

SOFTHEAD.

Hegh! hegh! I'm not a jolly old soul. I'm a sinful, wicked, miserable monster. Hegh! hegh!
EASY.

What's a monster? I like a monster! My girl shan't go a-begging any farther. You're a precious good fellow, and your father's an alderman, and has got a great many votes, and I'll stand for the City: and you *shall* have my Barbara.

SOFTHEAD.

I don't deserve her, Mr. Easy; I don't deserve such an angel! I'm not precious good. Lords and tigers have corrupted my innocence. Hegh, hegh! I'm as sick as a dog, and I'm going to be hanged.

WATCH (without).

Half-past eight o'clock!
WILMOT.

Come along, gentlemen; we shall have the watch on us!

EASY.

"And the bands that guard the City,
Cried—'Rebels, yield or die!'"

Enter Watchman.

WATCHMAN.

Half-past eight o'clock!—Move on! move on!
EASY.

Order, order! Mr. Vice and gentlemen, here's a stranger disturbing the harmony of the evening. I knock him down for a song. (*Seizes the Watchman's rattle.*) Half-past Eight, Esq., on his legs! Sing, sir; I knock you down for a song.

WATCHMAN.

Help! help! Watch! watch!

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[Cries within, "Watch!"

SOFTHEAD.

Hark! the officers of justice! My wicked career is approaching its close!

EASY (who has got astride on the Watchman's head, and persuades himself that the rest of the Watchman is the table).

Mr. Vice and gentlemen, the toast of the evening— what's the matter with the table? 'Tis bobbing up and down. The table's drunk! Order for the Chair—you table, you! *(Thumps the Watchman with the rattle.)* Fill your glasses—a bumper toast. Prosperity to the City of London—nine times nine—Hip, hip, hurrah! *(Waves the rattle over his head; the rattle springs, and makes all the noise of which rattles are capable.) (Amazed.)* Why, the Chairman's hammer is as drunk as the table!

Enter Watchmen with staves, springing their rattles.

WILMOT (drawing Softhead off into a corner).

Hold your tongue—they'll not see us here!

WATCHMAN (escaping).

Murder!—murder!—this is the fellow!—most desperate ruffian.

[Easy is upset by the escape of the Watchman, and, after some effort to remove him otherwise, the Guardians of the Night hoist him on their shoulders.

EASY.

I'm being chaired member for the City! Freeman and Electors! For this elevation to the post of member for your metropolis, I return you my heartfelt thanks! Steady there, steady! The proudest day of my life.—'Tis the boast of the British Constitution that a plain, sober man like me may rise to honours the most exalted! Long live the British Constitution. Hip—hip—hurrah!

[Is carried off waving the rattle. Softhead continues to weep in speechless sorrow.

WILMOT (coming forth).

Ha! ha! ha!—My family Briton being chaired for the City!—Stand up; how do you feel?

SOFTHEAD.

Feel! I'm a ruin!

WILMOT.

Faith, I never saw a more mournful one! It must be near Sir Geoffrey's!—Led them here—on my way to this sepulchral appointment, Deadman's Lane! Where the plague can it be? Ha! the very place. Looks like it! How get rid of Softhead.—Ha, ha! I have it. Softhead, awake! the night has begun—the time for monsters and their prey. Now will I lift the dark veil from the mysteries of London. Behold that house, Deadman's Lane!

SCENE III.

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SOFTHEAD.

Deadman's Lane! I'm in a cold perspiration!

WILMOT.

In that house—under the antique sign of Crown and Portcullis—are such delightful horrors at work as would make the wigs of holy men stand on end! The adventure is dangerous, but deliriously exciting. Into that abode which woman were lost did she enter, which man is oft hanged when he leaves—into that abode will we plunge, and gaze, like Macbeth, "on deeds without a name."

SOFTHEAD (in a paroxysm of terror and woe).

Heh! heh! heh! I won't gaze on deeds without a name! I won't plunge into dead men's abodes! I'll go home to my mother! Heh! heh! heh! Let me go—let me go.

[Exit.

WILMOT.

Ha, ha! I've at least kept my promise to Barbara. I think her poor lover's half way to the City already! And as for papa, who has just been chaired member for it—"such a very independent man"—"so severe on a cheerful glass"—he has chosen a son-in-law drunk, and egad, he shall keep to him sober. So this is the house—not too late to call. No, it is not yet nine—the writer fixes the evening—the inducement Lucy's name, and a benevolent action. She knows how to enlist the heart of a lover. Whatever our own faults may be, 'tis so pleasant to couple with kind thought or good deed, the name of the woman we love! By Venus Urania, no man's a monster on that side his character.

[Knocks and enters.

END OF ACT III.

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ACT IV.

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SCENE I.

The library in Sir Geoffrey's house.

Enter Sir Geoffrey, with a nosegay in his hand.

SIR GEOFFREY.

No, no! these pestilent flowers can't come from Wilmot; they must come from that villain, mine old friend and enemy; meant as a jest to insult me. That man!—my blood boils! I'll find him out, and I'll fight him again; and if I am killed, what's to become, then, of Lucy? Why not marry her to Hardman at once? At her age, a girl's notions on love cannot be very decided.

Enter Hodge.

HODGE.

Mr. Hardman, sir.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Show him in. (*Exit Hodge.*) Yes, he is clever; but perhaps he is *too* clever! Ugh! I'd better first try him. Suppose I ask him to tell me his birth and his history; and as he speaks truly or falsely, discard him as a liar or adopt him as a son.

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

I come early. I tracked the figure to the house that you spoke of. But what—flowers again! This insolent lord—

SIR GEOFFREY.

No, no! the flowers don't come from Wilmot. I tell you, they don't. Hardman, draw near. I've known you patient and brave, laborious and earnest; but you are ambitious. Ambition sometimes puzzles the simple. For my part, I think you really love fame and your country.

HARDMAN.

I do. I love fame, for her voice lifted thought into hope; I love my country, because, though her customs be harsh to the lowly, she has not one law that forbids the lowly to rise.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Well said! Look me straight in the face. Ugh, I don't know; you have a look of a man whom I loved as a boy;—my own foster-brother,—the son of a yeoman. I made him my equal. He aided my cousin to trick me out of my birthright, by false tales to my father. Very nearly succeeded. And in dying (I pardoned him, dying,) he had the effrontery to say that he had never betrayed, if I had never suspected.

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HARDMAN (smiling).

Might not that have been true?

SIR GEOFFREY.

You think so. Well, I'll not suspect you,—at least, I'll try. Look me still in the face. Can I trust you? A grave trust, sir,—the happiness of another!

HARDMAN.

Thus appealed to, I say fearlessly, trust me!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Hem! I've seen that you're not indifferent to Lucy. But before I approve or discourage, just tell me more of yourself,—your birth, your fortune, past life. Of course, you are the son of a gentleman?—He turns aside. (*Aside.* He will lie!)

HARDMAN.

Sir, at the risk of my hopes, I will speak the hard truth. "The son of a gentleman!" I think not. My infancy passed in the house of a farmer; the children with whom I played told me I was an orphan. I was next dropped, how I know not, in the midst of that rough world called school. When the holidays came, my companions went home. There was no home for me. I asked, "Why?" and the master said, "Why? but because you're an orphan." Then he looked at me with a stern sort of kindness. "You have talent," said he, "but you're idle; you have no right to holidays; you must force your way through life; you are sent here by charity."

SIR GEOFFREY.

Charity! *There*, the old fool was wrong!

HARDMAN.

Wrong or right, sir, he changed my whole nature; my idleness vanished—I became the head of the school. Then I resolved no longer to be the pupil of—Charity. At the age of sixteen I escaped, and took for my motto—the words of the master—"You must force your way thro' life." Hope and pride whispered—"You'll force it!"

SIR GEOFFREY.

Poor fellow! What then?

HARDMAN.

Eight years of wandering, adventure, hardship, and trial, I often wanted bread—never courage. At the end of those years I had risen—to what? A desk at a lawyer's office in Norfolk.—

SIR GEOFFREY (aside).

My own lawyer? where I first caught trace of him again. He is true! I like him better and better.

HARDMAN.

I was then four—and—twenty. It was Walpole's native county. Party spirit ran high in the town. Politics began to bewitch me. There was a Speaking Club, and I spoke. Squires and yeomen rode from a distance to hear young Hardman discuss what neither he nor themselves understood. My ambition rose higher—took the flight of an

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author. I came up to London with ten pounds in my pocket, and a work on the "State of the Nation."
SIR GEOFFREY.

He! he!
HARDMAN.

After fifty refusals, I found a bookseller to publish my treatise. It sold well; the publisher brought me four hundred pounds. "Vast fortunes," said he, "are made in the South Sea Scheme. Venture your hundreds,—I'll send you a broker."—

SIR GEOFFREY.

He! he! I hope he was clever, that broker?
HARDMAN.

Clever indeed: in a fortnight he said to me, "Your hundreds have swelled into thousands. For this money I can get you an Annuity on land, just enough for a parliamentary qualification." The last hint fired me—I bought the Annuity. You now know my fortune, and how it was made.

SIR GEOFFREY (aside).

He! he! I must tell this to Easy; how he'll enjoy it.
HARDMAN.

Not long after, at a political coffee-house, a man took me aside. "Sir," said he, "you are Mr. Hardman, who wrote the famous work on 'The State of the Nation.' Will you come into Parliament? We want a man like you for our borough; we'll return you free of expense; not a shilling of bribery."

SIR GEOFFREY.

He! he! Wonderful! not a shilling of bribery!

HARDMAN.

The man kept his word, and I came into Parliament—inexperienced and friendless—not a soul there cared a straw for me or—the "State of the Nation." I spoke, and was laughed at; spoke again, and was listened to; failed often; succeeded at last. Here, yesterday, in ending my tale I must have said, looking down, "Can you give your child to a man of birth more than doubtful; and of fortunes so humble?" Yet aspiring even then to the hand of your heiress, I wrote to Sir Robert for a place just vacated by a man of high rank, who is raised to the peerage. He refused.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Of course. (*Aside.* I suspect he's very rash and presuming.)
HARDMAN.

To-day the refusal is retracted—the office is mine.

SIR GEOFFREY (astonished and aside).

Ha! I had no hand in that!
HARDMAN.

