

The School for Scandal



Richard Brinsley Sheridan

a version by

Dominic Power

H&P
Playwrights

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Cover photo of Byron Mondahl and Benjamin Whitrow

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This version of *The School for Scandal* was first produced by Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory on 9th April 2015, with the following cast:

in order of appearance

Lady Sneerwell	Julia Hills
Snake	Paul Currier
Sneerwell's Maid	Charlie Smalley (UoB Attachment)
James, <i>Sneerwell's Footman</i>	Callum McIntyre
Joseph Surface	Paapa Essiedu
Maria	Hannah Lee
Mrs Candour	Fiona Sheehan
Crabtree	Benjamin Whitrow
Sir Benjamin Backbite	Byron Mondahl
Sir Peter Teazle	Christopher Bianchi
Lady Teazle	Daisy Whalley
Lady Teazle's Maid	Emma Jarvis (UoB Attachment)
Rowley	Alan Coveney
Sir Oliver Surface	Chris Garner
Trip, <i>Charles' Footman</i>	Joey Hickman
Charles Surface	Jack Wharrier
Credit, <i>a Banker</i>	Craig Fuller
Careless	Oliver Hoare
Sir Toby	Callum McIntyre
Harry	Paul Currier
William, <i>Joseph's Servant</i>	Tom Manson (UoB Attachment)

Production

Director	Andrew Hilton
Associate Director & Edition	Dominic Power
Assistant Director (UoB Attachment)	Hannah de Ville
Set & Costume Designer	Emma Bailey
Costume Supervisor	Jane Tooze
Lighting Designer	Matthew Graham
Composer	Elizabeth Purnell
Production Photographers	Mark Douet & Craig Fuller
Production Manager	Nic Prior
Company & Stage Manager	Kevin Smith
Deputy Stage Manager	Caroline Steele
Assistant Stage Manager	Kate Hilditch
ASM (UoB Attachment)	Charlie Smalley
Wardrobe Mistress	Lynn Foster

Prologue

*written by Mr. Power
spoken by Mr. Mondahl*

Our *School for Scandal*, temple of great learning
That once did house the modish and discerning,
It's students learnt upon matriculation
That gossip's art and scandal a vocation.
It honed the skills of calumny and rumour
To placate the world's malicious humour
And so each generation was diverted.
Alas, no more, our college is deserted.
Its antique masters haunt the empty halls,
The ivy wilts upon its hallowed walls.

Takes out Smartphone

Newfangled toys, ingenious devices,
Spread ridicule, turn folly into crisis.
Now everyman's a graduate in malice,
Free to traduce from coffee house to palace.
Where once we gleaned our gossip from the paper
Now it travels swiftly through the vapour.
And each man in his humour may assert
How Mistress Prim at heart is Madame Flirt,
The noble base, the pious sybaritic.
Your dullest Macaroni now turns critic.

Smartphone rings - Handel Fireworks ringtone

Why, how, now Jack! (*to audience*) I pray you, don't take umbrage
I must take this - my dearest friend Lord Tunbridge -
Cards, is it? Pray count me out today,
I'm charged to speak the prologue to a play.
Oh, an old thing, Jack, I vow you would not know it
The theatre's booked, so we're obleeged to show it.
What's news in town? I hear that Lady Coker
Is in rehab. They say a city Broker
Has dunned Lord Dab. Pray tell me something more -
What, some young buck disporting with a whore
Refused the fee, despite his family's riches
And ended in the street without his britches?
An artist caught the scene in pen and ink?
I long to see't. Pray forward me the link!
Farewell, knight. Here 'tis. Upload, retweet
The mischief's out - Egad! It's me! Delete!
Delete! Alas, I cannot call it back.
It's in the air, my fame is on the rack.
I'll to the gazette, announce my new sobriety,

Blame addiction, make pretence of piety.
 As for the prologue, that I am charg'd to speak,
 I cannot do it, my spirit is too weak.
 I have no heart, our author's words to flatter,
 Judge for yourselves. About this other matter,
 All may not be lost can I but beg one favour.
 There is one way that gossip loses savour.
 A portrait of us sure will make amends,
 None dare judge a man among such friends,
 So amiable, so wise, so self-possessed,
 So *a la mode*, so stylish and well-dressed.
 So if you please my critics to beguile,

Poses with audience. Holds up smart phone

Lean together. Hold it. Ready. Smile!

