

The farmer's wife: a comic opera, in three acts / Written by C. Dibdin, Jun. and performed, for the first time, at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, on Tuesday, February 1, 1814.

Contributors

Dibdin, Charles, 1768-1833.
Bishop, Henry R. 1786-1855. Farmer's wife.
Covent Garden Theatre.

Publication/Creation

London : Printed for G. and S. Robinson, 1814.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/y65xrkbb>

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THE FARMER'S WIFE:



A COMIC OPERA,

In Three Acts.

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A COMIC OPERA,

IN THREE ACTS.

PRINTED BY J. MOYES,
Greville Street, Hatton Garden, London.

618
THE FARMER'S WIFE:

A COMIC OPERA,

In Three Acts.

WRITTEN BY

C. DIBDIN, JUN.

AND PERFORMED, FOR THE FIRST TIME,

AT

THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN,

On Tuesday, February 1, 1814.

THE OVERTURE COMPOSED BY BISHOP;
THE MUSIC BY MESSRS. BISHOP, DAVY, REEVE,
T. WELSH, AND CONDELL.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. AND S. ROBINSON,
25, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1814.

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25, WATERLOO PLACE

1844

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS attempt at English Comic Opera is most respectfully offered to the perusal of that Public whose fostering indulgence permitted it a place on the Stage. To Mr. H. HARRIS every grateful acknowledgement is due for the very handsome manner in which the Piece was produced; and to Mr. FAWCETT, the Stage Manager, not only for his excellent acting, but his unremitting attention to the interests of the Author; who sensibly feels every thing he ought towards the Composers, Performers, and Artists; though he trusts he shall, for imperious reasons, be excused particularizing individual instances of talent and friendship; but, like the parrot in the fable, if he *says little*, he "*thinks the more*."

SADLER'S WELLS,

March 5, 1814.

ADVERTISEMENT.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Sir Charles Courtly.....	Mr. JONES.
Cornflower [<i>The Farmer</i>].....	Mr. FAWCETT.
Captain Belton.....	Mr. SINCLAIR.
Farmer Barnard.....	Mr. INCLEDON.
Mr. Williams.....	Mr. CHAPMAN.
Dr. Pother [<i>Village Apothecary</i>].....	Mr. MATTHEWS.
Peter [<i>Valet to Sir Charles</i>].....	Mr. LISTON.
Robin [<i>Servant to Barnard</i>].....	Mr. EMERY.
Stubble [<i>Bailiff to Cornflower</i>].....	Mr. SLADER.
William [<i>Servant to ditto</i>].....	Mr. TINNY.
Chalk [<i>Landlord</i>].....	Mr. ATKINS.

WOMEN.

Mrs. Cornflower.....	Miss STEPHENS.
Miss Courtly.....	Miss MATTHEWS.
Jenny [<i>Her Maid</i>].....	Miss TREBY.
Susan } [<i>Maids of the Farm</i>].....	{ Miss BOOTH.
Fanny }	{ Miss RENNELL.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MEN

Sir Charles Courtly Mr. Jones
 Cornflower (Tyranny) Mr. Lawrence
 Captain Belton Mr. Sinclair
 Farmer Barnard Mr. Ingham
 Mr. Williams Mr. Chapman
 Dr. Foster (Village Apothecary) Mr. Matthews
 Peter (Valet to Sir Charles) Mr. Linton
 Robin (Servant to Barnard) Mr. Henry
 Stubble (Hedge to Cornflower) Mr. Slader
 William (Servant to Stubble) Mr. Tink
 Chas. (Landlord) Mr. Atkins

WOMEN

Mrs. Cornflower Miss Stephens
 Miss Courtly Miss Matthews
 Lucy (Her Maid) Miss Terry
 Susan (Maid of the Room) Miss Booth
 Fanny Miss Kennell

THE FARMER'S WIFE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Farm House, &c.*

Enter WILLIAM, SUSAN, and FANNY.

TRIO. (BISHOP.)

I.

O! how sweet the opening day!
Every sense delighting,
Charming ev'ry care away,
To labour while inviting.
Labour, source of joy and health;
Labour, all the peasant's wealth.

II.

O! how blythe the bosom grows,
When the lark is singing!
While to Him who all bestows
Sweet gratitude is springing!
Grateful notes our song employ;
Grateful hearts alone enjoy.

Will. I wonder how long it will be before our good master Cornflower returns from London: and, when he does, what he'll say to the fine Baronet, and his coxcomb servant, Peter, who are

here. Our master's friend, Farmer Barnard, seems to think 'em no better than they should be.

STUBBLE [*Entering*].

Stub. Neither are you any better than you should be, William; folding your arms here, instead of unfolding your sheep yonder: and *you*, girls, never content with being idle yourselves, must always keep the lads from their labour, dangling after you.

Fanny. Well, I'm sure, none of us care for *your* dangling after us; and that makes you so snappish, Mr. Bailiff.

Stub. No, no; that puppy, Peter, is more to your taste than I am.

Susan. No, Mr. Stubble; Peter's no more to our taste than you are: he's a monkey, and you are——

Stub. What?

Susan. A bear! [*Exeunt WILLIAM, FANNY, and SUSAN, laughing.*]

Stub. Ay, ay; snigger and laugh, if you please; but I'll make you all do your duty. They can none of them bear me since I discharged old Gerard: but he was a hypocrite, and ungrateful to his employer.—Well, think what they will, they shall find rough Stubble comes from a good grain, and is no mere man of straw.

SONG.—STUBBLE. (REEVE).

I.

My name's Reuben Stubble, no mere man of straw;

True grain, tho', mayhap, mix'd wi' chaff;

I stickle for duty, make justice my law,

So they call me severe;

But let them jibe and jeer;

At their snigg'ring I whistle and laugh;

As I did, when light-hearted I drove father's team,
 While the bells at their collars were ringing;
 For I found, to be one thing, another to seem,
 Were vexation, and kept me from singing,
 Fal lal, la, &c.

II.

Plain upright and downright was ever my plan;
 Your flatt'ry's too pleasant by half;
 Let me finish in age, as in youth I began,
 For if now I should slip,
 To catch me on the hip,
 How your snigg'ers would whistle and laugh:
 If I did too, whenever I pass'd by a team,
 While the bells at their collars were ringing,
 'Twould remind me how diff'rent to be and to seem,
 And spoil all my relish for singing
 Fal lal, la, &c.

Stub. Ifegs, here comes Farmer Barnard;
 upon his daily inquiry, I suppose, when we expect
 master Cornflower.

Enter BARNARD.

Barn. Good day, Stubble: well, have you
 heard any thing yet of your worthy master's
 return?

Stub. No, indeed, sir, we don't expect him yet
 for some time; I wish, for my part, he was come:
 —I think—I think—but I don't like to speak my
 mind, and so I'll say nothing.

Barn. I guess what you allude to, honest
 Stubble—the uncommon attention paid by this Sir
 Charles Courtly to my friend Cornflower's young
 wife; and the—no, hang it, I can't say *encou-*
agement she gives him, tho' it's very much like it.
 —I could almost wish the Baronet had broke his
 neck when his chaise broke down:—I was afraid,

when Cornflower married her, it would turn out this way some time or other.

Stub. It was always a matter of wonder to me how it came about that he should be married to a beautiful woman, so much younger than himself, with a tip-top education, and manners more fit for a drawing-room than a dairy.

Barn. I'll tell you, Stubble. Cornflower, beneath a rough outside, possesses a heart that would do honour to a prince.

Stub. That all the country round knows.

Barn. Your mistress was the only daughter of a man of fashion, named Belton, who had, besides, a son, now an officer in the army abroad, and who is shortly expected here. Extravagance ruined the father's fortune, and he retired with his wife and children to a small Villa in the West. Business carrying Cornflower into the neighbourhood, he saved the daughter from the flames, at the risk of his own life: this introduced him to the father, whom, in a moment of exigency, he preserved from a jail.

Stub. Ay, like enough; he's not the only one my master, Cornflower, has saved from a jail:—if his purse was as large as his heart, there wou'dn't be a prisoner for debt in the county.

Barn. The two circumstances I have mentioned, made so strong an impression on the mind of the young and lovely Emma, that, seeing Cornflower's age and manners through the medium of of his heart, gratitude blinded her to all disparity, and she consented to reward his love. I advised him against the match—"Consider," said I, "the difference of your ages, manners, education, and habits of life:"—but in vain; he considered only his passion, took the wife, and must now take

the consequence. Yet, I must say, in his defence, that following advice which opposes our dearest inclinations is an effort of heroism easily affected, but hard to accomplish, even by the wisest and best.

DUET. (DAVY).

I.

O give me the man who can value advice,
 Yet heeds not the counsel that folly may lend;
 Whose heart trusts with caution, discerning, tho' nice;
 Whose head can distinguish 'tween flatt'rer and
 friend;
 Whose temper unruffled no trouble can wring,
 Yet in danger can feeling with fortitude show.
 If the "mind is a kingdom," that man is a king,
 And a subject of envy for monarchs below.

II.

Such a man, if domestic, tho' harass'd with care,
 Still smooths up his brow when approaching his
 door;
 Conceals from the circle that welcome him there,
 All, all, but the joy their endearments insure.
 The smiles of his partner such pleasure can bring,
 His children's sweet prattle such joy can bestow.
 If the "mind is a kingdom," that man is a king,
 And a subject of envy for monarchs below.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Room in the Farm House.

Enter PETER.

Peter. I wonder how long it will be before we despatch our business, and get away from this hum-drum place: If Sir Charles succeeds in his

attempts on Mrs. Cornflower, who, I think, does not seem quite insensible to his little attentions, and I do but manage affairs properly with Susan, the best thing we can do, will be to carry off our prizes before the farmer returns. I think I hear Sir Charles.

Sir Charles. [*Without.*] Where is he, I say? I can't find my blockhead.

Peter. Look on your own shoulders.

Sir Charles. Where is the rascal?

Peter. Which of us does he mean?

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Charles. O, you are here, sir—Well, have you heard any thing that indicates a suspicion of my designs upon Mrs. Cornflower?

Peter. O no; we've manag'd matters very well hitherto. O sir, little did I think, when I saw you ogling her at the races, it would come to this! but when you have game in view, you stand for no *repairs*, as the *canaille* have it: yet, if I hadn't luckily learned that the farmer was in London, you'd never have got into the house.

Sir Charles. It was a masterly contrivance of mine, to overturn the chaise, and pretend I was internally hurt; was'nt it, Peter?

Peter. Bless your honour, you had flats to deal with.

Sir Charles. Cornflower, I find, is expected soon, so we must despatch, for I'm resolved to carry his wife off, by art or force; tho' I think there would be no occasion for violence, if I had but a little more time; for I confess she is not quite so prudish as I expected, nor yet so compliant as I had hoped; but assiduity may remove every bar; and when I have once carried her off—

Peter. There's another bar—

Sir Charles. What?

Peter. The bar at Westminster Hall; long briefs, big wigs, and large damages.

Sir Charles. Pshaw! as to damages, I must trust to the ingenuity of my counsel—"Gentlemen of the jury, my client—young man—bred in the school of fashion—susceptible heart—strong passions—critical situation—fascinating woman—husband absent, when he ought to have been present—suppose yourselves in his situation—love and opportunity—human nature—hands upon your hearts—venial crime—damages nominal—and—"

Peter. Judge charges the jury—"Gentlemen, counsel has done his duty, now I'll do mine—He would make out the wolf a silly sheep, because he was a wolf in sheep's clothing—here rich man steals poor man's lamb—crime bad enough of itself—defendant's rank makes it worse; and, being committed in return for benefits received, makes it as black as the devil."—O, no, judges never use naughty words; but, no matter what he'd say, it's what the jury would say; and I fancy there would be 5 or 6,000 reasons why that would not be very pleasing to your honour (*Ironically*).

Sir Charles. And, pray, sir, who asked you for your impertinent opinion? Because I have admitted you to a more than ordinary freedom, you are for ever imposing on my good nature.

Peter. That *I* impose upon you, I own; but I take great care nobody *else* shall, and that's what I call justice.

Sir Charles. And how do you prove it, Mr. Casuist?

Peter. Thus:—Self-love is the first law of Nature, and fidelity the next; which means, take care

of yourself first, and your master afterwards; and I believe I'm not singular in my interpretation.

Sir Charles. No, nor in your assurance: but no more of this nonsense: you know my *pretended* relation is to come here and invite Mrs. Cornflower to town; therefore, you must try some of your logic on Fanny, her favourite servant; and if she can be made our instrument of attack on her mistress, our victory will be almost complete.

Peter. I think you needn't doubt the certainty of your victory, considering what an old clodhopper this Cornflower has been described to you.

Sir Charles. I don't know that: as he is not very rich, I should suppose there must have been some very powerful motive for her marrying him; and I should like to find that out. I understand the village apothecary, Dr. Pother, who was absent when we came here, has returned, and that he is acquainted with the birth, parentage, and education of all the county: you may probably learn from him the history of this marriage, as the knowledge of that may facilitate my scheme.