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I am now one—if not of the highest—yet still *one* of that Government through which the Majesty of England administers her laws. And, with front erect, I say to you— as I would to the first peer of the realm—"I have no charts of broad lands, and no roll of proud fathers. But alone and unfriended, I have fought my way against Fortune. Did your ancestors more? My country has trusted the new man to her councils, and the man whom she honours is the equal of all."

SIR GEOFFREY.

Brave fellow, your hand. I look you again in the face,— not to doubt you this time. I see you are candid, I believe you are good.

HARDMAN.

Oh, generous friend, not so good as you deem me. Such trust makes me fear lest indeed I deceive you. There goes on *here*, for ever, a struggle between evil and good. Nature made me combative as the mastiff; and the zest of the chase trains the instinct to double and wind with the hound. Place before me a foe, and my soul leaps to war. Vanish all thoughts, save of conflict, stratagem, conquest! But friendship, affection, kindness, love—these have been so strange since my birth, that, finding them now, I stand amazed at myself!

SIR GEOFFREY.

If this is not honesty, where on earth shall I find it? Enough. Win Lucy's consent, and you have mine. Hush! Win it soon, for she may soon need a protector. You are combative, are you? So much the better; good English quality; no getting on without it. Hark! I have been jeered at, insulted; these flowers are sent to me in mockery. I'll fight the vile ribald. Look him up. I make you my second.

HARDMAN.

(*Aside.* Poor man! So shrewd when his humour is not on him. What strange whim is this?) How can mockery be meant by these flowers?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! Sixteen years ago, I'd a wife—

HARDMAN (insinuatingly).

Yes?

SIR GEOFFREY.

With her head full of poetry; a romantic fair lady, forsooth.

HARDMAN.

Yes? And these flowers?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! She taught me the language of flowers. This posy is made up, like those that I gave her—intended to express trust in fidelity. I had a friend, too; a very gay gentleman, who used to laugh at my conjugal gallantries; *he was fond of a laugh*; and now this friend—Curse him!

HARDMAN.

Sends you these flowers after sixteen years? But, my dear sir, so pointless a joke—

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SIR GEOFFREY.

Pointless!—it goes to the heart.—You are dull! I said I'd a wife.

HARDMAN.

Well?

SIR GEOFFREY.

And a friend!

HARDMAN.

Well?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Well! all is told. I'd a friend and a wife!

HARDMAN.

Hum!—the wife was romantic, the friend a gay gentleman, and you suspected—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Suspected! I was in the room of a tavern. I sate in the corner—heard a laugh, and my name; heard my friend boast that my wife was his mistress, and struck the laugh from his lips with this hand! Ugh! don't talk of it! Not been quite right here ever since—I suspect.

HARDMAN.

He boasted—but did she confess?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! hold your tongue. Did you ever hear of a woman who *did* confess? Proud as Lucifer—said a question was insult—common trick of the sex. I would have thrust her from my house—but she left it herself. Heaven forgive her—I cannot.

HARDMAN.

Any proof to back this gay gentleman's boast?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Yes, sir, I had a proof: a menial confessed that he took a letter from her to the paramour—secretly; and on the very day of the boast.

HARDMAN (aside).

Hem—the very day, too!—that looks bad.—And is it only *now* that you would punish this man?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Could not kill him before, sir. I tried the next day, and was run through the body. Fine gentlemen fence well.

HARDMAN.

But if he wanted to remind you of his own infamy, why should he wait so long?

SIR GEOFFREY.

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Could not find me out, I suppose. Went abroad ere my wounds were yet healed, to get away from disgrace. Did not come back till a kinsman left me an estate, on condition that I took his name,—for mine then was Morland—

HARDMAN.

Morland!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Returned—shut myself up here like a rat in a hole. Thought I was safe from all gibe. Not so! I'm found out. (*Aside.* Heavens! and this man was my friend a year before Lucy was born! and I never yet dared to call her my child!) No more words—I *will* fight him again! Take the challenge at once.

HARDMAN.

You have not told me the name.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! 'tis very well known; Lord Henry de Mowbray.

HARDMAN.

The reprobate brother of the Duke of Middlesex? He is dead! Died a few months ago.

SIR GEOFFREY.

He is dead!—(*Aside.*) Don't believe it!

HARDMAN (aside).

Temper romantic—the masked figure must be his wife!— This does not look like guilt.—Ha! what did Tonson say of Lord Henry's Memoir?—confession about Lady Morland—in Fallen's hands.—I'll go to Fallen at once.

(*Aloud.*) Forgive my abruptness. I will follow up the new clue you have given me. When can I see you again?

SIR GEOFFREY.

I'm going to Easy's,—you'll find me there all the morning. But don't forget Lucy,—we must save her from Wilmot.

HARDMAN.

Fear Wilmot no more.—This day he shall abandon his suit.

[Exit Hardman.]

SIR GEOFFREY.

No—I don't believe he is dead.—No one else knew my habits—no one else could insult me. Hardman says it, to prevent my being run thro' the body again. Easy shall get at the truth. Hodge!

Enter Lucy and Hodge.

—Hodge, take your hat and your bludgeon—attend me to the City.

LUCY.

Ah! going out, sir?—one kiss,—do you trust me now?

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SIR GEOFFREY (caressing her).

Trust you! with all my heart, though there is not much left of it. She'll be happy with Hardman. You must never cry again.—Ah! if she were my own child after all.

[Exeunt Sir Geoffrey and Lucy.]

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SCENE II.

David Fallen's Garret. The scene resembling that of Hogarth's "Distrest Poet."

FALLEN (opening the casement).

So, the morning air breathes fresh! One moment's respite from drudgery. Another line to this poem, my grand bequest to my country! Ah! this description; unfinished; good, good.

"Methinks we walk in dreams on fairy land

Where—golden ore—lies mixed with—" [Note: As it would be obviously presumptuous to assign to an author so eminent as Mr. David Fallen, any verses composed by a living writer, the two lines in the text are taken from Mr. Dryden's *Indian Emperor*.]

Enter Paddy.

PADDY.

'Plase, sir, the milkwoman's score!

FALLEN.

Stay, stay;—

"Lies mixed with—common sand!"

Eh? Milkwoman? She must be paid, or the children—I—I— (*Fumbling in his pocket, and looking about the table.*) There's another blanket on the bed; pawn it.

PADDY.

Agh, now! don't be so ungrateful to your ould friend, the blanket. When Mr. Tonson, the great bookshiller, tould me, says he, "Paddy, I'd giv two hunder Gould guineas for the papursh Mr. Fallen has in his disk!"

[Knock.

FALLEN.

Go, go!

PADDY.

Agh, murther! Who can that be distarbin' the door at the top of the mornin'?

[Exit.

FALLEN.

Oh! that fatal Memoir! My own labours scarce keep me from starving, and this wretched scrawl of a profligate worth what to me were Golconda! Heaven sustain me! I'm tempted.

Enter Paddy, and Wilmot disguised as Edmund Curll.

PADDY.

Stoop your head, sir. 'Tis not a dun, sir; 'tis Mr. Curll; says he's come to outbid Mr. Tonson, sir.

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FALLEN.

Go quick; pawn the blanket. Let me think my children are fed. (*Exit Paddy.*) Now, sir, what do you want?

WILMOT (taking out his handkerchief and whimpering).

My dear good Mr. Fallen—no offence—I do so feel for the distresses of genius. I *am* a bookseller, but I have a heart—and I'm come to buy—

FALLEN.

Have you? this poem? it is nearly finished—twelve books —twenty years' labour—twenty—four thousand lines!—10l., Mr. Curll, 10l.!

WILMOT.

Price of *Paradise Lost*! Can't expect such prices for poetry now—a—days, my dear Mr. Fallen. Nothing takes that is not sharp and spicy. Hum! I hear you have some most interesting papers; private Memoirs and Confessions of a Man of Quality recently deceased. Nay, nay, Mr. Fallen; don't shrink back; I'm not like that shabby dog, Tonson. Three hundred guineas for the Memoir of Lord Henry de Mowbray!

FALLEN.

Three hundred guineas for that garbage!—not ten for the Poem!—and—the children! Well! (*Takes out the Memoir in a portfolio, splendidly bound, with the arms and supporters of the Mowbrays blazoned on the sides.*) Ah!—but the honour of a woman—the secrets of a family—the—

WILMOT (grasping at the portfolio which FALLEN still detains).

Nothing sells better, my dear, dear Mr. Fallen! But how, how did you come by these treasures, my excellent friend?

FALLEN.

How? Lord Henry gave them to me himself, on his death—bed.

WILMOT.

Nay; what could he give them for, but to publish, my sweet Mr. Fallen; no doubt to immortalise all the ladies who loved him.

FALLEN.

No, sir; profligate as he was, and vile as may be much in this Memoir, that was not his dying intention, though it might be his first. There was a lady he had once foully injured—the sole woman he had ever loved eno' for remorse. This Memoir contains a confession that might serve to clear the name he himself had aspersed; and in the sudden repentance of his last moments, he bade me seek the lady, and place the whole in her hands, to use, as might best serve to establish her innocence.

WILMOT.

(*Aside.* What! did even *he* have a good side to his character?) How could you know the lady, my benevolent friend?

FALLEN.

I did not; but she was supposed to be abroad with her father,—a Jacobite exile,—and I, then a Jacobite agent,

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had the best chance to trace her.

WILMOT.

And you did?

FALLEN.

But to hear she had died somewhere in France.

WILMOT.

Then, of course you may *now* gratify our intelligent Public, for your own personal profit. Clear as day, my magnanimous friend!

FALLEN.

I thought so; sent for Tonson—broke the seal; but when I came to read—No, no! Let go, sir.

WILMOT.

Three hundred guineas! I have 'em here in a bag!

FALLEN.

No, stop; let me just look again! Ha! this betrayal of his brother's most private correspondence—this—faugh! Shame, shame on you, base huckster of conscience! You know I am penniless,—starving! you know I have tarnished my name,—played fast and loose with all parties; but this were worse than deceit to placemen and jobbers. These Memoirs would give up to lewd gossip and scoff, whatever is sacred in the temple of home. Begone! I will not sell man's hearth to the public.

WILMOT.

(*Aside.* Noble fellow!) Gently, gently, my too warm, but high-spirited friend! To say the truth, I don't come on my own account. To whom, my dear sir, since the lady is dead, *should* be given these papers, if unfit for a virtuous, but inquisitive, public? Why, surely to Lord Henry's nearest relation. I am employed by the rich Duke of Middlesex. Name your terms.