Flash of smartphone camera. Lights out.

Part One

Scene 1

Lady Sneerwell's Boudoir

LADY SNEERWELL at her dressing-table, SNAKE drinking coffee, MAID

- SNEERWELL The paragraphs you say, Mr Snake, were all inserted?
- SNAKE They were, Madam. I copied them myself in a feigned hand. There can be no suspicion whence they came.
- SNEERWELL Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?
- SNAKE That's in as fine a train as your Ladyship could wish. I think it must reach Mrs. Clackit's ears within four-and-twenty hours - and then you know the business is as good as done.
- SNEERWELL Mrs. Clackit has a very pretty talent – and a great deal of industry.
- SNAKE True, madam, and has been tolerably successful in her day. To my knowledge she has been the cause of six matches being broken off and three sons disinherited, of four forced elopements - and as many close confinements - nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a *tête-à-tête* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties perhaps had never seen each other's face before in the course of their lives.
- SNEERWELL She certainly has talents, but her manner is gross.
- SNAKE 'Tis very true. She generally designs well, has a free tongue and a

bold invention; but her colouring is too dark and her outlines often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of hint and mellowness of sneer which distinguish your Ladyship's scandal.

- SNEERWELL You are partial, Snake.
- SNAKE Not in the least. Everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a look than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they have a little truth on their side to support it.
- SNEERWELL I am no hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the success of my efforts. Wounded myself in the early part of my life by the envenomed tongue of slander, I confess I have since known no pleasure equal to the reducing others to the level of my own injured reputation.
- SNAKE Nothing can be more natural. But, Lady Sneerwell, there is one affair in which you have lately employed me wherein, I confess, I am at a loss to guess your motives.
- SNEERWELL You mean with respect to my neighbour, Sir Peter Teazle and his family?
- SNAKE I do. Here are two young men, to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death - the elder, Joseph Surface, possessing the most amiable character and universally well spoken of; the younger, Charles Surface, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom, without friends or character; the former an avowed admirer of your Ladyship and apparently your favourite; the latter attached to Maria, Sir Peter's ward, and confessedly beloved by her. It is utterly unaccountable to me why you, the widow of a city knight with a good jointure, should not close with the addresses of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Joseph - and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his profligate brother and Maria.
- SNEERWELL Then at once I must inform you that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Joseph and me.
- SNAKE No?
- SNEERWELL His real attachment is to Maria - or her fortune. But finding in his brother a favoured rival, he has been obliged to mask his pretensions and profit by my assistance.
- SNAKE But why should you interest yourself in his success?
- SNEERWELL How dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which through shame I have hitherto concealed, even from you? Must I confess that Charles, that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation, that he it is for whom I am thus anxious and malicious - and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?

- SNAKE Now indeed your conduct appears consistent; but why came you and Mr Joseph so confidential?
- SNEERWELL For our mutual interest. I have found him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish and malicious – in short, a sentimental knave - while with Sir Peter, and indeed with all his acquaintance, he passes for a youthful miracle of prudence, good sense and benevolence.
- SNAKE Indeed, I have heard Sir Peter vow he has not his equal in England; and, above all, he praises him as a Man of Sentiment.
- SNEERWELL True, and with the assistance of his sentiment he has brought Sir Peter entirely into his interest with regard to Maria, while poor Charles has no friend in the house, though I fear he has a powerful one in Maria's heart, against whom we must direct our schemes.
Enter JAMES
- JAMES Mr. Joseph Surface.
- SNEERWELL Show him up.
Exit JAMES
- He generally calls about this time. I don't wonder at people's giving him to me for a lover.
Enter JOSEPH SURFACE
- JOSEPH My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do today? Mr Snake, your most obedient.
- SNEERWELL Snake has just been arraigning me on our mutual attachment; but I have informed him of our real views. You know how useful he has been to us and, believe me, the confidence is not ill-placed.
- JOSEPH Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of Mr Snake's sensibility and discernment.
- SNEERWELL Well, well, no compliments now. But tell me when you last saw your mistress, Maria – or, what is more material to me, when your brother Charles last saw her.
- JOSEPH I have not seen her since I left you yesterday. But I can inform you that Charles and Maria meet no more. Some of your stories of his designs on Lady Teazle have taken a good effect on her.
- SNEERWELL Ah, my dear Snake, the merit of this belongs to you. But do your brother's distresses increase?
- JOSEPH Every hour. I am told he has had another execution in the house this morning. In short his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of.
- SNEERWELL Poor Charles!
- JOSEPH True, Madam; notwithstanding his vices one can't help feeling for him. Poor Charles! I'm sure I wish it were in my power to be of