Peter. Doctor Pother? Yes, I've heard of him; he's famous for telling a story in such a way nobody can understand him.

Sir Charles. Make use of your senses—go about it directly, and your reward shall be proportioned to the intelligence you obtain.

Peter. I'll do my utmost, sir: ferret him out immediately; and—

Sir Charles. Who's coming? O, its Fanny—you stay here, and, by virtue of this never-failing figure of rhetoric, (*Giving some money,*) retain her on our side, and, then, lose no time in feeling the pulse of the doctor.

[*Exit.*

Peter. I have already tampered with Fanny, who, I think, would soon be made an apt scholar in love's arithmetic, especially when practised in this "golden rule." [*Referring to the money.*]

Enter FANNY.

Peter. Well, my little Fanny, you didn't forget to represent to your mistress, in all the glowing colours of your fertile imagination, my master's profound gratitude towards her?

Fanny. No, Mr. Peter; but she said her ears were married, and not allowed to listen to the compliments of single gentlemen.

Peter. Why, she must be heartily tired of the copyhold compliments of *Old Aftergrass*, your master; whose manners are on a par with those of his ploughmen, and whose conversation is almost as amusing as the bleating of his own sheep—ba! ba! ba!

Fanny. Monstrous witty! Mr. Peter; but if any of the farm men happen to hear you abuse *Old Aftergrass*, as you are pleased to call him, they'll be apt to mistake you for a sheaf of corn, and give you a good threshing.

Peter. Then they should keep their harvest-home in the round-house, Mrs. Fanny; but, to other business—You must know, Sir Charles's sister will make this farm in her way to London shortly.

Fanny. And what have I to do with that?

Peter. Why, as you have not only beautiful eyes—

Fanny. La! Mr. Peter!

Peter. La! Mrs. Fanny! O yes, you have, and a most persuasive tongue; and, then, you have

the ear of your mistress; and if you could but manage to put a whim into her head, to accompany the Honourable Miss Courtly to town—

Fanny. To London?

Peter. Yes; and you can go with her; and I am ordered to present you with this trifling consideration [*showing the purse*], to equip you for the journey.

Fanny. [*Taking the money.*] Dear me, Mr. Peter, your master is certainly a very kind gentleman; I will do my best; though my mistress has just received a letter, that her brother, the Captain, has returned from abroad, and will be shortly here; that may prevent it.

Peter. [*Aside.*] That we must try to counteract.—However, you know you can execute your commission all the same; and when you are in London, perhaps I may exert my interest to get you a place among the right honourables, and you may soon become a lady.

Fanny. Me!

Peter. O, yes; it requires nothing but fine clothes, and fine airs.—Cheap muslins and private dancing-shops have made half the servants in London fit for nothing else but fine ladies: that purse will procure you the one, and I'll teach you the other.

[*Exit, dancing.*]

Fanny. Dear me, that will be charming! I shall like to go to London, and make my fortune, prodigiously; I'm tired of being buried alive among quizzes and quicksets; and this lucky opportunity may—Lud! who knows what it may not do! An oak springs from an acorn; and, they say, a little drop of water came to be a great pearl.

SONG.—FANNY. (REEVE.)

I.

A little drop of water fell
 In the foaming ocean;
 With sad emotion
 It cried, "To ev'ry hope farewell!
 For I'm lost, alas!"—
 'Tis a silly tale, and perhaps may tease you;
 But what came to pass
 You shall know, O yes, you shall know, a'n't please you.

II.

An Oyster that by chance was nigh
 Its fate arrested,
 The drop digested;
 Which grew a pearl of value high.
 And the tale is told—
 'Tis a silly tale, and perhaps may tease you—
 For a power of gold
 It was sold, O yes, it was sold, a'n't please you.
 [Exit.]

SCENE III.

The Farm, (as in the first Scene.)

Enter CORNFLOWER (as just off a Journey), followed by STUBBLE, with a Beggar.

Corn. Bestow my charity? [To Beggar.] You look able to work, and I'll employ you; to relieve idleness, is to rob industry, and encourage vice. Go, join yon labourers, and be the author of your own relief; there's independence in that, the only soil for honesty. Set him to work, Stubble, and—

Stub. He'll be as lazy as the two last vagrants you employed.

Corn. When he is, turn him off; but what is become of old Gerrard? I did not see him in the fields as I rode by.

Stub. No, sir; I discharged him.

Corn. Why, was *he* lazy too?

Stub. No; but I thought you could do without him.

Corn. Will any one else employ him?

Stub. No.

Corn. Then, though I can do without him, I see he can't do without me, and that's the very reason he should have staid. Let me see him in the fields when I go my rounds, or I may take it in my head to fancy I can do without *you*.

Stub. Why, I thought—

Corn. Thought? in matters of this sort think for yourself, don't think for me: I was a very poor man myself once, and know what the poor man suffers, when the unfeeling turn an eye of indifference upon his humble look for pity.—Go; and it will be your own fault, if I don't speak more kindly to you when we next meet.

[*Exeunt STUBBLE and Beggar.*

Well, now to meet my dear Emma; she'll be surprised to see me so soon; but I know her joy will be doubled by that. O, I am a happy man! I have gained my law-suit; have the best farm on the manor; the most elegant, ay, and the most sensible wife in the country;—here she is.

Enter Mrs. CORNFLOWER. [*They embrace.*]

My dear Emma, how happy I am to behold her who, in my eyes, possesses all the charms of the sex united!

Mrs. C. Your happiness, Henry, cannot ex-

ceed mine, at your unexpected return—the farm will now look itself again; for to me it is never cheerful, unless your presence gives it animation.

Corn. You are a flattering rogue, Emma.

Mrs. C. But tell me—you know a woman's curiosity is always on tip-toe—what has been the result of your journey?

Corn. Gained my law-suit, girl; and made up my mind, as I came along, to celebrate my victory by a merry-making, to which all our friends and neighbours shall be invited:—the large barn shall be fitted up in the London style. I ordered every thing necessary at the county-town this morning. Our worthy friends, Parson Williams and Farmer Barnard, shall assist us in our plans; and we'll be as happy as mirth and friendship can make us.

Mrs. C. You delight me with the proposal; every thing should wear the face of happiness at your return.

SONG. (T. WELSH.)

I.

My Henry kiss'd, and cried "Adieu!

Ah, soon to Emma I'll return."

I gaz'd, till he was lost to view,

Then, pensive, turn'd again to mourn.

No more the brightest scenes are gay

When those we love are far away.

II.

My love return'd, no more to part!

What transports in my bosom rise!

Tell words the welcome of the heart?

Ah! read it, Henry, in mine eyes.

The dullest scenes will now be gay,

My love no longer far away.

Corn. Though I was away, my heart was *only* here; but, by-the-by, what coxcomb was that I saw as I came in?

Mrs. C. The servant of Sir Charles Courtly.

Corn. And, pray, who is Sir Charles Courtly?

Mrs. C. Did you not receive my letter, informing you of his being here?

Corn. Being here? I received no such letter;—but how came he here?

Mrs. C. By accident: one miserable rainy night, we were alarmed by the barking of the dogs, and violent cries:—after mastering our fears, we went out, and found the servant you saw, with a postboy, at the gate, who requested shelter for a young gentleman, who had been overturned, and seriously hurt.

Corn. A young gentleman! and you bade him welcome, and gave him all the assistance you could? [*In an ambiguous manner.*]

Mrs. C. I did; you are not offended?

Corn. Offended! If you had'nt I might have been offended.—Let hospitality be shut out wherever else it will, it must be a sorry day for the nation, when it is'nt found in the house of an English farmer.

Mrs. C. I knew you would approve of what I did, and therefore I went further; I requested him to stay till he was perfectly recovered. And, as Doctor Pother was absent from the village, I—I, attended him myself. [*With hesitation.*]

Corn. If he didn't recover under the hands of such a physician I should wonder; your very attention is an antidote to pain.

Mrs. C. Who flatters now, Henry? But, here comes Sir Charles.

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Charles Courtly, my dear, of whose accident I informed you.

Sir Charles. And whose pleasing task it must be to say, that nothing can ever erase from his mind the generous treatment he has experienced *here*.—Allow me, good sir, to congratulate you on your return. You have come, sir, unexpectedly [*aside*], and devilishly *mal-à-propos*, too!

Corn. Why, Sir Charles, my business over, I left London the moment I could; I'm never at ease there; I neither like their modes nor their mummmery.

Sir Charles. Nay, my good sir, London is generally esteemed a terrestrial paradise.

Corn. In one respect I think it is, Sir Charles; for, like the garden of Eden, the knowledge obtained in it is too often at the expense of innocence.

Sir Charles. Rather severe, Mr. Cornflower: yet I must think London has its beauties, as well as the country; the contrast forms the *il penseroso*, and *l' allegro* of Nature; so I divide my time between them; for the *vive la bagatelle* of town, is a charming remedy for the *maladie imaginaire*, which is generally excited by too perpetual a recurrence of green trees, blue skies, white cows, black sheep, brown barns, and yellow haystacks.

Corn. But you don't mean to assert, Sir Charles, that the follies of London are equal to the consistencies of a country life? For our green trees and blue skies, you have green-horns and blue devils—for our white cows and black sheep, you have white-washed bankrupts and black-legged adventurers—and for our brown barns and yellow haystacks, you have bronzed fronts and jaundiced features in plenty.

Sir Charles. I love the medium, sir.—I ridicule as much *le petit maître* of London, as *le rustre* of the Land's End—frivolity and fog are equally my aversion. [*Aside.*] What a crusty bear it is!

Enter STUBBLE. [*Hesitatingly.*]

Stub. [*Sulkily.*] May I speak a word, sir?

Corn. May you speak a word, sir? Yes, sir, you may—what now?

Stub. Here's the carrier from the county town with a load of lamps, and gingerbread gear. I told him they never could be for you; but he said you ordered 'em: however, I would'nt let him unload, till I knew the rights of it.

Corn. He's right enough.

Stub. Then I was wrong again, I suppose!

[*Exit.*]

Corn. A rough fellow, though an honest one, sir; and I prefer a knotted oak to a pliant poplar—but I must see after this gingerbread gear, as he calls it; so, excuse me a short time, Sir Charles; we shall meet again at dinner, where I hope keen appetites and substantial fare will make us better acquainted. [*Exit.*]

Mrs. C. Mr. Cornflower, Sir Charles, has gained the law-suit I told you he went to London about;—so means to give his friends a country gala.

Sir Charles. O, ho! then Mr. Cornflower has a little more taste for London fashions than he is willing to allow. Ah, madam, London is the true emporium of pleasure. Believe me, it has beauties innumerable; and would eclipse the world, if it added to its catalogue those of Mrs. Cornflower, [*Bowing.*]

Mrs. C. Come, come, Sir Charles; I have told you before, this is language I mus'nt listen to.

Sir Charles. I am dumb, my dear madam; but, though you may prohibit the exercise of the tongue; the eyes—the eyes, are such officious tell-tales, 'tis impossible to effect an embargo on *them*; and if I may presume on the faculty of *reading eyes*, I am sure you are not *very, very* angry with me.

Mrs. C. Why, really, Sir Charles, the circumstance is too ridiculous to excite any irritable emotion. [*Mocking him*]. “If it added to its catalogue those of Mrs. Cornflower”—ha! ha! ha!

Sir Charles. Bravo! inimitably done!—spare me, spare me, my dear lady; you are too much for me, upon my soul you are; I stand no chance with you.

[*Taking her hand, which she withdraws.*]

Mrs. C. [*Gravely.*] Sir Charles, I must hear no more of this trifling.

Sir Charles. Pardon my volatility; I'm sure your good sense, your good nature, your superior excellence—

Mrs. C. Hold, hold, sir; flattery will increase, not extenuate, your fault.

Recit. accompanied. (BISHOP.)

Trifler, forbear, deceit in flatt'ry lies;
We may endure it, but we must despise.

POLACCA.

Go, trifler, go; your flatt'ry leave,
That lure which leads our sex astray;
Still smiling only to deceive,
And more securely to betray:

On Ætna's sides thus verdure bright
 Beguiles the swain, and hope inspires;
 While, with an overwhelming night,
 The dread volcano pours its fires.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

A Landscape.

Enter PETER.

Peter. Now, then, to seek after this Doctor Pother; this walking story-book, parish-register, and county-chronicle: but what with his unintelligible jargon, confounding one story with another, and knocking his own meaning on the head, I fancy I shall be little the wiser for his communication.—I protest he's coming.

Enter POTHER.

[*Bowing.*] I believe I have the honour to address Doctor Pother?

Pother. [*Chuckling as he speaks.*] Doctor Pother, at your service; one, in the way of his profession, that, though I say it, that should'nt say it, who—that is,—speaking professionally—for anatomy, chemistry, pharmacy, phlebotomy, oxygen, hydrogen, caloric, carbonic, atmospheric, galvanic, ha! ha! ha! can tell you a prodigiously laughable story on that subject.—Went last summer to a watering-place, all in the way of my profession—sent for in a hurry—lady of fashion—feel pulse—*faux pas*—not the lady sick, but her lap-dog—double fee—look grave—talk Latin—hint at hydrophobia, and prescribe galvanism—apply battery—shock violent—window open—out springs Pompey plump into a batter-

pudding going to the bake-house, and lay like a toad in a hole. Ha! ha! ha!