FALLEN.

Ha! ha! Then at last he comes crawling to me, your proud Duke? Sir, years ago, when a kind word from his Grace, a nod of his head, a touch of his hand, would have turned my foes into flatterers, I had the meanness to name him my patron—inscribed to him a work, took it to his house, and waited in his hall among porters and lackeys—till, sweeping by to his carriage, he said, "Oh! you are the poet? take this,"—and extended his alms, as if to a beggar. "You look very thin, sir; stay and dine with my people." People—his servants!

WILMOT.

Calm yourself, my good Mr. Fallen; 'tis his Grace's innocent way with us all.

FALLEN.

Go! Let him know what this Household Treason contains! Lord Henry was a cynic and a wit; his brother had galled, and renounced him; much of these Memoirs was meant for revenge. They would make the proud Duke the butt of the town—the jeer of the lackeys, who jeered at my rags; expose his frailties, his follies, his personal secrets. Tell him this; and then say that my poverty shall not be the tool of his brother's revenge; but my pride shall not stoop from its pedestal to take money from him. Now, sir, am I right? Reply, not as tempter to pauper; but, if one spark of manhood be in you, as man speaks to man.

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WILMOT (resuming his own manner).

I reply, sir, as man to man, and gentleman to gentleman. I am Frederick, Lord Wilmot. Pardon this imposture. The Duke is my father's friend. I am here to obtain, what it is clear that he alone should possess. Mr. Fallen, your works first raised me from the world of the senses, and taught me to believe in such nobleness as I now hope for in you. Give me this record to take to the Duke—no price, sir; for such things are priceless—and let me go hence with the sight of this poverty before my eyes, and on my soul the grand picture of the man who has spurned the bribe to his honour, and can humble by a gift the great prince who insulted him by alms.

FALLEN.

Take it—take it! (*Gives the portfolio.*) I am saved from temptation. God bless you, young man!

WILMOT.

Now you indeed make me two-fold your debtor—in your books, the rich thought; in yourself, the heroic example. Accept from my superfluities, in small part of such debt, a yearly sum equal to that which your poverty refused as a bribe from Mr. Tonson.

FALLEN.

My Lord—my Lord—(*Bursts into tears.*)

WILMOT.

Oh, trust me, the day shall come, when men will feel that it is not charity we owe to the ennoblers of life—it is tribute! When your Order shall rise with the civilisation it called into being; and, amidst an assembly of all that is lofty and fair in the chivalry of birth, it shall refer its claim to just rank among freemen, to some Queen whom even a Milton might have sung, and even a Hampden have died for.

FALLEN.

O dream of my youth! My heart swells and chokes me!

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

What's this? Fallen weeping?—Ah! is not that the tyrannical sneak, Edmund Curl?—

WILMOT (changing his tone to FALLEN into one of imperiousness).

Can't hear of the poem, Mr. Fallen. Don't tell me. Ah! Mr. Hardman (*concealing the portfolio*), your most humble! Sir—sir—if you want to publish something smart and spicy—Secret Anecdotes of Cabinets—Sir Robert Walpole's Adventures with the Ladies—I'll come down as handsomely as any man in the Row—smart and spicy—

HARDMAN.

Offer to bribe *me*, you insolent rascal!

WILMOT.

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Oh, my dear good Mr. Hardman, I've bribed the Premier himself. Ha! ha! Servant, sir; servant.

[Exit.]

HARDMAN.

Loathsome vagabond! My dear Mr. Fallen, you have the manuscript Memoir of Lord Henry de Mowbray. I know its great value. Name your own price to permit me just to inspect it.

FALLEN.

It is gone; and to the hands of his brother, the Duke.

HARDMAN.

The Duke! This is a thunderstroke! Say, sir: You have read this Memoir—does it contain aught respecting a certain Lady Morland?

FALLEN.

It does. It confesses that Lord Henry slandered her reputation as woman, in order to sustain his own as seducer. That part of the Memoir was writ on his death-bed.

HARDMAN.

His boast, then—

FALLEN.

Was caused by the scorn of her letter rejecting his suit.

HARDMAN.

What joy for Sir Geoffrey! And that letter?

FALLEN.

Is one of the documents that make up the Memoir.

HARDMAN.

And these documents are now in the hands of the Duke!

FALLEN.

They are. For, since Lady Morland is dead—

HARDMAN (aside).

Dead! (*Aside.* Yet who *but* Lady Morland can this mask be? I will go at once to the house and clear up that doubt myself. But the Duke's appointment! Ah, that must not be forgotten; my rival must be removed ere Lucy can be won. And what hold on the Duke himself to produce the Memoir, if I get the despatch.) Well, Mr. Fallen, there is no more to be said as to the Memoir. Your messenger will meet his Grace, as we settled. I shall be close at hand; and mark! the messenger must give to me the despatch which is meant for the Pretender.

FALLEN.

To you—but—

HARDMAN.

But me no buts, sir. Fail not to obey me: your life be the forfeit!

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[Exit Hardman.]

FALLEN.

My life!—He deceived me; he wants to destroy, not to save, the conspirators. I will fly and put off the messenger—write meanwhile to caution Lord Loftus—ay, and the Duke himself. 'Tis another revenge on him. (*Writing.*)

Enter Paddy.

PADDY.

'Plase, sur, an I've paid the milk—score—an there's five shillings you're as welcome as day to. For I'd an illigant new coat o' my own that does more credit than the blanket to the honour of the house, and makes a mighty fine show at the pawn—shop.

FALLEN.

Good friend—one favour more. You know the space by the wall of Lord Berkeley's garden. You must go there presently, and look about for a gentleman who will be on the spot at one o'clock. 'Tis the Duke of Middlesex. You will know him by his saying to you, "Marston Moor."

PADDY.

Marshton Moor?

FALLEN.

When he says those words, give him that letter. Then hasten with this to the Earl of Loftus's house, Piccadilly— —if not at home, find him out. First help me down stairs, and call a coach. Oh yes! I can afford it—"Methinks I walk in dreams on fairy land."

I'm to be rich—so rich! 'Tis my turn now. I've shared your pittance, you shall share my plenty!—my children! my children! (*Weeps.*)

PADDY.

Agh now, and plenty will be the death of yees. But cheer up! More power to your elbow, and ye'll get through that unexpicted misfortin'.

[Exeunt.]

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SCENE III.

The Mall.

Enter Softhead, his arms folded, and in deep thought. He is forming a virtuous resolution.

SOFTHEAD.

Little did I foresee in the days of my innocence, when Mr. Lillo read to me his affecting tragedy of George Barnwell, [Note: We have only, I fear, Mr. Softhead's authority for supposing *George Barnwell* to be then written; it was not acted till some years afterwards.] how I myself was to be led on, step by step, to the brink of deeds without a name.

Enter Easy, recently dismissed from the Watchhouse; slovenly, skulking, and crestfallen.

EASY.

Not a coach on the stand! A pretty pickle I'm in if any one sees me! A sober respectable man like me, to wake in the watch-house, be kept there till noon among thieves and pickpockets, and at last to be fined five shillings for drunkenness and disorderly conduct; all from dining with a lord who had no thoughts of making Barbara my lady after all! —Deuce take him!

SOFTHEAD.

And if there was any pleasure in it? *Pleasure!*

EASY.

Precious thing this high life!

SOFTHEAD.

Is it too late to repent? Is not Deadman's Lane, Crown and Portcullis, a warning to startle the most obdurate conscience?

EASY (discovering SOFTHEAD).

Softhead!—how shall I escape him?

SOFTHEAD (discovering EASY).

Easy! Where shall I creep?

EASY.

How he'll crow over me!

SOFTHEAD.

Yet no! I've a dim recollection of what passed, ere my sense was restored by my horror; but I think he was more drunk than myself. What a Fall! I'll appear not to remember. Barbara's father should not feel degraded in the

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eyes of a wretch like myself! How d'ye do, Mr. Easy? You're out early to-day.

EASY.

(*Aside.* Ha! He was so drunk himself, he has forgotten all about it.) Yes, a headache. You were so pleasant at dinner. I wanted the air of the park.

SOFTHEAD.

Why, you look rather poorly, Mr. Easy!

EASY.

Indeed, I feel so. A man in business can't afford to be laid up—so I thought before I went home to the City, that I'd just look into—Ha, ha! a seasoned toper like you will laugh when I tell you—I thought I'd just look into the—'pothecary's!

SOFTHEAD.

Just been there myself, Mr. Easy. (*Showing a phial.*)

EASY (regarding it with mournful disgust).

Not taken physic since I was a boy! It looks very nasty!

SOFTHEAD.

'Tis worse than it looks! And this is called—*Pleasure!* Ah! Mr. Easy, don't give way to Fred's fascination; you don't know how it ends.

EASY.

Indeed I do (*Aside*—it ends in the watchhouse). And I'm shocked to think what will become of yourself, if you are thus every night led away by a lord, who—

SOFTHEAD.

Hush! talk of the devil—look! he's coming up the Mall!

EASY.

He is? then I'm off; I see a sedan-chair. Chair! chair! stop! chair! chair!

[Exit.

Enter Wilmot and Duke.

Duke (looking at portfolio).

Infamous indeed! His own base lie against that poor lady, whose husband he wounded. Her very letter attached to it. Ha!—what is this?—Such ribaldry on me! Gracious Heaven! My name thus dragged through the dirt, and by a son of my House! Oh, my Lord, how shall I thank you?

WILMOT.

Thank not me; but the poet, whom your Grace left in the hall.

DUKE.

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Name it not—I'll beg his pardon myself! (*Aside.*) And the arms the third Edward gave to my ancestor (*tears in his voice*) affixed to this cess-pool!—Adieu; I must go home, and lock up the scandal till I've leisure to read and destroy it; never again shall it come to the day! And then, sure that no blot shall be seen in my 'scutcheon, I can peril my life without fear in the cause of my king.

[*Exit Duke.*]

WILMOT (*chaunting*).

"Gather you rosebuds while you may,
For time is still a-flying."

Since my visit last night to Deadman's Lane, and my hope to give Lucy such happiness, I feel as if I trod upon air. Ah, Softhead! why, you stand there, as languid and lifeless, as if you were capable of—fishing!

SOFTHEAD.

I've been thinking—
WILMOT.

Thinking! you *do* look fatigued! What a horrid exertion it must have been to you!