any essential service to him, for the man who does not share in the distresses of a brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves -

SNEERWELL O Lud, you forget that you are among friends.

JOSEPH Egad, that's true. I'll keep that sentiment till I see Sir Peter. However, it is certainly a charity to rescue Maria from such a libertine who, if he is to be reclaim'd, can be so only by a person of your Ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

SNAKE I believe, Lady Sneerwell, there's company coming. I'll go and compose the letters you wished me? Mr Surface, your most obedient.

JOSEPH Sir, your very devoted.

Exit SNAKE

Lady Sneerwell, I am sorry you have put any further confidence in that fellow.

SNEERWELL Why so?

JOSEPH I have lately detected him in frequent conference with old Rowley, who was formerly my father's steward and has never, you know, been a friend of mine.

SNEERWELL You think Snake would betray us?

JOSEPH Nothing more likely. The fellow hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy. Hah, Maria!

Enter MARIA

SNEERWELL Maria, my dear, how do you do? What's the matter?

MARIA There's that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin Backbite, has just call'd at my guardian's with his odious Uncle Crabtree. I slipped out and have run hither to avoid them.

SNEERWELL Is that all?

JOSEPH If my Brother Charles had been of the party, ma'am, perhaps you would not have been so much alarmed.

SNEERWELL Nay, now you are ill-natured; for I dare swear the truth of the matter is Maria heard you were here. But, my dear, what has Sir Benjamin done that you should avoid him so?

MARIA Oh, he has *done* nothing. 'Tis what he has said. His conversation is a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance.

JOSEPH Aye and the worst of it is there is no advantage in not knowing him, for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as a friend - and his uncle's as bad.

SNEERWELL Nay, but we should make allowance. Sir Benjamin is a wit and a poet.

- MARIA I confess wit loses its respect with me when I see it in company with malice. What do you think, Mr. Surface?
- JOSEPH Certainly, Madam. To smile at the jest which plants a thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.
- SNEERWELL Pshaw, there's no possibility of being witty without a little ill nature. The malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick. What's your opinion, Mr. Surface?
- JOSEPH To be sure, madam, that conversation where the spirit of raillery is suppressed will ever appear tedious and insipid.
- MARIA Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable; but in a man, I am sure, it is always contemptible. We have pride, envy, rivalry, and a thousand motives to depreciate each other; but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce one.
- Enter JAMES*
- JAMES Madam, Mrs Candour is below and, if your ladyship's at leisure, will leave her carriage.
- SNEERWELL Beg her to walk in.
- Exit JAMES*
- Now, Maria, here is a character to your taste, for though Mrs. Candour is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best-natured sort of woman.
- MARIA Yes, with a very gross affectation of good nature she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree.
- JOSEPH I'faith that's true. Whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candour undertakes their defence.
- SNEERWELL Hush! Here she is.
- Enter MRS CANDOUR*
- CANDOUR My dear Lady Sneerwell, how have you been this century? Mr. Surface, what news do you hear? Though indeed it is no matter, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.
- JOSEPH Just so, indeed, Ma'am.
- CANDOUR Ah, Maria, child! What, is the whole affair off between you and Charles? His extravagance, I presume? The town talks of nothing else.
- MARIA Indeed! I am very sorry, Ma'am, the town is not better employed.
- CANDOUR True, true, but there's no stopping people's tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it, as indeed I was to learn from the same quarter that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately so well as could be wish'd.