Peter. Monstrous diverting; ha! ha! ha!
[*Both laugh.*]

Pother. But, pray, may I inquire who it is I am addressing?

Peter. The gentleman of Sir Charles Courtly, who is at Cornflower's farm.

Pother. O, I've heard of him—chaise overturned, I unluckily out of the way.—I hope Sir Charles has quite recovered—that is—I shall be happy to attend him in the way of my profession.

Peter. I'll mention your name to him—I'll recommend you, Pother. [*Consequently.*]

Pother. Eternally obliged. [*Aside.*] Man of rank for a patient—bravo! we'll divide the practice between us; I'll blister, and he shall bleed.

Peter. I'm told, Doctor Pother, you are a perfect annal of anecdote; and know the rise, progress, and establishment of the whole county.

Pother. You may say that;—pick up a thing here and there,—all in the way of my profession;—tell you a comical story of that—

Peter. I'll listen another time; for now I want to consult you, professionally, myself.

Pother. O, professionally;—then I'm the man for you,—either anatomy—chemistry—pharmacy—phlebotomy—

Peter. Don't open your catalogue of hard names; my complaint is curiosity.

Pother. Curiosity? Species of the nervous—cause, irritability;—symptom, restlessness;—prognosis, alarming;—cure, doubtful;—fee, double.

Peter. None of your doubling, Doctor; I'm poor, and so you must prescribe gratis, as a lure to better practice.

Pother. Ha! ha! prescribe gratis!! *not* in the way of my profession.—Can tell you a monstrous good story about that, too.

Peter. Never mind that story; I want you to tell me another.—You must know, I have often wondered how Mr. and Mrs. Cornflower came to make so unequal a match.

Pother. Tell you all about it—secret, mum!—had it from Barnard,—forgot part, though.—Let me see,—father, man of fashion—extravagance—lady a visiting—Cornflower—house all in flames—two pair of stairs window—ran up a ladder—taken by the bailiffs—maiden name Bagshaw or Wilkinson, or something like it—married—came down with the mopusses, and moped ever since.

Peter. Very clear, upon my word; the lady visiting—Cornflower all in flames, and a two-pair of stairs window ran up a ladder—

Pother. No, no, Cornflower ran up the ladder—

Peter. O, Cornflower ran up the ladder, and was taken by the bailiffs—

Pother. Psha! Lady in flames—Cornflower up the ladder—lucky escape; and Miss Bagshaw or Wilkinson, as I said before, out of pure gratitude and affection—her father *arrested*—

Peter. I have it.—The lady and Cornflower ran up a ladder all in flames; and Miss Bagshaw or Wilkinson, as you said before, out of pure gratitude and affection, arrested her father.

Pother. Psha! you are a blockhead!

Peter. There's a pair of us. [*Aside.*] I shall lose my reward through the fellow's stupidity.—I must make up a story of my own; [*To Pother*] you'd make an excellent parliamentary orator.

Pother. Why parliamentary?

Peter. Because your explanation is more unintelligible than your speech. [*Exit.*

Pother. A pert fellow! I know a monstrous good story of that kind; but there's nobody here to tell it to.—I declare, here comes Robin, Farmer Barnard's man—I'll tell it to him.

Enter ROBIN.

Robin, I was just thinking of a most excellent story—Yon fellow wouldn't stay to hear it, and so I'll tell it to you.—You must know, Mrs. Mudge longed for a lobster—

Robin. Now, none of your long stories, doctor; they be like your RESCRIPTIONS, nobody do understand 'em—and they be good for nothing, after all.

Pother. This to my face! worse than the other—I wonder at your impertinence.

Robin. Do you? Now I wonder that any body should wonder at that, it's so natural to me.—Why, bless you, don't I know you, man? I can tell you a story about the blacksmith's wife, that you sent a horse-medicine to, and nearly threw her into a galloping consumption.

Pother. [*Aside.*] He! he! he! I remember, my boy took tartar emetic for cream of tartar; and if the blacksmith's wife hadn't been as tough as the forge bellows, a hobnail to a horse-shoe but she'd have gone off the anvil: a monstrous good story—he! he! he! [*Exit.*

Robin. That be a funny man, sure enough.—Whew! yonder goes my Susan—but Shoo be a queer grain'd toad; and though I be a likely lad, and ha' gotten t' brass i' my sarvice, Shoo girns at me like an' I were no' but a moudiwarp.—

There's that Peter, I a'most think she's daft enou' to ha' a liking for that chap; but what Shoo can see in him I can't mak' out; it's but a chattering pye at best—and yet Shoo winks and Shoo blinks at him, and cocks up her nose at me, as much as to say—"I'ze meat for thy measter."—Laws! laws!—how blind some folk be!—there, now she's stopping—she sees me—dang me, if she ben't making mouths at me, and running away; and if that ben't as much as to say—"follow my leader"—I know nothing of *physigonomy*, that's all.

[*Exit, running.*]

SCENE V.

A Rural View.

Enter SUSAN.

Susan. I've given Robin a fine race, and have lost him at last. I tease him finely—pretending to have a liking for that coxcomb, Peter, whom I despise; but it's only to try his affection, and make myself sure of his truth, for I am determined to look well before I leap. A poor girl had need be *circumspectious*, when young men are grown so *parjurous*.—Here he comes again. [*Pretends to be walking away.*]

Enter ROBIN.

Robin. So, so, Mrs. Susan, a pretty wild-gooise chace you ha' led me, after such a matter o' fact invitation as you gave me. But I tak' you; to be sure, I never tickled a trout, nor trolled for a salmon.

Susan. Indeed, I don't understand you, with your invitations to trout and salmon.

Robin. Why, didn't you grin at me a bit sin? and what were that but saying—"tak' me i' the humour?"

Susan. And so you may, for I'm in a very ill humour, and the sight of a Yorkshireman won't make it better.

Robin. Why, what have you to say against Yorkshire?

Susan. I hate Yorkshire.

Robin. Well, that's frank enough, however, and I can't say but I admire your sincerity; but, as for manners, you know, why that says nought.—And, pray, now, where might Mr. Peter be born?

Susan. In delightful London!

Robin. What, Middlesex to wit? Cockneyshire? Now let me give you a piece of advice, out of true love and kindness: you may keckle and grin at a Yorkshireman, but don't you mak' a fond foil of your sen, and get bit by a Lunnuner: York's deep, I own, but Lunnuners are some'at like hedgehogs, there's no getting at 'em, and when you do, they 're not worth the trouble.—You think Yorkshiremen knaves, and I know Lunnuners to be foils; and a knave's better than a foil, ony day, you know.

Susan. Then you would really advise me to have you?

Robin. I'd scorn to give you ony advice, but for your own good.—And why not have me? We should match very well.

Susan. Why so?

Robin. You are handsome.

Susan. Very.

Robin. I'ze likely.
Susan. Not very.
Robin. I want a wife.
Susan. May be.
Robin. You want a husband.
Susan. May be not.
Robin. I like you.
Susan. Perhaps so.
Robin. You may like me.
Susan. Perhaps not.
Robin. Now what objection can you have?
Susan. One.
Robin. What is it?

PETER entering.

Peter. Me, to be sure.
Robin. Then I think it a very trifling objection indeed.
Peter. But you'll find some trouble in getting rid of that trifle; what say you, my pretty Susan?

FINALE. (CONDELL.)

Susan.

In speaking my mind, I but little can say,
 Between you the odds are so small;
 'Tis just like the difference, good sirs, by the way,
 Between nothing and nothing at all.

[*Labourers enter to Symphony.*]

1st Labourer.

Why, dang it now, Ralph, here's a pretty to do,
 Here's Susy with Peter and Robin—

Susan.

Well, well, Mr. Saucebox, pray what's that to you?

Robin [To Labourer.]

Let's ha' none o' thy jeering and jobbing.

STUBBLE *entering.*

Stubble.

What, all here together, and idling again?

But this time I forgive you; for why?

Our master's return makes all labour in vain,

And there'll be pretty sport by-and-by.

CHORUS.

Our master's return, &c.

Stubble.

The big barn is order'd to be dizen'd out

With gear, and such gorgeous array,

And the neighbours are ask'd all to foot it about,

'Twill be just as good as a play.

2d Labourer.

And mun we foot it too?

Robin.

——— Nay, dang it, now, Ralph,

To hear thee talk of dancing, I cannot but laugh.

Peter [To Susan.]

You'll sure be my partner?

Robin.

——— She's mine, I trow.

Susan.

Excuse me, I pray, if I answer both *no*!

Stubble.

Nay, the gentlefolk only will dance, ye queer elves;
 But we, in the meantime, so clever,
 A jollification shall have to ourselves;
 When, left to regale
 On roast beef and brown ale,
 We'll drink, "Master Cornflower for ever!"
 Yes, our toast it shall be,
 With three times three,
 Huzza! Master Cornflower for ever!

CHORUS.

Yes, our toast, &c.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Room in Sir CHARLES'S Town House.

Enter JENNY.

Jenny. Bless me, what a change has taken place in my mistress, Miss Courtly, lately: Before her brother, Sir Charles, left town she was all placid and plaintive, as the new novel says; but from the moment that Captain Belton protected her in the park from the insults of one of the young bucks of fashion, she has become quite preposterous; and having danced with him last night at Lady Fanfly's ball, her head is certainly turned this morning—I think I hear her singing; yes, she's coming—I'll listen to her song, for that will let me into the state of her sentiments, and we ladies' maids should never manage our mistresses if we didn't dive into their secrets. *[Exit.]*

Enter Miss COURTLY.

AIR. (BISHOP.)

Weave, O weave me garlands gay,
Where myrtles shall with roses twine,
There many a blooming flower display,
And many a perfum'd bud combine:

Then with 'em crown the smiling hours,
 And let bright fancy lead the train ;
 And harmony, with charmed powers,
 Invite 'em with her dulcet strain.
 My thoughts are all dancing
 To ecstasy's measure,
 So pleasing,
 Yet teasing,
 Perplexing with pleasure.
 Awhile let the phantasy sweetly confound me ;
 Come, come, smiling hours, strew your roses around me.

Miss C. I declare this Captain has quite fascinated me. I have been dancing with him in my dreams all night, saw him at my feet, and was upon the point of confessing I loved him, when that officious Jenny drew my curtain, and the Captain and my conquest vanished together. Well, well, custom will bring him here this morning with the usual inquiries, and I'll appear volatile, to try his temper : if my levity displeases him, and he has candour enough to confess it——ah me !—I'm afraid my eyes will betray my heart, in spite of all my caution. I wish my brother was here—its very odd I hear nothing from him.

Enter JENNY.

Miss C. Any letters to-day, Jenny ?

Jenny. No, ma'am.

Miss C. It's astonishing, that my brother should inform me he was coming to town, and he has neither arrived, nor written a reason for his change of mind.

Jenny. La, ma'am, its the old reason, I dare-say : Sir Charles, you know, is a real sportsman in every sense of the word ; and depend on't, the object

which detains him, is either a partridge or a petticoat.

Miss C. Peace, girl; recollect it is of my brother you are speaking.

Jenny. I beg pardon, ma'am; Captain Belton's below.

Miss C. Captain Belton below! show him up directly.

Jenny. Yes, ma'am. [*Aside.*] What irresistible fellows these Captains are! [*Exit.*

Miss C. I am almost afraid to meet him. Heigho! I feel a strange fluttering at his approach—I had better retire a moment to compose myself. [*Exit.*

Re-enter JENNY, introducing Captain BELTON.

Jenny. Miss Courtly will be here in a moment, sir. [*Exit JENNY.*

Capt. B. So, I have escaped all the bullets of the enemy abroad to fall by the darts of a fair lady's eyes at home; and this fascination detains me from visiting my sister Cornflower so soon as I intended. Yet do I know sufficient of the object who bewitches me, to justify my passion? or has the sentimental Charles Belton, after professing he would never surrender his heart but to mental charms, lost it to a pretty face? Surely not; the superiority of her mind is too evident—I cannot be mistaken. Love is blind, they say; and the heathen mythology gave him wings too. Yet, were I to personify the all-conquering passion, I would restore his eyes, and deprive him of his pinions.

AIR. (BISHOP.)

I.

Love's blind, they say,
O never, nay;
Can words Love's grace impart?
The fancy, weak,
The tongue may speak,
But eyes alone the heart:
In one soft look what language lies!
O, yes, believe me, Love has eyes.

II.

Love's wing'd, they cry—
O, never, I—
No pinions love to soar;
Deceivers rove,
But never Love,
Attach'd, he moves no more:
Can he have wings, who never flies?
And, yes, believe me, Love has eyes.

Enter Miss COURTLY.

Capt. B. I have presumed, madam, on the privilege your condescension afforded me of attending you in the circle last night, to pay my respects.