SOFTHEAD.

Ah! Fred, Fred, don't be so hardened. What atrocity did you perpetrate last night?

WILMOT.

Last night? Oh, at Deadman's Lane: monstrous, indeed. And this morning, too, another! Never had so many atrocities on my hands as within the last twenty-four hours. But they are all nothing to that which I perpetrated yesterday, just before dinner. Hark! I bribed the Prime Minister!

SOFTHEAD.

Saints in Heaven!
WILMOT.

Ha! Ha! Hit him plump on the jolly blunt side of his character! I must tell you about it. Drove home from Will's; put my Murillo in the carriage, and off to Sir Robert's—shown into his office,—“Ah! my Lord Wilmot,” says he, with that merry roll of his eye; “this *is* an honour, what can I do for you?”—“Sir Robert,” says I, “we men of the world soon come to the point; 'tis a maxim of yours that all have their price.”—“Not quite that,” says Sir Robert, “but let us suppose that it is.” Another roll of his eye, as much as to say, “I shall get this rogue a bargain!”—“So, Sir Robert,” quoth I, with a bow, “I've come to buy the Prime Minister.”—“Buy me,” cried Sir Robert, and he laughed till I thought he'd have choked; “my price is rather high, I'm afraid.” Then I go to the door, bid my lackies bring in the Murillo. “Look at that, if you please; about the mark is it not?” Sir Robert runs to the picture, his breast heaves, his eyes sparkle: “A Murillo!” cries he, “name your price!”—“I have named it.” Then he looks at me *so*, and I look at him *so!*—turn out the lackies, place pen, ink, and paper before him; “That place in the Treasury just vacant, and the Murillo is yours.”—“For yourself?—I am charmed,” cried Sir Robert. “No, 'tis for a friend of your own, who's in want of it.”—“Oh, that alters the case: I've so many friends troubled with the same sort of want.”—“Yes, but the Murillo is *genuine*,—pray what are the friends?” Out laughed Sir Robert. “There's no resisting you and the Murillo together! There's the appointment, and now, since your Lordship has bought me, I must insist upon buying your Lordship. Fair play is a jewel.” Then I take my grand holiday air; “Sir Robert,” said I, “you've bought me long ago! you've given us peace where we feared civil war; and a Constitutional King instead of a despot. And if that's not enough to buy the vote of an Englishman,

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believe me, Sir Robert, he's not worth the buying." Then he stretched out his bluff hearty hand, and I gave it a bluff hearty shake. He got the Murillo—Hardman the place. And here stand I, the only man in all England, who can boast that he bought the Prime Minister! Faith, you may well call me hardened: I don't feel the least bit of remorse.

SOFTHEAD.

Hardman! you got Hardman the place?

WILMOT.

I did not say Hardman—

SOFTHEAD.

You did say Hardman. But as 'tis a secret that might get you into trouble, I'll keep it. Yet, *Dimidium meæ*, that's not behaving much like a monster?

WILMOT.

Why, it does seem betraying the Good Old Cause;—but if there's honour among thieves, there is among monsters; and Hardman is in the same scrape as ourselves—in love;— this place may secure him the hand of the Lady. But mind—he's not to know I've been meddling with his affairs. Hang it! no one likes that. Not a word then—

SOFTHEAD.

Not a word. My dear Fred, I'm so glad you're not so bad as you seem. I'd half a mind to desert you;—but I have not the heart; and I'll stick by you as long as I live!

WILMOT (aside).

Whew! This will never do! Poor dear little fellow! I'm sorry to lose him; but my word's passed to Barbara; and 'tis all for his good. As long as you live? Alas! that reminds me of your little affair. I'm to be your second, you know!

SOFTHEAD.

Second!—affair!

WILMOT.

With that fierce Colonel Flint. I warned you against him; but you have such a deuce of a spirit. Don't you remember?

SOFTHEAD.

No; why, what was it all about?

WILMOT.

Let me see—oh, Flint said something insolent about Mistress Barbara.

SOFTHEAD.

He did?—Ruffian!

WILMOT.

So—you called him out! But if you'll empower me in your name to retract and apologise—

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SOFTHEAD.

Not a bit of it. Insolent to Barbara! *Dimidium meæ*, I'd fight him if he were the first swordsman in England.
WILMOT.

Why, that's just what he is!
SOFTHEAD.

Don't care; I'm his man—though a dead one.
WILMOT.

(*Aside.* Hang it—he's as brave as myself, on that side of his character. I must turn to another.) No, Softhead, that was not the cause of the quarrel—said it to rouse you, as you seemed rather low. The fact is that it was a jest on yourself, that you took up rather warmly.

SOFTHEAD.

Was that all—only myself?
WILMOT.

No larger subject; and Flint is *such* a good fencer!
SOFTHEAD.

My dear Fred; I retract, I apologise; I despise duelling—absurd and unchristianlike. Tell Colonel Flint, I beg his pardon most humbly. I shall never forgive myself if I wounded his fine sense of honour. The tiger said he was touchy!

WILMOT.

Leave all to me. Dismiss the subject. I'll settle it; only, Softhead, you see our set has very stiff rules on such matters. And if you apologise to a bravo like Flint; nay, if you don't actually, cheerfully, rapturously fight him—though sure to be killed—I fear you must resign all ideas of high life!

SOFTHEAD.

Dimidium meæ, but low life is better than no life at all!
WILMOT.

There's no denying that proposition. It will console you to think that Mr. Easy's kind side is Cheapside. And you may get upon one, if you return to the other.

SOFTHEAD.

I was thinking so, when you found me—*thinking (hesitatingly)*—But to leave you—
WILMOT.

Oh, not yet? Retire at least with *éclat*. Share with me one grand, crowning, last, daring and desperate adventure.

SOFTHEAD.

Deadman's Lane, again, I suppose? I thank you for nothing. Fred, I have long been your faithful follower. (*With emotion.*) Now, my Lord, I'm your humble servant. [Note: A play upon words plagiarised from Farquhar. The reader must regret that the author had not the courage to plagiarise more from Farquhar.] (*Aside.* Barbara will comfort me. She's perhaps at Sir Geoffrey's.)

[*Exit.*]

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WILMOT.

Well! his love will repay him, and the City of London will present me with her freedom, in a gold box, for restoring her prodigal son to her Metropolitan bosom. Deadman's Lane—that was an adventure, indeed. Lucy's mother still living—some mystery she will not yet explain—implores me to get her the sight of her child. Will Lucy believe me? Will—(*Enter Smart.*) Ha, Smart? Well—Well?—You —baffled Sir Geoffrey?

SMART.

He was out.

WILMOT.

And you gave the young lady my letter?

SMART.

Hist! my Lord, it so affected her—that—here she comes.

[Exit Smart.]

Enter Lucy.

LUCY.

Oh, my Lord, is this true? Can it be? A mother lives! Do you wonder that I forget all else?—that I am here—and with but one prayer, lead me to a mother!

WILMOT.

But—

LUCY.

Ah, do not refuse! Do not reason with me. Yet—yet— I am young—inexperienced. My father trusts me. You do not ask the daughter to wrong the father's trust—this is no snare—you do not deceive me?

WILMOT.

Deceive you! Oh Lucy—I have a sister myself at the hearth of my father.

LUCY.

Forgive me—lead on—quick, quick—oh, mother, mother!

[Exeunt Lucy and Wilmot.]

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SCENE IV.

Space at the back of Bond Street, now Berkely Square.

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

It is the wife. She is innocent! I feel it; but no proof of innocence, save her own letter and her slanderer's confession, in the hands of the Duke. Will this haughtiest of men ever yield such memorials,—even admit the base lie of his brother. Still her story has that which may touch him. Meanwhile I must secure the dispatch to the Pretender; clear my path of a rival; and then gain Lucy's heart by restoring a mother. Fallen's envoy should be here! Who is this?

Enter Paddy, the Porter.

PADDY.

Plase your Highness and Grace—is it the grand Juke o' Middlesheeks I make bould to address?

HARDMAN.

From Mr. Fallen? Marston Moor?

PADDY.

Agh! and that's what it is!—Marshon Moor. (*Gives a letter.*) (*Aside.* His coat's mighty plane and jinteel for a Juke—wid a jewel of a sword, wid no jewel at all. But, tunder and turf! if yees could jist see the coat o' Sir Phelim O'Donohue, all scarlet an' gould, putting the sun out o' consate of itself at the Fair of Carrickashaughlan! Oh, King of Glory, I must rin on to the Yearl!)

[Exit.

HARDMAN.

What can this be? Ha, I guess; Fallen repents—a letter to warn the conspirators. By his leave! (*Opens the letter and reads*)—"My Lord Duke,—I hasten to warn you. Give the packet to none. Your plot is detected. David Fallen." Distraction! What to do? Where find a man to personate the messenger, and deceive the Duke? The clock strikes—not a minute to lose!

Enter Softhead.

SOFTHEAD.

Oh dear! What have I seen! Wilmot taking poor innocent Lucy into that house, Deadman's Lane, which 'Woman is lost if she enter, man is hanged when he leave'—ran to Sir Geoffrey's; he's out; Hodge, too. Where go next?

HARDMAN.

Ah! he'll do. A fool!—but the man he will meet is not wise.

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SOFTHEAD.

Oh, that clever Mr. Hardman! Sir, I must speak with you.

HARDMAN.

Yes, by and by. But now, in the King's name I command you to act in his Majesty's service. Wrap this cloak round you—the Duke of Middlesex comes. Stand here as he passes. Say "Marston Moor."

SOFTHEAD (rapidly hurried through the various phases of bewilderment).

Marston Moor!

HARDMAN.

Not a word else. If he speak, do not answer. Lay your hand on your lips. He will give you a packet. You will transfer it to me. I shall wait in yon angle.

SOFTHEAD.

Duke!—Stuff! I can't and I won't. I've had enough of dukes and—

HARDMAN.

You said yourself you could never have eno' of a Duke. But 'tis no time for jesting. Your king compells you to this. I, who speak, am a Minister. Accept, and no danger; refuse, and there's matter for hanging. He comes! "Marston Moor," and then—silence!

[Retires behind the wall.]

SOFTHEAD.

Matter for hanging! Why, I'm *doomed* to be hanged!

Enter Duke of Middlesex.

DUKE.

That's the man—ahem—(*Passes Softhead, who remains silent.*) I don't know!