- MARIA 'Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.
- CANDOUR Very true, but what's to be done? People will talk; there's no preventing it. Why, it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filagree Flirt. But, Lord, there's no minding what one hears - though to be sure I had this from very good authority.
- MARIA Such reports are scandalous.
- CANDOUR So they are – shameful, shameful! But the world is so censorious no character escapes. Lord, now who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an indiscretion? Yet such is the ill-nature of people that they say her uncle stopped her last week just as she was stepping into the York diligence with her dancing-master.
- MARIA I'll answer for't there are no grounds for that report.
- CANDOUR Oh, no foundation in the world I dare swear. No more probably than for the story circulated last month of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino - though to be sure that matter was never rightly cleared up.
- JOSEPH The licence of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.
- MARIA 'Tis so - but in my opinion, those who report such things are equally culpable.
- CANDOUR To be sure they are, child. Tale-bearers are as bad as tale-makers - 'tis an old observation and a very true one. But what's to be done, as I said before? How will you prevent people from talking? Today Mrs. Clackitt assured me Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife like the rest of their acquaintance. She likewise hinted that a certain widow in the next street had got rid of her dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner. And at the same time Miss Tattle, who was by, affirmed that Lord Buffalo had discovered his Lady at a house of no extraordinary fame - and that Sir Harry Bouquet and Tom Saunter were to measure swords on a similar provocation. But, Lord, do you think I would report these things? No, no, tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as tale-makers.
- JOSEPH Ah, Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good nature!
- CANDOUR I confess, Mr. Surface, I cannot bear to hear people traduced behind their backs, and when ugly circumstances come out against one's acquaintance, I own I always love to think the best. By the bye, I hope 'tis not true your brother is absolutely ruin'd?
- JOSEPH I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, Ma'am.
- CANDOUR Ah, I heard so - but you must tell him to keep up his spirits. Everybody almost is in the same way - Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas

Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit. All up, I hear, within this week. So, if Charles is undone, he'll find half his friends and acquaintance ruined too, and that, you know, is a consolation.

JOSEPH Doubtless, Ma'am, a very great one.

Enter JAMES

JAMES Mr. Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

SNEERWELL So, Maria, you see your lover pursues you. Positively you shan't escape.

Enter CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE

Exit JAMES

CRABTREE Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hand. Mrs. Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew, Sir Benjamin Backbite? Egad, Ma'am, he has a pretty wit - and is a pretty poet too, isn't he, Lady Sneerwell?

BACKBITE O fie, Uncle!

CRABTREE Nay, egad, it's true. I back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymers in the kingdom. Has your Ladyship heard the epigram he wrote last week on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire? Do, Benjamin, repeat it - or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs. Drowzie's conversazione. Come now: your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and -

BACKBITE Uncle, now, prithee -

CRABTREE I' faith, ma'am - 'twould surprise you to hear how ready he is at all these fine sort of things.

SNEERWELL I wonder, Sir Benjamin, you never publish anything.

BACKBITE To say truth, ma'am, 'tis very vulgar to print. And as my little productions are mostly satires and lampoons on particular people, I find they circulate more by giving copies in confidence to the friends of the parties. However I have some love elegies, which, when favoured with this lady's smiles, I mean to give to the public.

CRABTREE *[To MARIA]* 'Fore Heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalize you! You will be handed down to posterity, like Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa.

BACKBITE Yes, madam, I think you will like them when you shall see them on a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall meander through a meadow of margin. 'Fore Gad, they will be the most elegant things of their kind!

CRABTREE But, ladies, that's true. Have you heard the news?