Miss C. You do me honour, sir—I was never better in my life.—An agreeable party last night, Captain Belton, with a few exceptions. Miss Bronze, for instance, the counsellor's daughter, by her vociferation and volubility, seemed to think herself in Westminster-hall. Mr. Chenille chattered and hopped about like a magpie in masquerade; while Sir Philidore Flimsy actually gave me the idea of a gnat in an ecstasy.

Capt. B. In promiscuous parties of pleasure, Miss Courtly, whimsical portraits will naturally present themselves; but, serving as foils to set off the more brilliant and accomplished, I question whether we are just in holding them up to too minute criticism.

Miss C. But you must be aware, that the absurdities of some people are so intrusive, that good nature is, positively, a most violent effort.

Capt. B. Then, madam, it is the more praiseworthy.

Miss C. Oh, you'll absolutely mope me, if you moralize, Captain.

Capt. B. I should suppose Miss Courtly serious, if her eyes did not declare she was acting an assumed character; to try, perhaps, the complexion of mine.

Miss C. Bless me, Captain, your perceptions are amazingly singular.

Capt. B. Is it singular to perceive the beauties of Miss Courtly; or, seeing, not to admire?

Miss C. O, I protest now you are shockingly serious.

Capt. B. Serious I am, indeed; for on the object of my present hope depends the happiness of my future life.

Miss C. Why, really, you soldiers attack a female with as little ceremony as a foe, and fancy yourselves as resistless in the drawing-room as in the field.

Capt. B. Treat me not with levity, charming Rosabel; humanity is the brightest ornament of the beautiful as well as the brave: listen, then, to the ardent dictates of a passion that—

Miss C. Hold, Captain; was not all this addressed to the blooming Matilda Heartwell last

night? Was there nothing in your assiduity beyond polite attention?

Capt. B. I protest, Miss Courtly, my conversation with Miss Heartwell was—

Miss C. O, I have no right to require an explanation.—Only, sir, when a soldier embarks in an affair of honour, he should be completely clear of suspicion.

Capt. B. Could I as easily convince Miss Courtly of the ardour and sincerity of my passion, as I can clear myself from suspicion, I should be happy indeed.—But, a plain soldier, I want language to do justice to the emotions of my heart, or the graces that occasion them.

SONG. (T. WELSH.)

I.

To sing thy bright beauties, dear maid,
Asks language my tongue cannot frame;
In virtue's chaste graces array'd,
The purest of passion they claim.
Believe me, sincere is the tale I would tell,
And smile on thy lover, sweet Rosabel.

II.

To tell how I love thee, sweet fair,
My mind can no image supply;
In secret I dwell on my care,
And approach thee alone with a sigh.
Believe that fond sigh for the tale I would tell,
And smile on thy lover, sweet Rosabel.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

*A Rural View.**Enter Sir CHARLES.*

Sir Charles. Having made up my mind to secure this pretty field-flower, if she won't consent, I'll carry her off: Peter shall have a chaise ready, and I must bribe some of the clowns to assist him. Here comes one, to whom, I fancy, a few guineas will be an irresistible bait.

ROBIN crosses.

Hark ye, my honest fellow.

Robin. To me, sir?

Sir Charles. Yes: what's your name?

Robin. Robin Rut, at your sarvice, sir.

Sir Charles. Well, Robin, is money plentiful here?

Robin. Why, among those who ha' plenty there be no want, you see.

Sir Charles. Very sensibly observed; are you among that happy number?

Robin. Nay, mon; I see no happiness in it; there's our squire has a power o' money, yet I don't find that he grumbles less than ony other mon: but rich folk have time to think, and that brings care, you know; while we poor labouring chaps work so hard all day, and sleep so sound all night, we ha' no time to think at all.

Sir Charles. True, Robin: but to business. By your accent, you should be a Yorkshireman; and I dare say you could manage a little stratagem

for me: a few guineas shan't be wanting, and here's one, by way of binding the bargain.

Robin. Why, what countryman be you, to talk of binding a bargain before it be made? beside, I be the servant of another, and I cannot let my sen out to hire without his leave; so, as he's coming yonder, you'd better ax him.

Sir Charles. [*Looking out.*] [*Aside.*] Cornflower and Barnard! the last two men I wish to meet just now: I shall see you again, my honest fellow—At present, I am in a hurry; so, so—good day, Robin, good day! [*Exit.*]

Robin. Same to you, sir; he! he! he! I wonder what he were after wi' his guinea—no good, I warrant, or he wou'dn't have offered me money, without telling me what it were for.

Enter CORNFLOWER and BARNARD.

Barn. So, Robin, Sir Charles has been honouring you with his conversation?

Robin. Why, master, I be but a poor lad, and as he were o't' quality mak, and such like, I behaved mysen to him wi' all proper condescension.

Corn. Submission you mean, Robin.

Robin. That may be the word, mayhap; we don't all read t' same way; but he were a little mysterious, and that don't smack like honesty; yet I listen'd to him wi' temper and moderation, and that I call condescension.

Barn. You're right, Robin: Cornflower, I never liked that sprig of quality.

Robin. Why, by gums! I think he be no great cracks mysen, measter; for, do you know, he were going to give me a guinea just now.

Corn. A guinea?

Robin. Ay, a right arnest one; none o' your Brummagemms.

Corn. For what purpose did he offer it?

Robin. Dang me, if I know any more than t' man i' the moon: he jabber'd something about a stratagem, and that like; but your coming spoiled all.

Barn. A stratagem? I thought as much: some poor girl to be deceived, I suppose. [*To Robin.*] But why didn't you keep the guinea, and bite him for his roguery?

Robin. Bite? that's a Yorkshire fashion sure enough; but there be two sorts o' that kidney; deep York, and honest York, and they don't both bite the same way.

Corn. Well said, Doncaster—you shall lose nothing by refusing it; take that [*gives him money*] for your integrity. Independence is our birthright, and I love a fellow who stands up for it, to my heart's blood.

Robin. A couple of guineas! Now Ize away to mother, and buy t' ould lass a pound o' tea, and a warm cardinal again 't' frost.—Dang my buttons, but Ize i' luck! [*Exit Robin.*]

Barn. I think, friend Cornflower, you should look a little at home. Your spouse is a charming good soul; but these flashy fellows are always fluttering about a fine woman, like a moth round a candle.

Corn. Emma Cornflower is as handsome as any woman in the county, I know; and I am not a little proud of her.—I know, too, that a face is no security for happiness; but if she has the face of an angel, she has the heart of one; and I have reason enough to teach me, that a married woman of principle is a character too elevated for a fool to

obtain, and too secure for a wise man to attempt. But, in good troth, Barnard, though an honest fellow; thou art always croaking, like an ill-boding raven; and on every subject, from politics to poaching, its nothing but kaw! kaw! kaw! to the end of the chapter.

Barn. And thou art a good-natured, easy fellow, who can't see ruin when it stares thee in the face. But, beware, though hasty suspicion is mean, blind security is madness: you have a prize, guard it well—Like you, I, too, had been blessed, had not death deprived me of the loveliest of her sex: but I summoned fortitude to my aid, nor suffered another attachment to threaten me with such another pang.

SONG.—BARNARD. (DAVY.)

I.

Love no more my heart possessing,
Shall delusive hope restore;
How I lov'd! beyond expressing—
But, alas! the maid's no more.

II.

O, 'twas neither form nor feature,
That could triumph o'er my heart;
Truth it was, and heavenly nature—
O, how hard with these to part!

III.

Yet, adieu to useless sorrow,
Man his fate must firmly bear;
Nor forbid of hope to borrow,
Meanly truckle to despair.

[*Exit* BARNARD.]

Corn. I hope there is no foundation for Barnard's surmises; there cannot be; I should be

unjust to my Emma to doubt: however, I heartily wish my house cleared of this Baronet and his saucy lacquey; they interrupt my comfort by destroying the regularity of my household; confound my servants by the freedom of their manner, and bid fair to corrupt them by their example.—Why, here comes another proof of the folly I must put a stop to. [*Retires.*]

Enter SUSAN, followed by PETER.

Susan. I tell you, once for all, I'll have nothing to say to such a fright as you are.

Peter. A fright! Do I look like a fright? You wouldn't call me so if you saw the impression I make on the pretty girls in St. James's Park; you don't know St. James's Park, though—it's a *russet urbe*, as we say in the classics—a rural plantation in London; all trees, soldiers, cows, cockneys, and sentry boxes; and it would do your heart good to see the smart nursery maids, with troops of little pets and poppets come to take the fresh air and new milk in a morning: and the moment I make my appearance among them; one nods, another winks; "Ah, Peter," cries a third; "O, you creature," says a fourth; then I say soft things to one, squeeze another by the hand, chuck a third under the chin—and one morning romping with a merry one, who had a dear little dumpty darling in her arms, unluckily it fell into one of the pails of milk, and being in mourning, the sweet little moppet came out again as mottled as a magpie.

Susan. Don't talk to me of your moppets and magpies; you are but a milksop and a magpie yourself, and I won't stay to talk to you any longer.

Peter. Leave me not in despair—I have writ-

ten a copy of verses on you.—I implore ye hear them. [*Pulls out a paper.*]

Susan. [*Aside.*] Laws! I should like to hear his poetry of all things.—Well, make haste then.

Peter. [*Reads conceitedly.*]

O, snow drop of purity! primrose of prettiness!
Moss rose of modesty! wall-flower of wittiness!

Daffydown-dilly of damsels so fair!

O, tulip of taste! carnation of comeliness!

Pink of perfection! and lily of loveliness!

Listen, O, list, or I die—I declare!

Did you mind the beauty of the alliteration?

Susan. Ha! ha! ha! I don't know what you mean by *illiteration*, but I never heard such nonsense in my life; why, the boys make as good on the 5th of November—

“ I see no reason
Why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot.”

Peter. Can nothing move you? Here let me kneel, [*Kneels,*] and pour out the overflowings of a heart oppressed with ecstatic oppression, and expiring with sympathetic sighs.

Susan. Go along, you fool; I only listened to laugh at you; and if you follow me any more, I'll set Robin about you, and then you may make rhymes upon the beating you'll get: you're an ignorant, impudent, conceited monkey! we all despise you, and are so glad you're going.

Peter. But I won't go yet, if it's only to tease you. “Aid me Venus, Loves and Graces”—

[*Catches, and is struggling to kiss her, when CORNFLOWER comes forward, and takes her from him.*]

Corn. Young man, how dare you interfere with a servant of mine?

Peter. Bless us! don't put yourself in a *brulery*, as we say in French—I am accountable, Mr. Cornflower, to no one but my master.

Corn. When you interrupt those whose time and services are mine, you shall account to me, sir.

Peter. [*Aside.*] A blustering brute! I've a great mind to blow him up.

Corn. [*To Susan.*] Have you given any encouragement to this coxcomb?

Susan. Me, sir? No, sir:—encourage him, indeed! I must be mightily at loss for a sweetheart, if it came to that; but he's always following me, and talking nonsense.

Peter. Talking nonsense! oh!

Corn. Look you, sir; if your ignorance prevents you having a proper sense of your own duty, and occasions your sacrificing that time which is your master's property, to idleness, don't let me or my servants be trespassed upon by your folly and profligacy; or I shall, perhaps, assume that authority your master seems so much to neglect, and bestow the correction you so richly deserve.

Peter. You correct me? bounce—that's high, however—Let me tell you, Mr. Farmer, if you dare—

Corn. Scoundrel, begone! or you shall feel the weight of this horsewhip.

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Charles. Hey-day! what's the meaning of this?

Peter. Meaning? Mr. Cornflower, because I merely talked a little soft nonsense to his favourite maid, is up in the stirrups, and was going to give me a horsewhipping.

Corn. And if ever I catch you interrupting this girl again I'll put my threat in execution, depend on't.

Sir Charles. [*To Peter.*] I wish Mr. Cornflower had horsewhipped you—you richly deserve it: out of my sight.

Peter. [*Aside.*] What a breeze! Well, I'm going—Susan, adieu! [*Exit, sauntering insolently.*]

Corn. [*To Susan.*] You return home; and though I will not consider you in fault now, if ever I know you give that puppy encouragement, you lose my protection.

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] My protection! O, ho! I see how it is.

Susan. I'm sure I never encouraged him; I look higher than him, at any rate.

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] Look higher than him—that's plain enough.

Corn. Go home then, and remember what I have said.

Susan. [*Aside.*] Bless me, it's very hard to be snubbed when one is'nt in fault, so it is. [*Exit.*]

Sir Charles. Mr. Cornflower, I am extremely sorry my servant should have behaved so improperly; but London servants, sir, are the devil.

Corn. The misconduct of servants originates, too often, in the example set them by their employers, sir.

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] That's pretty sharp; I'll work him for it, however.—I hope you don't estimate me by my servant; he certainly is an incorrigible rascal. Come, I see the case—I should have been as indignant myself; but don't give yourself any further uneasiness on the score of the girl,—I'll accommodate the matter, depend on it, and take care that he shall not interfere between you any more.

Corn. Accommodate, and interfere between us? What do you mean, Sir Charles?