[Passing on to the end of the Stage.]

HARDMAN (starting forth).

'Sdeath! "Marston Moor!" Would you go to Tyburn for treason?

SOFTHEAD.

Lord! lord! Why did I say I could never have eno' of a Duke?

DUKE (returning).

Duke! Ha! You spoke, friend?

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SOFTHEAD.

"Marston Moor!"

DUKE.

So! Powers above! 'tis that small man again! I thought his familiarity concealed something mysterious. This explains it. We have met before, sir. (*Softhead puts his hand on his lips.*) But 'tis not because you risk your life for King James, that you should forget what is due to John, Duke of Middlesex.— (*Aside.* He looks humbled. I've awed him. He'll not speak. Ah, true! no conversation was to pass. He's discreet.)—There's the packet; and—delay not a moment till it reach you know whom. (*SOFTHEAD as before.*) He's discretion itself—I'll walk on to the Mall, and tell that poor timid Lord Loftus! How an Earl *can* be timid!

[Exit.

SOFTHEAD (giving the cloak and the packet to HARDMAN).

There, thank Heaven, I've done with that awful Duke for ever, and ever, and ever! Now I must speak to you. I've just seen—

HARDMAN.

See first that the Duke does not turn back.

SOFTHEAD (looking down the side-scene).

Turn back—Lord forbid!

HARDMAN (opening and reading the Requisition).

Ho! Wilmot's in my power; here ends his rivalry! The Duke's life too, in exchange for the Memoir? No, no! Fear's not his weak point. Now, the honour of a family, the happiness of a home, Lucy's grateful consent to my suit,—all depend on my chance to hit the right side of a character— (*As he goes out, flings his cloak over SOFTHEAD'S head.*) Keep my cloak, I shall be back in five minutes.

Enter Paddy.

PADDY.

Agh, plase your Highness—I would spake to your Grace.

HARDMAN.

Speak to that gentleman—there in my cloak.

[Exit.

SOFTHEAD (who is entangled in the cloak).

Mr. Hardman, how can you, sir? Stay, now I've got you! (*Seizes blindly on Paddy, and, throwing back the*

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cloak, stands face to face with the porter.) Who the devil are you?

PADDY.

Plase sir, the Juke—

SOFTHEAD.

Oh, bother the Duke! have not I done with him yet?

[Tries to look after Hardman, the Porter obstructing him, and speaking rapidly.]

PADDY.

Agh! asy now; yee's sees I've a bit of a letter for his honour the Yearl o' Loftus, which I was to give to the Yearl, myself and intirely. Asy now, asy! and it is not at home that the Yearl is.

SOFTHEAD.

What's that to me? get out!

PADDY (unheeding him).

And I thought I'd ax the big Juke where to find him, and the Juke said, says he, Paddy spake to that jantleman; an' he did, the Juke!

SOFTHEAD.

"Duke again! Retribution! Why, *why*, did I say, 'I could never have eno' of a Duke.'" Plague on it, man; which way did he go?

PADDY.

Is it the Juke?

SOFTHEAD.

I tell you I have done with the Duke! No, the other?

PADDY.

Sorra another in life, sure, ixcipt the grand Juke—

SOFTHEAD (with an angry look and an expostulatory gesture to heaven).

But it isn't *fair*,—now I repent!

PADDY.

Agh, murther! and is it in the kennel ye'd be trailing the iligant cloak of the Juke!

SOFTHEAD.

Take the cloak! and be hanged to you; Ah, there he goes—

PADDY (running after him).

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Agh and bad luck to yees! Is it poor Paddy ye'd hang for staling the cloak of the Juke!
SOFTHEAD.

I'm Duke-haunted, I'm haunted.
PADDY.

Stop, and the devil go after you! The cloak o' the Juke. (*Exit SOFTHEAD by a violent effort.*) The Juke! the
Juke!
END OF ACT IV.

Not So Bad As We Seem

ACT V.

Not So Bad As We Seem

SCENE I.

The Mall. Enter Duke of Middlesex.

DUKE.

Lord Loftus not here yet! Strange! Certainly, he is my friend; nobody more so, but that is no reason why he should forget what is due to the head of the Mowbrays. Keep me waiting, Powers above! five minutes and a half! I'll go!

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

My Lord Duke—forgive this intrusion!

DUKE.

T'other man I met at Lord Wilmot's. Sir, your servant, I'm somewhat in haste.

HARDMAN.

Still I presume to delay your Grace; for it is on a question of honour!

DUKE.

Honour! that goes before all! Sir, my time is your own.

HARDMAN.

Your Grace is the head of a house, whose fame is a part of our history; it is, therefore, that I speak to you boldly,
since it may be that wrongs were inflicted by one of its members—

DUKE.

How, sir!

HARDMAN.

Assured, that if so (and should it be still in your power,) your Grace will frankly repair them, as a duty you took with the ermine and coronet.

DUKE.

You speak well, sir.—(*Aside.*) Very much like a gentleman!

HARDMAN.

Your Grace had a brother, Lord Henry de Mowbray.

DUKE.

Ah! Sir, to the point.

HARDMAN.

At once, my Lord Duke! Sixteen years ago a duel took place between Lord Henry and Sir Geoffrey

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Morland—your Grace knows the cause.

DUKE.

Hem! yes; a lady—who—who—

HARDMAN.

Was banished her husband's home, and her infant's cradle, on account of suspicions based, my Lord Duke, on—what your Grace cannot wonder that the husband believed—the word of a Mowbray!

DUKE.

(*Aside*—Villain!) But what became of the husband, never since heard of? He—

HARDMAN.

Fled abroad from men's tongues, and dishonour. He did not return to his native land, till he had changed for another the name that a Mowbray had blighted. Unhappy man! he lives still.

DUKE.

And the lady—the lady—

HARDMAN.

Before the duel, had gone to the house of her father, who was forced that very day to fly the country. His life was in danger.

DUKE.

How?

HARDMAN.

He was loyal to the Stuarts, and—a Plot was discovered.

DUKE.

Brave, noble gentleman! Go on, sir.

HARDMAN.

Her other ties wrenched from her, his daughter went with him into exile—his stay, his hope, his all. His lands were confiscated. She was high-born: she worked for a father's bread. Conceive yourself, my Lord Duke, in the place of that father—loyal and penniless; noble; proscribed; dependant on the toils of a daughter; and that daughter's name sullied by—

DUKE.

A word?—

HARDMAN.

From the son of that house to which all the Chivalry of England looked for example.

DUKE (aside).

Oh, Heaven! can my glory thus be turned to my shame? But they said she had died, sir.

HARDMAN.

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When her father had gone to the grave, she herself spread or sanctioned that rumour—for she resolved to die to the world. She entered a convent, prepared to take the novitiate—when she suddenly learned that a person had been inquiring for her at Paris, who stated that Lord Henry de Mowbray had left behind him a Memoir—

DUKE.

Ah!—

HARDMAN.

—Which acquits her. She learned, too, the clue to her husband—resolved to come hither—arrived six days since. No proof of her innocence save those for which I now appeal to your Grace!

DUKE.

O pride, be my succour! (*Haughtily.*) Appeal to me, sir, and wherefore?

HARDMAN.

The sole evidence alleged against this lady are the fact of a letter sent from herself to Lord Henry, and the boast of a man, now no more. She asserts that that letter would establish her innocence. She believes that, on his death-bed, your brother retracted his boast; and that the Memoir he left will attest to its falsehood.

DUKE.

Asserts—believes—go on—go on.

HARDMAN.

No, my Lord Duke, I have done. I know that that letter, that Memoir exist; that they are now in your hands. If her assertion be false—if they prove not her innocence—a word, nay, a sign, from the chief of a house so renowned for its honour, suffices. I take my leave, and condemn her. But if her story be true, you have heard the last chance of

a wife and a mother to be restored to the husband she loves and forgives, to the child who has grown into womanhood remote from her care; and these blessings I pledged her my faith to obtain, if that letter, that Memoir, should prove that the boast was—

DUKE.

A lie, sir, a lie, a black lie!—The coward's worst crime— a lie on the fair name of woman! Sir, this heat, perhaps, is unseemly; thus to brand my own brother! But if we, the peers of England, and the representatives of her gentlemen, can hear, can think, of vile things done, whoever the doer, with calm pulse and cold heart,—perish our titles! where would be the use of a Duke?

HARDMAN (aside).

A very bright side of his character.

DUKE.

Sir, you are right. The Memoir you speak of is in my hands; and with it, Lady Morland's own letter. Much in that Memoir relates to myself; and so galls all the pride I am said to possess, that not ten minutes since methought I had rather my Duchy were forfeit than have exposed its contents to the pity or laugh of a stranger. I think no more of myself. A woman has appealed for her name to mine honour as man. Now, sir, your commands?

HARDMAN.

No passage is needed, save that which acquits Lady Morland. Let the Memoir still rest in your hands.

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Condescend but to bring it forthwith to my house; and if I am not there to receive you, 'tis solely because elsewhere engaged (pardon the epithet) in assisting the proud Duke of Middlesex in the duties that justify pride.

DUKE.

Your address, sir; I will but return home for the documents, and proceed at once to your house. Hurry not; I will wait. Allow me to take your hand, sir. You know how to speak to the heart of a gentleman. (*Aside.* He must be very well born.)

HARDMAN (aside).

Yet how ignorant we are of men's hearts till we see them lit up by a passion!

DUKE (looking off).

Ha! Here comes the Earl at last. Sir, will you permit Lord Loftus, my intimate friend, to accompany me to your house? I have other matters, of immediate importance, on which to consult him; and—

HARDMAN.

Nay, I shall be glad to know that my Lord Loftus is with your Grace; for I, too, have an affair of great moment, on which, somewhat later, I would speak to you both.

DUKE.

In all times at your service, sir.

[Exit Duke.]

HARDMAN.

So, all are shaped to my purpose—the good or the bad. Nay, why is it bad to serve my own happiness? Yet this noble has made what is honour so clear to my eyes. Let me pause—let me think—let me choose! I feel as if I stood at the crisis of life.

Enter SOFTHEAD.

SOFTHEAD.

Got rid at last of that damnable porter. Mr. Hardman! you shall hear me now. You're a friend of Lord Wilmot's, of Sir Geoffrey's, of Lucy's?

HARDMAN.

Speak—quick—to the purpose.

SOFTHEAD.