CANDOUR What, sir, do you mean the report of -

CRABTREE No, ma'am, that's not it. Miss Nicely is going to be married to her

- own footman!
- CANDOUR Impossible!
- CRABTREE Ask Sir Benjamin.
- BACKBITE 'Tis very true, ma'am. Everything is fixed and the wedding liveries bespoke.
- CRABTREE Yes, and they say there were *pressing* reasons for it.
- SNEERWELL Why, I have heard something of this before.
- CANDOUR It can't be. And I wonder any one should believe such a story of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.
- BACKBITE O Lud, ma'am, that's the very reason 'twas believed at once. She has always been so cautious and so reserved, that everybody was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.
- CANDOUR Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady as a fever is to those of the strongest constitutions. But there is a sort of puny, sickly reputation that is always ailing, yet will outlive the robuster characters of a hundred prudes.
- BACKBITE True, madam.
- CANDOUR But this may be all a mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales.
- CRABTREE That they do, I'll be sworn, ma'am. Did you ever hear how Miss Piper came to lose her lover and her character last summer at Tunbridge? Sir Benjamin, you remember it?
- BACKBITE O to be sure - the most whimsical circumstance.
- SNEERWELL How was it, pray?
- CRABTREE One evening at Mrs. Ponto's assembly the conversation happened to turn on the breeding Nova Scotia sheep in this country. Says a young lady in company, "I have known instances of it, for Miss Letitia Piper, a first cousin of mine, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins." "What!" cries the Lady Dowager Dundizzy, who you know is as deaf as a post, "has Miss Piper had twins?" This mistake, as you may imagine, threw the whole company into a fit of laughter. However, 'twas the next morning everywhere reported - and in a few days believed by the whole town - that Miss Letitia Piper had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and girl. And in less than a week there were people who could name the father - and the farmhouse where the babies were put to nurse.
- SNEERWELL Strange indeed!
- CRABTREE Matter of fact, I assure you. O Lud, Mr. Surface, pray is it true that your uncle Sir Oliver is coming home?

- JOSEPH Not that I know of, indeed, sir.
- CRABTREE He has been in the East Indies a long time. You can scarcely remember him, I believe? Sad comfort, whenever he returns, to hear how your brother has gone on.
- JOSEPH Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may reform.
- BACKBITE To be sure, he may. For my part I never believed him to be so utterly void of principle as people say, and though he has lost all his friends I am told nobody is better spoken of by the Jews.
- CRABTREE That's true, egad, nephew. I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine - and that whenever he is sick they have prayers for his recovery in the synagogue.
- BACKBITE Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me when he entertains his friends he will sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own securities, have a score of tradesmen waiting in the antechamber, and a bailiff behind every guest's chair.
- JOSEPH This may be entertainment to you, gentlemen, but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother.
- MARIA Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning. I'm not very well.
- Exit MARIA*
- CANDOUR O dear, she changes colour very much!
- SNEERWELL Do, Mrs. Candour, follow her; she may want assistance.
- CANDOUR That I will with all my soul, ma'am. Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be?
- Exit CANDOUR*
- SNEERWELL 'Twas nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles reflected on.
- BACKBITE The young lady's *penchant* is obvious.
- CRABTREE But, Benjamin, you mustn't give up the pursuit for that. Follow her, and put her into good humour. Repeat her some of your verses.
- BACKBITE Mr. Surface I did not mean to hurt you; but depend on't your brother is utterly undone.
- CRABTREE. O Lud! aye – undone - as ever man was - can't raise a guinea.
- BACKBITE And everything sold, I'm told, that was movable.
- CRABTREE I have seen one that was at his house. Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked - and the family portraits, which I believe are framed in the wainscots.

BACKBITE And I'm very sorry, also, to hear some bad stories against him.

CRABTREE O he has done many mean things, that's certain.

BACKBITE But, however, as he's your brother -

CRABTREE We'll tell you all another opportunity.

Exeunt CRABTREE & BACKBITE

SNEERWELL Ha, ha! 'Tis very hard for them to leave a subject they have not quite run down.

JOSEPH I believe the abuse was no more acceptable to your Ladyship than to Maria.

SNEERWELL I fear Maria's affections are farther engaged than we imagin'd. But she is invited again this evening, with Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, so we shall have an opportunity of observing farther. In the meantime, I'll plot more mischief - you may study Sentiment.

Exit SNEERWELL

JOSEPH Here's an edifying sentiment that I'll keep to myself: so chaste is my courtship, I would happily marry Maria's fortune without engaging with her person. The world may hold Maria comely, but her sincerity grates me. Now the young wife of Sir Peter Teazle has a pertness and mischief that compels me to woo her in spite of danger. My interest and my desire are lodgers in the same house, yet for my safety I must keep them in separate apartments and mind that they never salute one another on the stair.

Exit

Scene 2 [Act2 Sc1/Act1 Sc2]

A Room in Sir Peter Teazle's House

Enter SIR PETER, LADY TEAZLE and her MAID with flowers

SIR PETER Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it.