Sir Charles. Come, come, I'm snug—I shan't disclose any thing; these things will happen; and if Peter dares to interfere between you, and—and—you take me?

Corn. No, sir, I do not take you.

Sir Charles. Pooh—pooh—why, friend Cornflower, we have all some of that “frailty which flesh is heir to.”

Corn. Now, sir, you have spoken plainly: and hear my plain answer—I stand here, master of a family, and, as far as depends upon my power, accountable for their conduct to society, and to Heaven.—Shall I meanly consider my servants as mere instruments of my profit, and not grant them the protection of that independence they labour to procure me? Besides, sir, I am a husband; married to a woman I doat on, from whom I demand the most unqualified constancy: and shall I become that despicable brute who could insult a virtuous wife by a degrading intimacy with her servant? Fie! fie! Sir Charles!

Sir Charles. Mr. Cornflower, you—you—misunderstand—

Corn. Sir, you have roused me, and I must speak as I feel. The innocent girl you have dared to defame by your surmises, is the virtuous offspring of parents who have no wealth but their integrity: no human prop for their age but that daughter, whom I have taken—yes, sir, I have taken—not for the diabolical motive you have audaciously taxed me with—No, sir, but to be the protector of her youth; the promoter of her happiness; and the guardian,—yes, fashionable sir, the guardian of her virtue! [Turns indignantly up the Stage.

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] Rot me, if I believe him—but I must draw in my horns.—My dear, dear sir, I beg ten thousand pardons; but consider, I live in a world where these things are so common, that, really, we think nothing of them:—but, as I have unfortunately erred, I trust your manly sense will readily excuse me.

Corn. Say no more, sir; I can only treat the accusation with the indifference it merits.

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] A sly old fox!—Thank you, my dear sir, thank you; but though you look over it so generously, I cannot easily forgive myself:—but hope, when we next meet, I shall be able to make an apology with a better grace.—
[*Aside.*] Old guardian of virtue. — [*Exit.*

Corn. Contemptible! but I shall soon get rid of him, and then the evil he has occasioned will cure itself.

POTTER *Entering.*

Potter. Who talks of curing, without the Doctor's assistance? that's against all rules of practice.

Corn. I should rather think curing with his assistance against all rules of practice.

Potter. Very well for a farmer—stale joke though—picked it up in London, I suppose;—by-the-by, hav'n't had a single opportunity of congratulating you before on your return:—Business, business, my dear friend—always in a bustle; don't know which thing to turn to first.

Corn. And so neglect all; the way with most bustling people, Doctor.

Potter. Thank ye, thank ye. — London has made you facetious; bought wit of the lawyers,

perhaps;—speaking of lawyers, did you ever hear the story of my suit in chancery?

Corn. I've just got rid of one suit, and don't involve me in another.

Pother. Tell you the story another time; but, pray, tell me; you have a Baronet at your house, who wants medical assistance? Unluckily I was out of the way when he came;—but better late than never.—You shall introduce me; and let the case be ever so desperate, that I set all to rights, I'll stake my credit to a cabbage-stalk.

Corn. Lay odds, and I'll take you.

Pother. My skill against your would-be-wit, and let the jockey club decide.

Corn. Then it will be a neck-and-neck business, I fancy;—but, call at the farm, see the Baronet, and introduce yourself; though unluckily, as you say, he has recovered; Mrs. Cornflower prescribed for him.

Pother. Prescribed? Physician in petticoats—took her degrees at Queen's College,—studied Buchan, Culpepper, and Glass's Cookery—old women—old women—

Corn. Who often make the best doctors.

Pother. Still facetious: your wit's like a bee; when it strikes, always loses its sting.

Corn. And yours, like a drone, possesses neither honey nor sting. [*Exit CORN.*]

Pother. Stupid fellow! but doctors, like lawyers, are considered fair game for quizzing. Talking of doctors, puts me in mind of a story of one who married an old maid, whose only perfection was her purse.

SONG.—*Dr. POTHER.* (REEVE.)

I.

There liv'd in a country town
A Doctor nam'd Antony Brown;
Who, as he got nothing by trade,
Made love to a wealthy old maid,
So ugly she hadn't a charm,
But her purse was as long as my arm!
What a bait for Dr. Brown!

II.

One day, with a grace debonair,
He ask'd for a lock of her hair;
Says she, "You embarrass me quite,
Dr. Brown, you're so very polite."
She gave it, and he was all gig,
But soon found 'twas a lock of her wig!
What a dose for Dr. Brown!

III.

Her teeth all so white, he'd declare,
Made amends for the loss of her hair;
She fancied the tooth-ach, by way
Of seeing the Doctor one day;
When her teeth were all false, he said,
For she'd but a colt's tooth in her head,
Which fasten'd on Dr. Brown!

IV.

Fine sonnets he wrote on her eyes,
And prais'd 'em up to the skies;
But the day he his passion declar'd
A thing happen'd, at which he star'd!
While she ogled the Doctor, alas!
Out tumbled a peeper of glass.
What a sparkler! quo' Dr. Brown.

V.

One hand fix'd on with a screw ;
 Her legs wa'n't a pair, tho' two ;
 But the Doctor, who courted her purse,
 He took her for better, for worse :
 And their first child was born, or they lie,
 With a wig, wooden hand, and glass eye,
 But the image of Dr. Brown !

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

*A Parlour in the Farm.**Enter Mrs. CORNFLOWER, dressed for the Fête.*

Mrs. C. Well, I am dressed for this fête ;
 yet, I don't know how it is, with a gay outside, all
 here [*Putting her hand to her heart,*] is not com-
 posed.

Enter FANNY.

Fanny. Ma'am, here's his reverence the curate.

Mrs. C. Show him in directly, Fanny.

[*Exit FANNY.*

I am glad he is come ; his conversation will restore
 my serenity.

Enter Mr. WILLIAMS.

Mr. Williams, I am indeed happy to see you ;—
 our little festival will be doubly pleasant, when
 sanctioned by your presence.

Mr. W. Innocent mirth, at proper seasons,
 madam, is the offspring of gratitude to the Great
 Dispenser of joy. You will have to boast what
 few can ; a large assembly of unaffected friends ;—
 and your guest, Sir Charles, may take a lesson to

London with him, for the benefit of fashionable society.

Mrs. C. Sir Charles is going to leave us to-morrow, sir.

Mr. W. [*Aside.*] That tone had something like regret.—I am not sorry to hear it; Sir Charles is a dangerous inmate for an humble village, madam.

Mrs. C. Is rank an object of dread, then?

Mr. W. No, madam; for respect, when dignity and rectitude accompany it.

Mrs. C. Do you know, Mr. Williams, that Sir Charles's sister is coming here, after his departure, to invite me to town: I have not mentioned it to Mr. Cornflower; it will be time enough for him to know it when the invitation comes.

Mr. W. [*Aside.*] Indeed!

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Charles. Most enchantingly dressed, Mrs. Cornflower—[*Seeing Mr. W.*] I beg pardon, sir; I did not see you.—Our sports are highly honoured, when gentlemen of your cloth unbend, and join in them; I wish they would oftener mix in those of the *beau monde*.

Mr. W. Men of my cloth might be thought unpleasant intruders, Sir Charles; for the importance of their sacred charge compels them, sometimes, to speak disagreeable truths.

Sir Charles. I don't imagine you would ever flatter, sir.

Mr. W. It is not the province of my calling, to flatter, sir;—but a word apart, if Mrs. Cornflower will excuse it.

[*Mrs. CORNFLOWER retires up the Stage.*]

You leave us to-morrow, I find; and it has been hinted to me, that your SISTER [*In a marked manner*] is to visit the farm, and invite Mrs. Cornflower to London.

Sir Charles. Why—a—a—it is probable.

Mr. W. I would act the part of an adviser, not a busy-body.—I understand human nature, Sir Charles—do not attempt it.

Sir Charles. I protest, sir, your meaning is enigmatical.

Mr. W. You are a man of mode, and must understand me, sir; the temperature of your fashionable atmosphere is too feverish for our uncontaminated females.

Sir Charles. We are mightily indebted to your good opinion, sir; though folly is not more ridiculous than rudeness, nor the fever of fashion more fatal than the ague of fastidiousness.

Mr. W. You may put what construction you please on my words, sir; take 'em as they are meant, you will have reason to thank me: but, remember, your sister's visit here will be in vain. [*Exit.*]

Mrs. Corn. [*Coming forward.*] Mr. Williams seems warm, Sir Charles.

Sir Charles. Oh, only a few nonsensical words, madam.

Mrs. C. He is a worthy man, Sir Charles, and I'm sure never offends against propriety.

Sir Charles. If he has the esteem of Mrs. Cornflower, he must have mine. Well, I don't know how it is—black coats, like red coats, are generally favourites with the ladies—I certainly will get into orders—don't you think I should become canonicals, madam?

Mrs. C. You, Sir Charles? Why, you hav'n't a serious lineament in your face.

Sir Charles. Why, certainly, gravity is no great ingredient in my composition. Egad, I believe I am better calculated for the scarlet; and, if it were possible, I would revive the age of chivalry, and, sallying forth as your knight, I think I could defy the world in arms.

Mrs. C. Not quite so enthusiastically, Sir Charles: you should recollect, that the ladies of knights-errant were all unmarried.

Sir Charles. A mistake, madam: they were all paragons of virtue as well as beauty, and the ardour of Platonic love sent their warriors forth—that ardour overpowers me; from this moment I am your knight, madam: the Cornflower, emblem of innocence, shall be my distinction; and my motto—respect and admiration.

Mrs. C. Ha! ha! hah! Why, Sir Charles, you grow too romantic to listen to.

Sir Charles. Romantic! say bewildered—am I not to leave this place to-morrow, and leave behind that which will occasion me regrets no time can ever remove?

Mrs. C. I protest, sir, I do not understand you.

Sir Charles. [*Tenderly.*] Not understand me—ah! madam—forgive the heat of an imagination which has involuntarily betrayed the secret of an heart oppressed beyond description.

Mrs. C. [*With dignity.*] You forget, sir, what I am: what you ought to be.

Sir Charles. I forget every thing but the unhappy fatality which brought me here; the—

Mrs. C. No more, sir: has my conduct ever given you room to presume thus? recollect yourself; in a few minutes we shall be summoned to

the ball, and discomposure on either of our parts must be fatal to my peace for ever.

Sir Charles. Sooner would I die than be the occasion of anxiety to you.—Blame your charms, your virtues, more than my ill-starred error. I shall soon leave you—never—never—to see you more—but treat my memory with charity, I implore you. [*Exit, with affected agitation.*]

Mrs. C. Unthinking man! I am all agitation—had we been surprised—the thought is agonizing—yet, O, my Henry, could you ever believe me false?

SONG.

I.

Ah, never believe
I so fickle could prove,
Your hope to deceive,
Or prove false to my love:
Tho' fancy may stray,
Thro' the ardour of youth,
Can affection decay
Fix'd on virtue and truth?
Ah! never, ah, never,
Believe me, love!

II.

To passion no slave,
In my bosom no art,
The hand that I gave
Fix'd for ever my heart.
The faith I profess'd
To sweet gratitude due,
Had not love charm'd my breast,
Must secure me to you,
For ever, for ever,
Believe me, love!

SCENE IV.

Opens, and discovers CORNFLOWER'S Barn, fitted up for the Fête in a Style of elegant Simplicity—Rural Emblems, decorated with coloured Lamps, Wreaths of Flowers, &c.—Tables, with Refreshments—Seats—A Band in an Orchestra, &c. &c.—Company assembled—Mrs. CORNFLOWER, Sir CHARLES, and Mr. WILLIAMS, enter—also CORNFLOWER, with a Hazel Wand in his Hand, decorated with Oak-leaves and Roses.

Corn. Come neighbours, let us begin our merriment: a sprightly dance, by making good humour and exercise go hand in hand, will add both to our health and happiness. We cannot vie with London routs for elegance or splendour; but what we want in magnificence shall be made up by mirth; and our deficiencies in taste shall be supplied by friendship. I'll be master of the ceremonies; and by virtue of this hazel wand, decorated with emblems of rustic health and rural simplicity, invite you to pleasures that, I trust, will not fail to please on reflection.

Sir Charles. And Mrs. Cornflower will, I hope, do me the honour to open the ball with me.

CHORUS. (BISHOP.)

Welcome are all to this scene of delight,
Where frolic and temperance hand-in-hand go;
The rejoicing of gratitude still must excite
Emotions the children of pleasure ne'er know.

A Dance by the Characters, [the Music by BISHOP.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Landscape.*

Enter BARNARD and POTHER.

Barn. Poor Cornflower! he would listen to no advice; and now the consequence is even worse than I had feared.—Scarcely was he gone to the county-meeting, after the Baronet's chaise drove off, than she and her maid were both missing, and all search for them has been in vain.

Pother. Monstrous melancholy! but I could tell you a droll story on that subject.

Barn. You have told a story too much on that subject already; that coxcomb, Peter, and you, have been overheard talking together, about Cornflower and his wife; and it is suspected you know more than you will acknowledge.