On my way to Sir Geoffrey's, I passed by a house of the most villanous character. I dare not say how Wilmot himself has described it (*Earnestly.*) Oh sir, you know Wilmot! you know his sentiments on marriage. I saw Wilmot and Lucy Thornsides enter that infamous house!—deeds without a name!—Deadman's Lane!

HARDMAN (aside).

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Deadman's Lane! He takes her to the arms of her mother! forestalls my own plan, will reap my reward. Have I schemed, then, for him? No, by yon heavens!

SOFTHEAD.

I ran on to Sir Geoffrey's—he was out; not a man in the house—women did not know where he was gone. I thought of going to Easy,—to the Justice's,—I don't know what I thought of, I've been haunted, and I can't say whether I stand on my head or my heels.

HARDMAN (who has been writing in his tablets, tears out a page).

Take this to Justice Kite's, hard by: he will send two special officers, placed at the door, Deadman's Lane, to wait my instructions. They must go instantly—arrive as soon as myself. Then, hasten to Mr. Easy's: Sir Geoffrey is there. Break your news with precaution, and bring him straight to that house. Leave the rest to my care. Away with you; quick.

SOFTHEAD.

I know he will kill me! But I'm right. And when I'm right,— *Dimidium mee!*

[Exit.

HARDMAN.

Ho! ho! It is war! My choice is made. I am armed at all points, and I strike for the victory.

[Exit.

SCENE II.

Apartment in the house, Deadman's Lane, Crown and Portcullis, very old-fashioned and sombre, faded tapestry on the walls, high mantelpiece, with deep ingles; furniture rude and simple; general air of the room not mean, but forlorn, as of that in some house, neglected and little inhabited, since the days of Elizabeth; the tapestry drawn aside at the back, shows a door into an inner room.—Wilmot seated.

WILMOT.

They are still in the next room. It grows late: I fear she will be missed. But I have not the heart to disturb them—the first interview between child and mother.

Enter Hardman.

HARDMAN.

Alone! Where is Lucy, my lord?

WILMOT.

In the next room with—

HARDMAN.

Her mother?

WILMOT.

What! you know?

HARDMAN.

I know that between us two there is strife, and I am come to decide it; you love Lucy Thornsides.

WILMOT.

Well! I told you so.

HARDMAN.

You told it, my Lord, to a rival. Ay, smile. You have wealth, rank, fashion, and wit; I have none of these, and I need them not. But I say to you—that ere the hand on this dial moves to that near point in time, your love will be hopeless and your suit be withdrawn.

WILMOT.

The man's mad! Unless, sir, you wish me to believe that my life hangs on your sword, I cannot quite comprehend why my love should go by your watch.

HARDMAN.

I command you, Lord Wilmot, to change this tone of levity; I command it in the name of a life which, I think, you prize more than your own; a life that is now in my hands. You told me to sound your father. I have not done so—I have detected—

WILMOT.

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Detected! Hold, sir! that word implies crime.

HARDMAN.

Ay, the crime of the great. History calls it Zeal. Law styles it High Treason.

WILMOT.

What do I hear? Heavens!—my father! Sir, your word is no proof?

HARDMAN.

But *this* is! (*Producing the Requisition to the Pretender.*) 'Tis high treason, conspiring to levy arms against the King on the throne; here called the Usurper. High treason to promise to greet with banner and trump a pretender— here called James the Third. Such is the purport of the paper I hold—and here is the name of your father.

WILMOT (*aside*).

Both are armed, and alone.

[Locks the outer door by which he is standing.

HARDMAN (*aside*).

So, I guess his intention. (*Opens the window and looks out.*) Good, the officers are come.

WILMOT.

What the law calls high treason I know not; what the honest call treason I know. Traitor thou, who hast used the confidence of a son against the life of a father, thou shalt not quit these walls with that life in thy grasp—yield the proof thou hast plundered or forged.

[Seizes him.

HARDMAN.

S't! the officers of justice are below; loose thine hold, or the life thou demandest falls from these hands into theirs!

WILMOT (*recoiling*).

Foiled! Foiled! How act! what do! And thy son set yon bloodhound on thy track, O my father!

Lucy appears at the threshold of the inner room.

LUCY.

Ha, Mr. Hardman! what means this? Your voices raised —and—

HARDMAN.

I pray you, leave us—nay, be not alarmed. But five minutes more! we are devising to save a parent for a child;

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your father will be here anon; entreat your mother, whatever she hears, not to stir till I summon.

[Hurrying back Lucy within, and closing the door. He unlocks the other and comes forward.]

WILMOT.

Sir, you say you are my rival; I guess the terms you now come to impose!

HARDMAN.

I impose no terms. But for your rash attempt on this scroll, how know you but what I had placed it unasked in your keeping?

WILMOT.

Without demanding me to sacrifice the love, that you yourself said was hopeless?

HARDMAN.

What needs the demand? Have you an option? I think better of you. We both love the same woman; I have loved her a year, you a week; you have her father's dislike, I his consent. One must yield—why should I? Rude son of the people though I be, why must I be thrust from the sunshine because you cross my path as the fair and the highborn?—What have I owed to your order or you?

WILMOT.

To me, sir? Well, if to me you owed some slight favour, I should scorn at this moment to speak it.

HARDMAN.

I owe favour, the slightest, to no man; 'tis my boast. Listen still, I schemed to save your father, not to injure. Had you rather this scroll had fallen into the hands of a spy? And now, if I place it in yours—save your name from attainder, your fortunes from confiscation, your father from the axe of the headsman—why should I ask terms? Would it be possible for you to say "Sir, I thank you; and in return I will do my best to rob your life of the woman you love, and whom I have just known a week?" Could you, Peer's son and gentleman, thus reply,—when if I know aught of this grand people of England, not a mechanic who walks thro' yon streets, from the loom to the hovel, but what would cry "Shame" on such answer?

WILMOT.

Sir, your words are—are—This blow is so sudden, my mind is not clear; I might perhaps answer, that the true point between us is not, whose love be the longer in date, but whose love is the purer from interest—and has the more chance of return? Nay, sir! I cannot argue with, I cannot rival, the man who has my father's life at his will, whether to offer it as a barter, or to yield it as a boon. Either way, rivalry is henceforth impossible.—Fear mine no more! Give me the scroll—I depart.

HARDMAN.

(Aside. His manliness moves me!) Nay, let me pray your permission to give it myself to your father, and with such words as will save him and others whose names are hereto attached, from such perilous hazards in future.

WILMOT.

In this too I fear that you leave me no choice; I must trust as I may to your honour; but heed well if—

HARDMAN.

Menace not; you doubt, then, my honour?

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WILMOT (*with suppressed passion*).

Plainly, I do; our characters differ. I had held myself dishonoured for ever if our positions had been reversed,—if I had taken such confidence as was placed in you,—concealed the rivalry,—prepared the scheme,—timed the moment,—forced the condition in the guise of benefit. No, sir, no, that may be talent, it is not honour.

HARDMAN.

(*Aside*. This stings! scornful fool that he is, not to see that I was half relenting. And now I feel but the foe! How sting again? I will summon him back to witness himself my triumph.) Stay, my Lord! (*Writing at the table*.) You doubt that I should yield up the document to your father? Bring him hither at once! He is now at my house with the Duke of Middlesex; pray them both to come here, and give this note to the Duke. (*With a smile*.) You will do it, my Lord?

WILMOT.

Ay, indeed,—and when my father is safe I will try to think that I wronged you. (*Aside*. And not one parting word to—to—S'death—I am unmanned. Show such emotion to him—No, no!—And if I cannot watch over that gentle life, why the angels will!) I—I go, sir,—fulfil the compact; I have paid the price.

[*Exit*.

HARDMAN.

He loves her more than I thought for. But she? Does she love him? (*Goes to the door*.) Mistress Lucy!

[*Leads forth Lucy*.

LUCY.

Lord Wilmot gone!

HARDMAN.

Nay, speak not of him. If ever he hoped that your father could have overcome a repugnance to his suit, he is now compelled to resign that hope, and for ever. (*Lucy turns aside, and weeps quietly*.) Let us speak of your parents—your mother—

LUCY.

Oh yes—my dear mother—I so love her already.

HARDMAN.

You have heard her tale! Would you restore her, no blot on her name, to the hearth of your father?

LUCY.

Speak!—speak!—can it be so?

HARDMAN.

If it cost you some sacrifice?

LUCY.

Life has none for an object thus holy.

HARDMAN.

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Hear, and decide. Lord Wilmot has all to charm the eye and the fancy; but human life is so long, and you have known him a week! Lucy, I have loved you in secret ever since I first entered your house. You were then just emerging from childhood. It is the wish of your father that I should ask for this hand—

LUCY.

No!—no!

HARDMAN.

Is the sacrifice so hard? Wait and hear the atonement. You come from the stolen embrace of a mother; I will make that mother the pride of your home. You have yearned for the love of a father; I will break down the wall between yourself and his heart—I will dispel all the clouds that have darkened his life.

LUCY.

You will—you will! O blessings upon you!

HARDMAN.

Those blessings this hand can confer!

LUCY.

But—but—the heart—the heart—*that* does *not* go with the hand.

HARDMAN.

Later, it will. I only pray for a trial. If, after some months, my suit still displease you, say the word, I renounce it. I ask but to conquer that heart, not to break it. Your father will soon be here—every moment I expect him. He comes in the full force of suspicion—deeming you lured here by Wilmot—fearing (pardon the vile word) your dishonour. How explain? You cannot speak of your mother till I first prove her guiltless. Could they meet till I do, words would pass that would make even union hereafter too bitter to her pride as a woman. Give me the power at once to destroy suspicion, remove fear, delay other explanations. Let me speak—let me act—as your betrothed, your accepted. Hark! voices below—your father comes!— I have no time to plead; excuse what is harsh—seems ungenerous—

SIR GEOFFREY (without).

Out of my way!—loose my sword!

LUCY.

Oh save my mother!—Let him not see my mother!

HARDMAN.

Grant me this trial—pledge this hand now—retract hereafter if you will. Your mother's name, your parents' reunion! Aye or no!—will you pledge it?

LUCY.

Can you doubt their child's answer? I pledge it!

Enter Sir Geoffrey, struggling from EASY, SOFTHEAD, BARBARA.

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SIR GEOFFREY.