Pother. Me? I'm as innocent as my new gout medicine: but you astonish me, by supposing I had any hand in this business.—I'll tell you all about it. One day I met Peter—"I have the honour to address Dr. Pother, I believe," said he—"Dr. Pother, at your service," said I; and, after a long harangue, all in the way of my profession, he asked me, merely out of curiosity, as he said, how Mr. and Mrs. Cornflower came to be married?—I had the fact from you.

Barn. With an injunction of secrecy.

Pother. Humph! that's true, to be sure; but,

my dear sir, I was taken by surprise.—By-the-by, I can tell you a most laughable story about that.

Barn. Stick to your own story.

Pother. Well then, as I said before, Peter came to consult me, all in the way of my profession; and he did ask me how the marriage was brought about, and I did happen to say,—“Peter,” says I,—“Mr. and Mrs. Cornflower—house on fire—ran up a ladder—saved her life—arrested her father”—“Out of pure love and affection,” says Peter—Says I, “You’re a blockhead”—Says he, “You’re a parliamentary orator—cock and bull story—unintelligible explanation;” and—[*Raising his voice*] “Am I to be catechised? I, Doctor Pother; who, for anatomy, chemistry, pharmacy, phlebotomy, oxygen, hydrogen, caloric, carbonic, atmospheric, galvanic,—’sdeath, sir! I’ll follow them till I find ’em; and prove, sir, that Dr. Pother, sir, is not a man, sir, to part man and wife, sir, except in the way of his profession, sir; and if I had time, sir, I could tell you a story about that, sir, that would—pooh! pah! broo! [*Exit, in a passion.*]

Barn. The fellow’s honest, I know; but his folly has made him the dupe of that scoundrel, Peter. I have seen Mr. Williams, our worthy curate; and he has undertaken the task of breaking the dreadful tidings to poor Cornflower. Unhappy, misguided friend! I feel for your disappointment as if it was my own. Modern fashionable friends are warm in the hour of prosperity; but give me the man who is equally zealous in the moment of adversity.

SONG. (DAVY.)

I.

What fashion calls friendship dishonours the name,
 The cloak of convenience, the child of caprice;
 The phantom of folly, the compact of shame,
 On prosperity rising, with peril to cease:
 Such nerveless affections control not my will,
 I glow with an ardour no check can suspend,
 And when friendship's the toast, being summon'd to fill,
 My heart's in the bumper I pledge to my friend.

II.

Let worth be the basis, plain dealing the mean,
 Affection the impulse, and honour the guide;
 In the compact I glory, nor shift with the scene,
 In prosperity tender, adversity tried.
 Let him share all my joys, mine his sorrows be still,
 His interest and fame mine to watch and defend;
 Thus, when friendship's the toast, being summon'd
 to fill,
 My heart's in the bumper I pledge to my friend.

*Enter ROBIN, dressed as for a Journey, with a
 Cudgel in his Hand.*

Barn. Why, Robin? how's this? dressed for travelling?

Robin. Ay; and I's a favour to ax of thee.

Barn. What is it?

Robin. A few days' absence, unknown to any body; mind, to find out the Baronet, and his puppy dog Peter, who have *veigled* away Madam Cornflower.

Barn. What, you'd turn knight-errant, and sally forth to the succour of distressed damsels?

Robin. O, you mean that Don Quixote fellow,—I'll mak 'a better out on 't than he, I warrant—I won't mistake a wind-mill for a castle, though I may fancy Baronet's back a corn-sheaf, and Peter's head a tenpenny-nail; and this [*the Cudgel*] shall serve for both flail and hammer.

Barn. Thou art an honest fellow;—go, and here's something for the journey. [*Gives money.*]

Robin. Thank ye.—Oh! I met Dr. Pother in a panic; and he be going wi' me, to clear up his character, as he said; I never ax'd him how, for fear of setting him off wi' one of his long stories—but I mun be off, for Master Cornflower's a good fellow; he were a cordial to my heart, when my poor ould mother had her goods seized for rent, and he paid it all down for her, wi' expenses; and shall I rest quietly in my bed, and see him *clandestinely violated* of his wife?—No! so, here I go; and if I catch the *interlopers*, if I don't peg Peter and bang t' Baronet, to their hearts' delight, never trust me. [*Buttons up his Coat, and strides off, flourishing his Cudgel.*]

Barn. As I live, here is Captain Belton: would he had returned earlier, he might have prevented this.

Enter Captain BELTON.

Capt. B. What, my old friend?

Barn. Captain Belton? Welcome home—yet, you are not going to the farm?

Capt. B. Where else should I go?

Barn. Come with me; there is a misunderstanding at the farm.

Capt. B. Your look and manner declare something I almost dread to hear.

Barn. As a soldier, you can summon courage against a surprise—Your sister—

Capt. B. What of her?

Barn. She is missing;—in short, we suspect, is gone off with a Baronet; who, through an accident, became a guest at the farm during Cornflower's absence in London.

Capt. B. Impossible! sir, my sister's character is not to be sported with.

Barn. Come, come, reserve your anger for the proper object. I don't say she *is* gone with him; but both disappeared this morning, and cannot be traced;—a partiality between them has appeared to every body, but Cornflower.

Capt. B. Distraction! and he—

Barn. Knows nothing of it: he is gone to the county-meeting. — Our curate will, at his return, break it to him; and you had better not be seen till the surprise is over.

Capt. B. Who is the villain?

Barn. He is called Sir Charles Courtly.

Capt. B. [*Aside.*] Heavens! my Rosabel's brother!—I know, by accident, this Baronet has a sequestered villa some few miles from here; there they are probably gone; and we may intercept them.

Barn. In such a cause I am yours to the world's end; I'll step home, prepare myself for the journey, and meet you again directly. [*Exit.*

Capt. B. Alas! who could have suspected this! Had I not better pause, ere I proceed further with Rosabel? Like her, my sister Emma was, in appearance, all beauty and truth: she has fallen, and may not—No:—I cannot suppose it—I am too far gone in love and honour, to retract; and must still sigh when she is absent.

AIR. (BISHOP.)

I.

Fly swift, ye zephyrs,
 Who waft the sighs of love;
 Tell her how I languish,
 What pain for her I prove.

II.

Fly swift, ye zephyrs,
 Ah, fleet as fancy move,
 Tell her all my anguish—
 No joy without my love!

III.

O, tell her, o'er my mind
 She bears the softest sway,
 O, tell her all my ardour,
 My fondness all display.
 Fly, &c.

[Exit..]

SCENE II.

*An Apartment in CORNFLOWER'S House—
 Wine on a Table—Two Chairs.*

*Enter CORNFLOWER [booted and spurred, with a
 small Parcel in one Hand, neatly folded up; his
 Whip in the other] and Mr. WILLIAMS.*

Corn. My reverend friend, you could not have called on me at a better time; this evening I devote to mirth—'tis the birth-day of my Emma—See, I have brought her a present, and have delighted myself with anticipating the pleasure it will afford her.

Mr. W. The hopes of human life, good friend, are for ever chequered with disappointment.

Corn. Sir, I hope you have met with no disappointment to occasion the remark? We are old friends; and if it is in my power to remedy it, I trust, I needn't say you may command me.

Mr. W. Command but yourself, and—

Corn. Command myself? I don't understand you.

Mr. W. You have promised yourself much pleasure from presenting this testimony of your affection to Mrs. Cornflower, is it not possible you may be disappointed?

Corn. I think it is not possible: but you shall witness what you seem so strangely to doubt.
[Rings the Bell.]

Enter SUSAN.

Tell your mistress I wish to see her.

Susan. [Embarrassed.] Sir?

Corn. Tell your mistress I wish to see her.

Susan. [Hesitating.] My mistress, sir?

Corn. Yes, your mistress;—is the girl stupid?

Susan. [WILLIAMS looking significantly at her.] My mistress is gone out, sir.

Corn. Gone out this evening? Well, we must wait her return. Why didn't you tell me so at first?

Susan. [Confused.] Yes, sir. [Exit.

Corn. The girl's a fool.

Mr. W. The absence of Mrs. Cornflower gives me an opportunity for a serious conversation, which an unlucky circumstance prevented yesterday.

Corn. On what subject, friend Williams?

Mr. W. The Baronet, and—and—Mrs. Cornflower.

Corn. [*Surprised.*] The Baronet, and Mrs. Cornflower?

Mr. W. Have you never observed the familiarity between them?

Corn. If I understand you, sir, you would insinuate something to the disadvantage of Emma; but beware how you touch on so tender a point; Barnard has troubled me on that subject, but from a man of your knowledge one could hardly expect trifling.

Mr. W. Do me the justice to hear me; the Baronet—

Corn. Is gone; and I candidly confess, as I never liked him, I wish to hear no more about him: he should not have staid so long, but as a guest thrown in my way by calamity, I could not violate the laws of hospitality, and drive him from my door.

Mr. W. The viper should ever be cast from our bosom.

Corn. Speak plainly, sir; you are probing me in the most sensitive part of my feelings.

Mr. W. I would wound only to comfort: the insidious attention paid by the Baronet to Mrs. Cornflower I have long observed—

Corn. And have interpreted the politeness with which Mrs. Cornflower, considering him our guest, received it, to her disadvantage: this, sir, is not well done—you insult me—you hurt me—you—

Mr. W. Necessity imposes the task—Sir Charles's assiduities have made more impression on Mrs. Cornflower than you imagine: he was a man well calculated to seduce, and Mrs. Cornflower—

Corn. For Heaven's sake, sir, do not trifle; declare all your suspicions, and I'll stake my existence on my poor Emma's innocence.—Your cruelty,

sir, brings tears into my eyes; and your character only bridles my anger—my Emma false?

Mr. W. [*Impressively.*] Have you ever known me capable of a serious falsehood?

Corn. [*Pausing with fear.*] Never: perhaps she has returned.—[*He is going to ring a bell—Mr. W. stops him.*]

Mr. W. Restrain your impatience a moment.

Corn. Then plainly speak all, and do not agonize my heart with phantoms, you cannot—I hope—you cannot realize.

Mr. W. Delicacy now were cruelty—could I have spoken to you yesterday, all might have been prevented.

Corn. [*Impassioned.*] All? What? Speak? Unaccountable horrors freeze me.

Mr. W. [*Putting a Chair.*] Compose yourself.

Corn. Compose myself on the rack? Speak, man, what you know: Emma Cornflower false? No, no, no—yet, you would not destroy—but why not you as likely false as she?

Mr. W. The hour of temptation only exhibits our hearts—your wife is—

Corn. [*Agonized.*] What?

Mr. W. Gone.

Corn. [*Agonized.*] Where? When? How?

Mr. W. No one can tell; we have searched for her the whole day, but in vain. Fanny, her maid, is missing with her—you saw the Baronet off, then went to the county meeting; in an hour after both were gone. [*CORNFLOWER, with a groan, drops into the Chair, and sobs audibly, his Face hid.*] Indulge awhile this natural excess of grief, then listen—

Corn. Listen! to what but madness? Curse on the sex!

Mr. W. Hold: curse not all for one.

Corn. That one was all to me—had I but died, and ignorant of this, I had been blessed!

Mr. W. To covet death is the common fault of disappointed confidence. Remember, resignation is our duty.

Corn. You have no broken heart—you have no wife—nor I—

Mr. W. [*Wiping his Eyes.*] I am a man, and must partake your sorrows: but can I be your friend, and let them crush you? No:—then let my friendship, blending with my duty, draw from the sacred source of healing hope, that consolation which may calm your breast.

Corn. O, you had need, for you have planted a dagger there, death, death only can withdraw.—Which way went they? I'll fly, pursue, and sacrifice 'em. [*Going off.*]

Mr. W. [*Stops him.*] Hold—recollect yourself, and then—

Corn. [*With an affected calmness.*] I will! the storm is past—give me wine—I am sick at heart. O, man! man! hug adders, vipers, scorpions, but trust not woman! [*Tears open the Parcel, and produces two Portraits in one Frame.*] That was her present; she herself had begged it; her portrait and mine, united in one band, as we were!—O, how the wish delighted me! Look at that face; does that, sir, speak deceit? See, see that angel-smile! that heavenly look!—that—that—confusion! [*Dashes it down.*] But it's over—I've conquered—I've torn her from my heart—ha—ha—hah! [*Hysterically.*]

[*Rushes off, WILLIAMS following.*]

SCENE III.

A Heath.—Sir CHARLES'S House in the Distance—A Public House on one Side the Stage.—Rain heard.

Enter PETER, running.

Peter. Bless my heart, how it rains! and that's not the worst of it: I saw Robin and Dr. Pother at a distance; they have smoked us, I suppose; and if they saw me, all's done up—I'll pop into Chalk's, for I shall never be able to reach our house across the heath, yonder, without being seen. [*Knocks at the door.*] Here, Chalk! Chalk!

CHALK, Entering from the Door.

Chalk. Ah, Master Peter, is it you?

Peter. Very much like me; stand by, and let me get out of the rain.

Chalk. I don't mind rain, for my part.

Peter. Why, water is your best friend; your grog's like an April day, a little sunshine with a deluge of water.

Chalk. I'm sure, Mr. Peter, my spirits are all proof.

Peter. Not water proof; for you generally give them the dropsy. [*Exit into House.*]

Chalk. An impudent fellow; but I must be mum, for fear of his master; and if he was n't my landlord and a magistrate, I'd tell him a-piece of my mind: he ought to be ashamed of himself—two women at once, and—

Peter. [*Without.*] Chalk! Chalk!

Chalk. Coming! coming! a puppy! calling about him, and never paying. [*Goes into the House.*

Enter ROBIN and POTHER.

Robin. Dang it, how provoking it were to miss the rout, and that like only at t' last town.

Pother. Provoking, indeed: I'm afraid it's a lost case, and scarcely know what to prescribe; but it will make a singular story.

Robin. Never mind stories now, mon; let's go in here till t' hurricane be over, and consider in t' mean time what to do—Here, house! house!

CHALK, *Entering.*

Chalk. Please to want, gentlemen?

Robin. To come in, to be sure; what a daft chap thou mun be to ax such a question! This is a house for travellers, I racken, that's enough for us; and we 've brass in our pockets, and that's enough for thee.

Pother. Speaking of brass, I know a monstrous good story, about the Widow Wad and a warming-pan.

Robin. Rot the Widow Wad, and the warming-pan too! be I to stand in the pelting rain to listen to such gab? [*Goes in.*

Pother. Landlord, you never heard such a story in your life. Says the Widow Wad——

Chalk. Coming! coming! [*Runs in.*

Pother. Insolent fellow! I'll go find the waiter; for I'm determined somebody shall hear at. [*Goes in.*

SCENE IV.

A Room in the House.—A Chimney-board conceals the Fire-place.—Table and Chairs.—A Window and a Door.

PETER *Discovered.*

Peter. I certainly manœuvred Mrs. Cornflower and Fanny neatly; but the women are both so squeamish, and squall so, I don't know what we shall do with 'em; Intreaties are useless; and force is dangerous.

ROBIN. [*Without.*]

Robin. Ony where—ony where—Ize find my way.

Peter. There they are; why did n't I caution Chalk? they 're coming up here; where shall I hide? [*Looks about.*] O, this chimney-board will conceal me. [*Gets behind it.*]

Enter ROBIN and POTHER, preceded by the Waiter, who puts a Glass of Liquor on the Table, and Exit.

Robin. Doctor Pother, towards your good health. Why this stuff be like your *poticary* stuff, dear and nasty.

Pother. Ha! ha! ha! I could tell you a story about an apothecary.

Robin. Could you? Why, as we must stay here till rain's over, we may as well mak' ourselves agreeable: so give us a story, Doctor.

Pother. With all my heart.—You must know that——

Chalk. [*Without.*] This way, sir; this way.

Pother. I protest there's always something occurs to interrupt my stories.

Enter CHALK and STUBBLE, the latter shaking the Rain off his Hat.

Robin. What, Measter Stubble, what brought you here?

Stub. Why, I may put the same question to you, Robin.

Pother. I fancy, Stubble, we are all on a scent; tell you the story of our journey—set out—post haste—over gate, style, hedge, and ditch—stuck in a bog—and says Robin—

Robin. Stop i' the bog abit, while we hear Stubble's story.

Stub. We're after the lost sheep, Mrs. Cornflower. I left master at the last town, stopping to have the horse shod; and trudged on before, to inquire for Courtly-hall, which Parson Williams found in a road book.

Chalk. Courtly-hall is across the heath, gentlemen.

Robin. Then I shall catch that rascal Peter at last

Chalk. You mean Sir Charles's man: he was here just before you came in; and which way he went out, I can't tell;—but, shall I bring you any thing, gentlemen?

Stub. Ay, landlord; and as it's but a raw day, and we may wait some time for the rain, suppose you light the fire.

Chalk. Directly, gentlemen. [*Exit CHALK.*

Pother. Like your notion of the fire vastly—looking at the chimney board puts me in mind of a

story—Calling one day on a gouty patient; chimney-sweeper was sweeping parlour chimney, which came into the flue of patient's chamber—"How's gout?" said I—"Wish the Devil had it," said he; lump came something against the chimney-board, and out rolls the little soot-scraper into the room.—"The Devil!" cries the patient, and jumped out of the window into the fish-pond below it—cured gout; and, out of gratitude, he gives the chimney-sweepers, every May-day, a public breakfast in the afternoon.

Enter CHALK. [With a red hot Poker.]

Robin. That's right, landlord; Ize remove t' board, and we'll be in a blaze in no time.

[ROBIN removes the Board.—CHALK applies the Poker to the Fire, which is laid, and the Fire is lighted.—PETER drops down the Chimney, and jumps out, with an exclamation of terror.]

Chalk. A thief! a thief!

Robin. *[To Peter.]* O, it's thee, is it? I've got thee at last.

Chalk. What, Peter?

Peter. Yes, it's Peter!—"Dead for a ducat."
[Aside.]

Stub. Villain! Where is she?

Peter. She? Who?

Robin. None of thy tricks: speak, or Ize haul thee over t' coals.

Peter. Why, I have been hauled over the coals. *[Aside.]* What shall I do? I'll sham faint to gain time for recollection. Oh! I'm very much hurt—Oh!—Oh! *[Pretends to faint.]*

Robin. O, that's all sham Abraham:

Pother. I'll soon find out that; I'll bleed him—*[Feels for a Lancet.]*—Bless me, I have not got a lancet.

Robin. Here's an excellent fleam, man, and I'll hold him. *[PETER jumps up, tries to escape, but is secured by ROBIN.]* Now, down on thy marrowbones; and tell me where Mrs. Cornflower be, or Ize brak ev'ry bone i' thy skin.

Peter. I know nothing about her.

Chalk. Why, you told me that was the name of a lady Old Dick drove to your master's—Old Dick, gentlemen, belongs to the Ram Inn, at the last town.

Stub. Then I'll find him out, while you make that fellow confess. *[Exit.]*

Pother. *[To Peter.]* Confess, take my advice.

Peter. Take any thing but your physic.

Robin. None of your nonsense: did Mrs. Cornflower go off with thy master in a voluntary manner?

Peter. No; in a postchaise. I'll tell you how it was—My master stood there, as you may do—*[Placing ROBIN by the Door.]* The lady stood there, as you may do—*[Placing CHALK by him]*—and I stood there, as you may do—*[Placing POTHER by CHALK]*—up drove the chaise—now suppose me Old Dick—

Pother. Old Nick you mean.

Peter. Very well for you, Doctor.—I ran to the chaise-door, and opened it thus, *[Opening the Window,]* and now—catch me who can. *[Jumps out, followed by ROBIN and CHALK.]*

Pother. I'll follow the moment I have digested all this—make a capital story. Farmer and wife—rural affection—husband abroad—wife at home

—intriguing Baronet—elopement—pursuit—red-hot poker—old Nick in the chimney—down he comes—fat in the fire—and the Devil hauled over the coals. [*Looking out of the Window.*] There they go!—Now, Peter—now, Robin—Peter puffs—Robin at his heels—Peter at the pond—can't cross in time to go round—Robin seizes him—struggle—pull-haul—wrestle—and—there they go plump into the pond together. Huzza! It will make as good a story as my history of a debating society: I wish there was any body here to tell it to.

SONG. (REEVE.)

I.

The forum for fun and variety
Is a debating society;
Such gabbling
And squabbling,
And humming and ha'ing;
Such thumping
And jumping,
Air beating, and sawing;
Mouths like cannons ope
Charg'd with figure and trope,
Splitting logical straws in "no meanings" digestion,
With indefinite answer to quibbling question.

Spoken.] "Gentlemen of the Philological Forum, the question for this evening's agitation is—*Which is most essential to the physical faculties of moral economy, and the intellectual energies of reciprocal ratiocination, Waltzes, or Welch wigs?*" [*In several voices.*] Oh! bravo! bravo! bravo!—Mr. President and gentlemen—hem!—the question propounded for—hem! this evening's—hem! discussion, is of the utmost importance to the—hem!—Mr. President, that gentleman's *hem* is but a so so business; and if he draws the *thread* of his argument so slowly, he'll not get *through stitch* to—

night.—Mr. President, I rise to the question, and I shall produce an unanswerable argument, to which I expect a categorical answer.—Mr. President, how can any man, that is not an Irishman, expect an answer to an unanswerable argument?—Mr. President, if that jontleman is after making national reflexions, I've a national answer to his question, called a shelaly, that will be after knocking down him and his argument together.—Sir, it is first necessary to inquire, what moral economy and the intellectual energies are; and, to be brief, I shall divide the subject into no more than 21 heads.—What are you pulling out your night-cap for while the gentleman's speaking?—Silence, Mr. Leatherlungs on his legs—Sir, I will speak, its my turn—Then turn him out—

Order! order! question! question! chair! chair! chair!
All talkers and no hearers, till the forum's like a fair.

II.

Order gain'd, thro' the chairman's authority,
Seconded by the majority,

Gives season

For reason,

And quaint speculation;

With ranting

And panting,

And dull declamation:

With fury and fuss,

The case to discuss;

To twist and to twine,

Perplex and define;

With paradox, punning, bad grace, and worse
grammar,

While some squeak, and some bellow, some storm,
and some stammer.

Spoken. [In several voices]—Mr. President—Of this question much may be said on both sides, though I am decisively on one side; and notwithstanding what any gentleman can say on the other side, I shall

back my argument with such breast-work, that I shall have him on the hip, and leave him not a leg to stand upon.—Mr. President, I am clearly in favour of waltzes,—waltzes come from Germany with whiskers, sausages, melo-drams, and many other drams equally efficacious. A waltz is a dance, an innocent recreation, conducing both to health and cheerfulness; and what can be more favourable to reason and morality? A Welch wig is—What is it? A mean covering for the head; bestowing not wisdom, like a lawyer's wig, bronze like a Brutus, gravity like a tie, weight like a full bottom, or smartness like a scratch; but is, as it were, a mere night-cap, fit only for quizzes, quidnuncs, watchmen, and, what's all the same, old women.—Personal, personal.—I beg pardon, sir, I didn't know any old woman was present.—Mr. President, I maintain that waltzes are immoral.—No! no!—Sir, the morality of the subject in question depends upon one question; and I question if that question is at all questionable—Is morality an active or an inactive principle? If active, we must decide for waltzes; and, if inactive, for Welch wigs: and I have no doubt but that every gentleman who is of my mind will be of the same opinion.—Sir, a learned author, whose name I have forgot, and whose words I don't recollect, asserts what I shall not take up your time by repeating; but, on the subject of debate, the enlightened Dr. Dumfuzzle, in his Dissertation on Dunderheads, has, in the most elegant Latin, these emphatic words—

Comparabandus hum, wiggum cum waltzo,
Describusque, rumfusque, waltzum cum wiggo.

Knock down Dr. Dumfuzzle—

Order! order! question! question! chair! chair! chair!
All talkers and no hearers, till the forum's like a fair.

III.

The hubbub at length being paralyz'd,
The question is further on analyz'd:

" I move, sir,
 To prove, sir,
 That, spite of all quarrel,
 Welch wigs, sir,
 Are gigs, sir,
 And waltzes are moral.
 Let those who can't dance,
 From envy advance
 An argument con ;"
 And thus he goes on,
 Till above all the voices another exalts his,
 To prove that Welch wigs are more moral than waltzes.

Spoken in several voices.]—Mr. President, I aver that waltzes, being more expensive than Welch wigs, the latter are most agreeable to moral economy ; though waltzes, by overheating people, and giving them cold, are more serviceable to the physical faculty ; who are often obliged to prescribe Welch wigs to restore the intellectual energies, for the purposes of reciprocal ratiocination.—Sir, as to the morality of waltzes, I shall prove that Welch wigs—that is, that Welch wigs, compared with waltzes, being comparatively, by comparison, similar to Welch wigs, compared with waltzes, allowing for the morality of the one and the ratiocination of the other.—Nonsense, nonsense.—Silence—no interruption—the president speaks—

Gentlemen, to stop all this heterogeneous hurly-burly, the clerk shall read some of the fundamental rules of the society.

It is not required that any gentleman should be obliged either to understand himself or make any body else understand him ; for as every gentleman has his opinion, if he is satisfied with it, that is enough ; as no man, who is a man, ought to give up his opinion to any man, for no man.

Any gentleman may go to sleep during a debate, provided he wakes time enough for hearing the question put, and then he is recommended to vote with the strongest party.

Gentlemen who learn their speeches by heart are required to come perfect ; and, for the benefit of dis-

cussion, incontrovertible arguments, on both sides of the question, may be had of the secretary, at a reasonable rate, ready made.

Any gentleman wishing to speak the whole evening, may, by paying all the expenses, be accommodated with the room to himself.

Order! order! question! question! chair! chair! chair!
All talkers and no hearers, till the forum's like a fair.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

An Apartment in Sir CHARLES'S House.—The Door to another Apartment in the Scene.