Where is he? where is this villain? let me get at him! What, what, gone? (*Falling on Hardman's breast.*) Oh Hardman! You came, you came! I dare not look at her yet. *Is she saved!*

HARDMAN.

Your daughter is innocent in thought as in deed—I speak in the name of the rights she has given me; you permitted me to ask for her hand; and here, she has pledged it!

SIR GEOFFREY.

O my child, my child! I never called you that name before. Did I? Hush! I know now, that thou art my child; know it by my anguish; know it by my joy. Who could wring from me tears like these, but a child!

EASY.

But how is it all, Mr. Hardman? you know everything! That fool Softhead, with his cock and bull story, frightened us out of our wits!

SOFTHEAD.

That's the thanks I get! How is it all, Mr. Hardman?

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh, what so clear? He came here—he saved her! My child was grateful. Approach, Hardman, near, near. Forgive me, if your childhood was lonely; forgive me, if you seemed so unfriended. Your father made me promise that

you should not know the temptations that he thought had corrupted himself,—should not know of my favours, to be galled by what he called my suspicions,—should not feel the yoke of dependence;—should believe that you forced your own way through the world—till it was made. Now it is so. Ah, not in vain did I pardon him his wrongs against me; not in vain fulfil that sad promise which gave a smile to his lips in dying; not in vain have I bestowed benefits on you. You have saved—I know it—I feel it; saved from infamy—my child.

LUCY.

Hush, sir, hush!

[Throws herself into Barbara's arms.

HARDMAN.

My father? Benefits? You smile, Mr. Easy. What means he? No man on this earth ever bestowed benefits on me!

EASY.

Ha! ha! ha! Nay, excuse me; but when I think that that's said by a clever fellow like you—ha! ha!—the jest is too good; as if any one ever drove a coach through this world but what some other one built the carriage, or harnessed the horses! Why, who gave you the education that helped to make you what you are? Who sily paid Tonson, the publisher, to bring out the work that first raised you into notice? Who sent you the broker with the tale of the South Sea Scheme? From whose purse came the sum that bought your annuity? Whose land does the annuity burthen? Who told Fleece'em, the boroughmonger, to offer you a seat in Parliament? Who paid for the election that did not cost you a shilling?—who but my suspicious, ill-tempered, good-hearted friend there? And you are the son of his foster-brother, the man who first wronged and betrayed him!

SOFTHEAD.

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And this is the gentleman who knows everybody and everything? Did not even know his own father! La! why he's been quite a take-in! Ha! ha!

EASY.

Ha! ha! ha!

HARDMAN.

And all the while I thought I was standing apart from others,—needing none; served by none; mastering men; moulding them,—the man whom my father had wronged went before me with noiseless beneficence, and opened my path through the mountain I fancied this right hand had hewn!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Tut! I did but level the ground; till you were strong eno' to rise of yourself; *I* did not give you the post that you named with so manly a pride; *I* did not raise you to the councils of your country as the "Equal of All!"

SOFTHEAD.

No! for that you'll thank Fred. He bribed the prime minister with his favourite Murillo. He said you wanted the post to win the lady you loved. *Dimidum meæ*,—I think you might have told him what lady it was.

HARDMAN.

So! Wilmot!—It needed but this!

EASY.

Pooh, Mr. Softhead! Sir Geoffrey would never consent to a lord. Quite right. What's a lord, hang him. (*Aside.* Lets a respectable man be carried off to the watchhouse, and don't marry one's daughter after all.) Practical, steady fellow is Mr. Hardman; and as to his father, a disreputable connexion—quite right not to know him! All you want, Geoffrey, is to secure Lucy's happiness.

SIR GEOFFREY.

All! That, now, is his charge.

HARDMAN.

I accept it. But first I secure yours, O my benefactor!

This house, in which you feared to meet infamy, is the home of sorrow and virtue; the home of a woman unsullied, but slandered.—Of her who, loving you still, followed your footsteps; watched you night and day from yon windows; sent you those flowers, the tokens of innocence and youth; in romance, it is true—the romance only known to a woman—the romance only known to the pure! Lord Wilmot is guiltless! He led your child to the arms of a mother!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Silence him!—silence him!—'tis a snare! I retract! He shall not have this girl! *Her* house? Do I breathe the same air as the woman so loved and so faithless?

LUCY.

Pity, for my mother!—No, no; justice for her! Pity for yourself and for me!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Come away, or you shall not be my child; I'll disown you. That man speaks—

Enter Wilmot, Duke, and Lord Loftus.

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HARDMAN.

I speak, and I prove—(*To the Duke*)—The Memoirs— (*Glancing over them.*) Here is the very letter that the menial informed you your wife sent to Lord Henry. Read it; and judge if such scorn would not goad such a man to revenge. What revenge could he wield? Why, a boast!

SIR GEOFFREY (reading).

The date of the very day that he boasted. Ha! brave words! proud heart! I suspect!—I suspect!

HARDMAN.

Lord Henry's confession! It was writ on his death-bed.

LORD LOFTUS.

'Tis his hand. I attest it.

DUKE.

I too, John, Duke of Middlesex, whose word no man ever doubted;—and that is one use of a Duke! And more, sir; my Duchess comes of a race whose sons were all brave, and whose daughters all chaste. She entreats your Lady's friendship; to hold it an honour. Let her name be the answer to scandal. And that is one use of a Duchess.

SIR GEOFFREY (who has been reading the confession).

Heaven forgive me! Can *she*? The flowers; the figure; the—How blind I've been! Where is she? where is she? You said she was here! Ellinor! Ellinor! to my arms—to my heart—O my wife!

[Exeunt Sir Geoffrey and Lucy into the inner room.]

DUKE.

My eyes overflow. (*Perceiving Softhead.*) Ha! Powers above! Is that the small man once more? Has he betrayed us? Sir, sir, you ought to be half way to France!

SOFTHEAD (who, since the Duke's entrance, has been trying to creep into the earth, now running to HARDMAN).

France! Am I to be banished and haunted from my own native country? Mr. Hardman, sir! Mr. Hardman!

HARDMAN to LOFTUS and DUKE.

Hush! my lords, destroy this Requisition! When you signed it, you doubtless believed that the Prince you would serve was of the Church of your Protestant fathers?

DUKE.

Certainly; we were assured so.

LOFTUS.

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Or we never had signed it.
HARDMAN.

Then you are safe ever more; for your honour is freed.
The Prince has retired to Rome, and abjured your faith. I will convince you of this later.
DUKE.

What! then perhaps that mysterious small man saved our lives! Sir, sir! He flies me! He gesticulates! A most supernatural small man! Portentous! He awes me!
[Duke and Softhead continue to shun each other with mutual apprehension.]

EASY to WILMOT.

Glad to find you are not so bad as you seemed, my Lord; and now that Lucy is engaged to Mr. Hardman—
WILMOT.

Engaged already? *(Aside. So! he asked me here to insult me with his triumph!)* Well!
BARBARA.

Hush, papa! Oh, Softhead, how you wronged that dear Lord Wilmot; who meant so kindly to us too. How dejected he looks!

SOFTHEAD *(whimpering)*.

Why would you make yourself out such a monster, Fred? Don't do it again. It might take in wiser men than your poor little Softhead.
WILMOT.

Never more such gay follies for me! So *this* then is grief! I never knew it before; how it changes a man!

Enter Sir Geoffrey and Lucy: Sir Geoffrey radiant with joy, his form erect, his whole appearance changed.

SIR GEOFFREY.

I am young! I am young! A load's taken off from my breast. Ha! ha! ha!
[Laughing heartily.]

SOFTHEAD.

La! is that old Sir Geoffrey? What a laugh! Joy—I suppose! How it changes a man!
HARDMAN.

Lucy, your parents are united—my promise fulfilled; permit me— *(Takes her hand.)* Sir Geoffrey, the son of him who so wronged you, and whose wrongs you pardoned, now reminds you, that he is entrusted with the charge to ensure the happiness of your child! Behold the man of her choice, and take from his presence your own cure of distrust. With his faults on the surface, and with no fault that is worse than that of concealing his virtues;—Here

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she loves and is loved! And thus I discharge the trust, and ensure the happiness!

[Placing her hand in Wilmot's.

EASY.

How!

SIR GEOFFREY.

Peace! Good Hardman, I cannot gainsay you. Her mother has told me already the secret of her heart. Well, well, take her, you—satrap, and never let me see a tear in those eyes; or, in spite of Hardman's rebuke, I will rack you to death with—suspicion.

[Duke, Lord Loftus, Easy, Barbara, Softhead, &c., gather round Sir Geoffrey.

WILMOT.

Hardman—

HARDMAN.

Noble friend!

WILMOT.

How can I accept at the price of—

HARDMAN.

Hush! For the third time to-day, you have but one option. You cannot affect to be generous to me at the cost of a heart all your own. Take your right.

WILMOT.

Oh, Hardman! I trust I should feel—speak as you, were our positions reversed.

HARDMAN (smiling).

"Tho' our characters differ"—Come, my lord, lest I tell all the world how you bribed the Prime Minister. Say no more, for your own sake.

WILMOT.

Oh, name not so paltry a service.

HARDMAN.

Paltry! 'Tis the power to serve a nation!—On mine honour as man, this is the sole happy moment I have known to-day—the happiest I have known in my war with the world. Here was the true strife; here, between good and evil, the good has prevailed. My life henceforth, is clear. Men I never guessed of, have served me: I will serve men hereafter, as I dreamed that I served but myself: and, faithful still, Lucy, to you, have no bride but my country.

WILMOT.

Nay, Lucy, we must not leave him to that mournful fidelity. I have a sister, worthy to replace even your image; and who is already so disposed to admire, that I think she may be pleased to console, him.

SOFTHEAD (who has taken Easy aside).

Not So Bad As We Seem

But, indeed, Mr. Easy, I reform; I repent. Mr. Hardman will have a bride in the country—let me have a bride in the city. After all, I was not such a very bad monster.

EASY.

Pooh. Won't hear of it! Want to marry only just to mimic my Lord.

BARBARA.

Dear Lord Wilmot; *do* say a good word for us.

EASY.

No, sir; no! Your head's been turned by a lord.

WILMOT.

Not the first man whose head's been turned by a lord, with the help of the Duke of Burgundy—eh, Mr. Easy? I'll just appeal to Sir Geoffrey.

EASY.

No—no—hold your tongue, my Lord.

WILMOT.

And you insisted upon giving your daughter to Mr. Softhead; forced her upon him.