Enter Mrs. CORNFLOWER and FANNY.

Mrs. C. What misery has indiscretion cost me! and though guilty only of mental error, and brought here by stratagem and force, how odious must I appear in the eyes of my husband! to whom I cannot fly, and from whom I am, perhaps, separated for ever.

Fanny. My dear madam, a thought has just struck me: as we are confined here, and can make no one hear, suppose you was to write a note, and throw it out of the window, over the wall; saying how we were deluded from the farm by that wretch Peter, forced into a chaise, and brought here; and desiring whoever finds it, to carry it directly to my master: there is pen, ink, and paper, in the next room.

Mrs. C. The suggestion is good; I will execute it; and Heaven prosper our hope.

Fanny. And I'll get every thing ready, ma'am.

[*Exit FANNY.*]

Mrs. C. Alas! Henry, what must be your suf-

ferings? Yet they cannot equal mine: so long with him in your absence, his art and accomplishments dazzled my imagination, and led me to excuse, instead of resenting, his first approaches; and this, the extent of my guilt, has placed me in his power.

SONG. (T. WELSH.)

Ills surround me,
Fears confound me,
Ev'ry moment cares increase;
Ever sighing,
Hope denying
Balm, to give my bosom peace.
Like the fawn, by the lion pursued
To some precipice, panting for breath,
Who looks down on the fierce raging flood,
And plunges, despairing, to death.
Ills surround me, &c.

[*Exit.*]

Enter Miss COURTLY and JENNY, in Travelling Dresses.

Miss C. [To the Servant who ushers them in.] Tell my brother I am here. [*Exit Servant.*]
I am glad I came as you advised, Jenny; there is some mystery in my brother's being here, which I must unravel.

Jenny. Short time as I have been in the house, ma'am, I have seen significant looks enough to tell me all is not right.

Miss C. Then my coming may prevent mischief. Go, and prepare my room. [*Exit JENNY.*]
Now to consult my guardian brother about this formidable Captain, from whom I have endeavoured to conceal the interest he has in my affections, till I am sure of his; or I am afraid I

shall stand as little chance of resisting his persuasions of matrimony, as simple Lisette did those of her lover, Lubin.

SONG. (BISHOP.)

I.

Young Lubin lov'd the fair Lisette,
And tapping at her window came;
The sun had barely risen yet—
She peep'd and cried, "O, fie, for shame!"
"Sweet maid," says he, "'tis smiling May,
Come, let us rove."—"Indeed," said she,
"So soon—What will the neighbours say?
Fi donc! fi donc! ah, mon ami."

II.

Still Lubin soft persuasion tried,
And fair Lisette at last, content,
Forgot the neighbours, ceas'd to chide,
Stole out, and with him Maying went.
And oft a stolen kiss he caught;
Lisette no doubt displeas'd would be,
Yet only said, whate'er she thought,
"Fi donc! fi donc! ah, mon ami."

III.

He talk'd of love, "Come let's away,"
She cried, yet loiter'd; silly thing;
He press'd her, too, to fix the day,
And on her finger plac'd a ring.
She started, blush'd, and hung her head,
Yet very angry tried to be,
But only sigh'd, and softly said,
"Fi donc! fi donc! ah, mon ami."

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Charles. Why, sister Rozabel, what in the name of astonishment brought you down here?

Miss C. Neither seeing nor hearing from you, brother Charles, I concluded some accident had happened: but I am happy my fears were ground-

less. And now, brother, I want some serious conversation with you.

Sir Charles. You know I hate serious conversation.

Miss C. But it is of consequence to my happiness; and as you are left my guardian [*Laughing*], who else should I consult?

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] What can she be aiming at? Well, go on, I am all attention. [*Affecting gravity.*]

Miss C. I have had an adventure. An insult I received in St. James's Park brought a young officer to my protection, whom I afterwards met at Lady Fanfly's, danced with, and—

Sir Charles. Lost your heart.

Miss C. Even so, brother.

Sir Charles. And what may his name be?

Miss C. Captain Belton: and now, my dear brother, as my peace is concerned, I must request that you will ascertain for me all that relates to this formidable fellow, before my heart gets too far engaged to retreat.

Enter Servant.

Servant. A gentleman, sir, who says his name is Captain Belton.

Sir Charles. [*Looking significantly at Miss C., who is confused and astonished. Aside to her.*] By appointment, sister?—[*To Servant.*] Show the gentleman up. [*Exit Servant.*]

Miss C. Brother, I scorn your suspicion: how, or why, he should come here, is to me astonishing. On my honour, I knew not of it.

[*Exit, in confusion.*]

Sir Charles. It is easily accounted for: he has discovered for where she left London, and followed her. [*Enter Servant, introducing Capt. BELTON. Servant withdraws.*] Sir, your servant.

Capt. B. Your servant, Sir Charles. I have introduced myself, though unknown to you; but the business which brought me here is of too much consequence for ceremony.

Sir Charles. I hate ceremony, sir, as much as any man: but as I have some idea of your business, I think a little delicacy might be requisite.

Capt. B. If you have an idea of it, delicacy, sir, is a consideration you can have little claim to.

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] Well, this is the most impudent introduction to a love-story I ever met with.

Capt. B. Concern for the happiness of a sister, sir—

Sir Charles. I must, of course, be well acquainted with: and, as you put delicacy out of the question, I shall follow your example, and declare, that I shall take care to keep that sister out of your reach.

Capt. B. [*Producing Pistols.*] Either instantly deliver her to me, or take the alternative. [*Presenting him with a Pistol.*]

Sir Charles. [*Taking the Pistol—aside.*] Well, this is the first time I ever knew that the way to make an impression upon a sister's heart, was by a bullet through her brother's. [*They take places, and the moment they present, Miss COURTLY, with a scream, enters and stands between them.*]

Miss C. For Heaven's sake, brother—Captain Belton.

Capt. B. Miss Courtly! this must appear strange, madam; but insulted honour demands it.

Sir Charles. Insulted honour? Zounds, sir, I don't comprehend you: here's a man introduces himself to me, without the least ceremony, disclaims delicacy while talking of the happiness of a sister, and demands her of me, as a highwayman would my purse, by a pistol; then talks of insulted honour.

[*Capt. B. and Miss C. stand apart, both agitated.*]

CORNFLOWER. [*Without.*]

Corn. Resist my entrance, and I'll knock you down.

Capt. B. The voice of my brother!

Miss COURTLY retires, frightened.

Sir Charles. [*Aside.*] His brother! so, so, now his madness is accounted for—I foresee a pretty end to this business; but I must brazen it out.

Enter CORNFLOWER.

Corn. [*Seeing Capt. B.*] Belton! astonishment!

Capt. B. Barnard has told me all that has happened, the rest shall be explained hereafter.

Sir Charles. Upon my word, gentlemen, you puzzle me—breaking into my house like ruffians—

Corn. Shall we stand upon ceremony with a robber; the violator of innocence, the destroyer of the ties of humanity?

Sir Charles. You honour me, sir, prodigiously; but when you have ceased to be facetious, do me the favour to unriddle all this.

Corn. Mrs. Cornflower is in this house, sir: return her to me innocent as you found her—that you cannot do—Oh! it was inhuman—your life was preserved; in return, you take away the support of mine.

Capt. B. [*To Sir C.*] Come, sir, no longer parley.

Sir Charles. I shall account regularly with you, gentlemen: but, before I deign to answer all this insolence, you will, no doubt, in your nice calculations of honour, produce some proof of—

[*The Door in the back part of the Scene opens, and Miss COURTLY appears with Mrs. CORNFLOWER, who flies to her Husband.*]

Miss C. Brother! brother! I have discovered this secret; and I owe the exposure of it to my own honour, and the hope of your reformation.

Sir Charles. Confusion!

Mrs. C. [*Recovering.*] Henry, is it a dream; or am I safe? My brother here, too?

Corn. [*Putting her gently from him.*] Emma, this is not a dream; would it were! From here you go for ever: but my arms must now be widowed. [*Mrs. C. fainting, is supported by Capt. B.*] [*To Sir CHARLES.*] Look, look at that beauteous ruin, and say, murderer! fiend! what atonement you can make for such a wreck? Oh, she was an angel of light! now she is—

Sir Charles. Not quite so vehement, sir: for I must say, in my own defence, as well as the lady's, that she is innocent.

Corn. Innocent? speak it again; innocent?

Mrs. C. [*Recovered.*] Yes, Henry, indeed innocent.

Corn. Yet you fled my house.

Sir Charles. Involuntarily, sir.

Corn. A husband's honour bears a sacred character. I must be satisfied beyond a doubt. I never compromised my love: I cannot, will not, compromise my honour.

Mrs. C. [*Weeping.*] Too cruel!

Sir Charles. What proof do you want? If being dragged here against her will; if agony for you, and contempt for me, constitute innocence, I repeat she is innocent.

Mrs. C. Indeed it is truth.

Enter Servant.

Serv. [*To Sir CHARLES.*] A gentleman named Barnard, sir.

Sir Charles. Show him up; all the neighbourhood, if they come. [*Exit Servant.*]

Re-enter Servant, with BARNARD, STUBBLE, and DICK.

Corn. [*To BARNARD.*] Barnard, my friend, your unexpected presence—

Barn. Will, I hope, set all right. I accompanied your brother here: we settled, that he should make his appearance alone. While waiting at an adjacent house, Stubble found me, and brought me this man, who drove the chaise in which Peter and a gang of rascals, by force, brought Mrs. Cornflower here.

Stub. Yes; and one of the gang was Old Gerard.

Barn. Here is a note, too, I picked up under a window of this house, that will, I trust, remove all scruple.

[*CORNFLOWER takes it tremblingly, and reads.*]

Corn. 'Tis Emma's hand:—"Whoever you are, if you can pity persecuted innocence—inform—Cornflower—at—Farm—near—that his wife—treacherously forced away—now a prisoner in the house of Sir Charles Courtly—on this heath—amply rewarded—Emma Cornflower."

[*Aside.*] This could be no trick—she could never expect me here.

ROBIN Entering, Wet and Dirty

Robin. I gotten all t' fact out of him.

Corn. Who?

Robin. Peter: he *veigled* away your wife under *clandestant* pretences, and forced her into a *shay*. I've had a pretty tuzzle wi' him, to mak' him confess; and away we went, cheek-by-jowl, into t' horse-pond. I gave him such a ducking, it cooled his courage, and he confessed all.—Your wife's

innocent; and I wou'dn't tell you a flam, that you know well enough.

Corn. Emma—I can scarcely speak—joy, confusion, o'ercome me. If I have appeared cruel, our mutual honour, our future happiness, demanded I should clear your character beyond the possibility of doubt. Can you now forgive me?

Mrs. C. I have nothing to forgive: appearances were against me, and the severity of my trial has been amply overpaid by the farther proofs it has given me of your integrity and affection.

Capt. B. [*To Sir C.*] You have still to account to me, sir.

Sir Charles. [*Significantly.*] When you please, sir.

Miss C. [*To Sir C.*] Brother, do not attempt to defend one crime by the commission of another. To Captain Belton I can only remark, that the point of honour being established in the innocence of his sister, he will [*significantly*] not consult the feelings of all here by persisting in his present purpose.

Sir Charles. Here let me interfere—I have done wrong, and would make reparation.—To you [*Mrs. C.*] madam, I can make no amends: perhaps not to you, sir [*To Corn.*]—but I hope I can make my peace with Captain Belton, by bestowing on him, as her guardian, the hand of this lady. He may impute this concession to cowardice: if so, I am still ready to meet him: I feel no cowardice but that of guilt.

Capt. B. But how will Miss Courtly decide?

Miss C. I must consent, I suppose, to make some sacrifice for a general peace; and, therefore, as plenipotentiary extraordinary, I hereby ratify it.

[*Gives her Hand.*]

Corn. My Emma restored to me in all the triumph of innocence: I have no further resentment. And now, from the lesson before us, may all learn, never to boast of security till the hour of

trial be past. As frail beings, let humility be our monitor, and charity our motto: and from this feeling may we hope our friends will advocate the cause of the Farmer's Wife?

FINALE.

Mrs. Cornflower.

My trial past, retriev'd my fame,
Should wits my story handle,
Protect me, sisters kind, from blame,
Against the shafts of scandal.

CHORUS.

Her faults forgiving and forgetting,
Ease her bosom's anxious strife;
Her hope supporting, cause abetting,
Kindly aid the Farmer's Wife.

Cornflower.

Ye married men of honour stern,
Appearance was deceiving;
But from her curious story learn,
All seeing i'n't believing.

CHORUS.

Her faults, &c.

Miss Courtly.

Unmarried belles, unmarried beaux,
Whene'er detail'd her story,
Since from the trial pure she rose,
Defend her, I implore ye.

CHORUS.

Her faults, &c.

Captain Belton.

Here indiscretion's folly read,
Then judge with charity thro' life;

Barnard.

And, as support her mind must need,
Protect, kind friends, the Farmer's Wife.

CHORUS.

Her faults, &c.

FINIS.