EASY.

I—never!—When?

WILMOT.

Last night, when you were chaired member for the City of London. I'll just explain the case to Sir Geoffrey—

EASY.

Confound it—hold—hold! Never hear the end of it!

WILMOT.

And we *must* claim your promise; because, as you so justly remarked, Mr. Softhead is a jolly old soul! My dear Sir Geoffrey, I say—

EASY (putting his hand to Wilmot's lips).

There—there—that will do. But if ever a lord gets me again into—

WILMOT.

The watchhouse? But you *would* go, of yourself. "Proudest day of your life." Sir Geoffrey—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Yes.

EASY (running to BARBARA).

Not So Bad As We Seem

Only another wedding on foot, Geoffrey! You like this young reprobate, Barbara?
BARBARA.

Dear papa, his health is so delicate! I should like to take care of him.
EASY.

There, go, and take care of each other. Well, Alderman Softhead is a warm man—has a great many votes—and if I *should* stand for the City? Ha! ha! I suppose it is all for the best.
[Duke, takes forth, and puts on, his spectacles; examines Softhead curiously—is convinced that he is human, approaches, and offers his hand, which Softhead, emboldened by Barbara, though not without misgivings, accepts.]

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh—ugh! Mr. Goodenough Easy. I suspect—I suspect—
EASY.

That you've done with suspicion, plagued yourself and all round you quite long eno'. A great deal of dry stuff, called philosophy, is written about life. But the grand thing is to take it coolly, and have a good-humoured indulgence—
WILMOT.

For the force of example, Mr. Easy!
SOFTHEAD.

Ha! ha! ha!
WILMOT.

For the follies of fashion, and the crimes of monsters like myself, and that terrible Softhead!
SIR GEOFFREY.

Ha! Ha!
WILMOT.

For infirmities of temper?
SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh!
WILMOT.

When they are but as weather—stains on the oak—that discolour the rind, but mar not the worth of the tree—
DUKE.

Good!
WILMOT.

For the pride of a patrician—
DUKE.

Not So Bad As We Seem

Eh!

HARDMAN.

When it spreads thro' the heart of a land,—the example of honour!

DUKE (aside).

A perfect gentleman, tho' he may not have an ancestor!

WILMOT.

And more than indulgence for the daring plebeian with all his sharp struggles between evil and good, when he fights his way up to fortune, and sees those before him as foes.

[Taking Hardman's hand.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Let him, like Hardman, love fame and his country, and I suspect that, like Hardman, he'll be, one day, surprised by his friends.

HARDMAN.

My thanks to you both. But alas! my dear Wilmot, many sides to a character!

WILMOT.

Plague on it, yes! But get at them all, and we're not so bad as we seem—

SOFTHEAD.

No, Fred, not quite so bad!

HARDMAN.

Not even poor David Fallen, the Author.

WILMOT.

Egad, if the Author himself were here, I should still hope that we might say—'not quite so bad'—taking us as we stand—Altogether!

THE END.

Not So Bad As We Seem

**"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!"
OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY.
(AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)**

SCENE.

Wilmot's Apartment.—Wilmot, Sir Geoffrey, Softhead, Easy, and Hardman, seated at a Table. Wine, Fruits, &c.

WILMOT.

Pass the wine—what's the news?

EASY.

Funds have risen to-day.

SIR GEOFFREY.

I suspect it will rain.

EASY.

Well, I've got in my hay.

HARDMAN.

David Fallen is dead!

OMNES.

David Fallen!

WILMOT.

Poor fellow!

SIR GEOFFREY.

I should like to have seen him!

SOFTHEAD.

I saw him! So yellow!

HARDMAN.

Your annuity killed him.

WILMOT.

How—how? to the point.

HARDMAN.

By the shock on his nerves—at the sight of a joint.

A very great genius—

EASY.

"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

Not So Bad As We Seem

I own—now he's dead,
That a writer more charming—
WILMOT.

Was never worse fed!
HARDMAN.

His country was grateful—

SOFTHEAD (surprised).

He looked very shabby!
HARDMAN.

His bones—
SOFTHEAD.

You might count them!—
HARDMAN.

Repose in the Abbey!

SOFTHEAD (after a stare of astonishment).

So THAT is the way that a country is grateful!
'Ere his nerves grew so weak,—if she'd sent him a plateful.

EASY (hastily producing a long paper).

My Taxes! Your notions are perfectly hateful!
[Pause.—Evident feeling that there's no getting over Mr. Easy's paper.

WILMOT.

Pope's epigram stung him.
HARDMAN.

Yes, Pope has a sting.
WILMOT.

But who writes the epitaph?
HARDMAN.

Pope: a sweet thing!
WILMOT.

'Gad, if I were an author, I'd rather, instead,
Have the epitaph living—the epigram dead.

"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

Not So Bad As We Seem

If Pope had but just reconsidered that matter,
Poor David—

SOTHEAD.

Had gone to the Abbey much fatter!
EASY.

He was rather a scamp!
WILMOT.

Put yourself in his place.

EASY (horror-struck).

Heaven forbid!

HARDMAN.

Let us deem him the Last of a Race!
SIR GEOFFREY.

But the race that succeeds may have little more pelf—
HARDMAN.

Ay; and trials as sharp. I'm an author myself.
But the remedy? Wherefore should authors not build—

EASY.

An alms-house?

HARDMAN.

No, merchant, their own noble guild!
Some fortress for youth in the battle for fame;
Some shelter that Age is not humbled to claim;
Some roof from the storm for the Pilgrim of Knowledge;—
WILMOT.

Not unlike what our ancestors meant by—a College;
Where teacher and student alike the subscriber,
Untaxing the Patron,—

EASY.

The State,—
HARDMAN.

Or the briber,—
WILMOT.

The son of proud Learning shall knock at the door,
And cry *This* [Note: The head.] is rich, and not whine *That* [Note: The pocket.] is poor.

"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

Not So Bad As We Seem

HARDMAN.

Oh right! For these men govern earth from their graves—
Shall the dead be as kings, and the living as slaves!

EASY.

It is all their own fault—they so slave one another;
Not a son of proud Learning but knocks—down his brother!

WILMOT.

Yes! other vocations, from Thames to the Border,
Have some *esprit de corps*, and some pride in their order;
Lawyers, soldiers, and doctors, if quarrels do pass,
Still soften their spite from respect to their class;
Why should authors be spitting and scratching like tabbies,
To leave but dry bones—

SOFTHEAD.

For those grateful cold Abbies!

HARDMAN.

Worst side of their character!

WILMOT.

True to the letter.

Are their sides, then, so fat, we can't hit on a better?

HARDMAN.

Why—the sticks in the fable!—Our Guild be the tether,

WILMOT.

Ay: the thorns are rubbed off when the sticks cling together.

SOFTHEAD (musingly).

I could *be*—yes—I *could* be a Pilgrim of Knowledge,
If you'd change Deadman's Lane to a snug little College.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh! stuff!—it takes money a College to found.

EASY.

I will head the subscription myself—with a pound!

HARDMAN.

Quite enough from a friend; for we authors should feel
We must put our own shoulders like men to the wheel.
Be thrifty when thriving—take heed of the morrow,—

EASY.

"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

Not So Bad As We Seem

And not get in debt—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Where the deuce could they borrow?

HARDMAN.

Let us think of a scheme.

EASY.

He is always so knowing.

WILMOT.

A scheme! I have got one; the wheel's set a going!

A play from one author.

HARDMAN.

With authors for actors,—

WILMOT.

And some benefit nights,—

BOTH.

For the world's benefactors.

SIR GEOFFREY.

Who'll give you the play? it will not be worth giving.

Authors now are so bad; always are while they're living!

EASY.

Ah! if David Fallen, great genius, were here—

OMNES.

Great genius!

HARDMAN.

A man whom all Time shall revere!

SOFTHEAD (impatiently).

But he's dead.

OMNES (lugubriously).

He is dead!

EASY.

The true Classical School, sir!

"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

Not So Bad As We Seem

Ah! could he come back!
WILMOT.

He'll not be such a fool, sir.
[Taking HARDMAN aside, whispers.]

We know of an author.

HARDMAN (doubtfully).

Ye—s—s, David was brighter.

OMNES.

But he's dead.

HARDMAN.

This might do—as a live sort of writer.
EASY.

Alive! that looks bad.

SOFTHEAD.

Must we take a live man?

WILMOT.

To oblige us he'll be, sir,—as dead as he can!

SOFTHEAD.

Alive; and *will* write, sir?

HARDMAN.

With pleasure, sir.

SOFTHEAD.

Pleasure!

HARDMAN.

With less than your wit, he has more than your leisure.

Coquets with the Muse—

SIR GEOFFREY.

Lucky dog to afford her!

WILMOT.

Can we get his good side?

HARDMAN.

Yes, he's proud of his order.

WILMOT.

"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

Not So Bad As We Seem

Then he'll do!

SIR GEOFFREY.

As for wit—he has books on his shelves.

HARDMAN.

Now the actors?

WILMOT.

By Jove, we will act it ourselves.

[Omnes, at first surprised into enthusiasm, succeeded by great consternation.]

SIR GEOFFREY.

Ugh, not I!

SOFTHEAD.

Lord ha' mercy!

EASY.

A plain, sober, steady—

WILMOT.

I'll appeal to Sir Geoffrey. There's one caught already!

This suspicious old knight; to his blind side, direct us.

HARDMAN.

Your part is to act—

WILMOT.

True; and his to suspect us.

I rely upon you.

HARDMAN (looking at his watch).

Me! I have not a minute!

WILMOT.

If the Play has a plot, he is sure to be in it.

Come, Softhead!

SOFTHEAD.

I won't. I'll go home to my mother.

WILMOT.

Pooh! monsters like us always help one another.

SIR GEOFFREY.

"DAVID FALLEN IS DEAD!" OR, A KEY TO THE PLAY. (AN AFTER-SCENE, BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE.)

Not So Bad As We Seem

I suspect you will act.

SOFTHEAD.

Well, I've this consolation—

Still to imitate one—

HARDMAN.

Who defies imitation.

WILMOT.

Let the public but favour the plan we have hit on,
And we'll chair through all London,—our Family Briton.

SIR GEOFFREY.

What?—what? Look at Easy! He's drunk, or I dream—

EASY (rising).

The toast of the evening,—Success to the Scheme!