L. TEAZLE Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may bear it or not as you please; but I ought to have my own way in everything - and what's more I will too. What, though I was educated in the country I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married.

Exit LADY TEAZLE and MAID

SIR PETER When an old bachelor takes a young wife, what is he to expect? 'Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men - and I have been the miserablest dog ever since. We tifted a little going to church, and fairly quarelled before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution - a girl

bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation above the annual gala of a race ball. Yet now she plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of the town, with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush nor a grass plot out of Grosvenor Square. I am sneered at by all my acquaintance and paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune and contradicts all my humours. Yet the worst of it is, I fear I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

Re-enter Lady Teazle

Very well, ma'am, very well. So a husband is to have no influence, no authority?

L. TEAZLE Authority? No, to be sure. If you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, not married me. I am sure you were old enough.

SIR PETER Old enough! Aye - there it is. Well, well, Lady Teazle, though my life may be made unhappy by your temper, I'll not be ruined by your extravagance.

L. TEAZLE My extravagance! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be.

SIR PETER 'Slife, madam, to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse, or give a *fête champêtre* at Christmas?

L. TEAZLE Lord, Sir Peter, am I to blame because flowers are dear in cold weather? You should find fault with the climate, not with me. For my part I'm sure I wish it was spring all the year round and that roses grew under one's feet!

SIR PETER Oons, madam, if you had been born to this I shouldn't wonder at your talking thus. But you forget what your situation was when I married you.

L. TEAZLE No, no, I don't. 'Twas a very disagreeable one, or I never should have married you.

SIR PETER Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat an humbler style - the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, 'Lady Teazle', when I saw you first, sitting at your needle in a pretty figured linen gown with a bunch of keys by your side, your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted of your own working.

L. TEAZLE O, yes! I remember it very well, and a curious life I led - my daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family receipt-book, and comb my Aunt Deborah's lap-dog.

- SIR PETER Yes, yes, ma'am, 'twas so indeed.
- L. TEAZLE And then, you know, my evening amusements - to play Pope Joan with the Curate; to read a sermon to my aunt; or be stuck down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.
- SIR PETER I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, these were the recreations I took you from; but now you must have your coach upholstered in velvet and three powder'd footmen before your chair, and in the summer a pair of 'white cats' to draw you to Kensington Gardens. No recollection, I suppose, when you were content to ride double behind the butler on a docked coach-horse?
- L. TEAZLE No – I swear I never did that. I deny the butler and the coach-horse.
- SIR PETER This, madam, was your situation; and what have I done for you? I have made you a woman of fashion, of fortune, of rank - in short, I have made you my wife.
- L. TEAZLE Well then - and there is but one thing more you can make me to add to the obligation, and that is -
- SIR PETER My widow, I suppose? Thank you, madam. But don't flatter yourself; for though your ill conduct may disturb my peace it shall never break my heart. However, I am equally obliged to you for the hint.
- L. TEAZLE Then why will you endeavour to make yourself so disagreeable to me and thwart me in every little elegant expense. I should think you would like to have your wife thought a woman of taste.
- SIR PETER Taste! Zounds, madam, you had no taste when you married me.
- L. TEAZLE And after having married you, I allow I should never pretend to taste again. But now, Sir Peter, if we have finished our daily jangle, I presume I may go to my engagement at Lady Sneerwell's?
- SIR PETER Aye, there's another precious circumstance. A charming set of acquaintance you have made there!
- L. TEAZLE They are people of rank and fortune, and remarkably tenacious of reputation.
- SIR PETER Egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance, for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves! Many a wretch that rides a hurdle to Tyburn has done less mischief than these utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation!
- L. TEAZLE What, would you restrain the freedom of speech?
- SIR PETER Oh, they have made you just as bad as any one of the society.
- L. TEAZLE Why, I believe I do bear a part with a tolerable grace. But I vow I

bear no malice against the people I abuse. When I say an ill-natured thing, 'tis out of pure good humour, and I take it for granted they deal exactly in the same manner with me. But, Sir Peter, you know you promised to come to Lady Sneerwell's too.

SIR PETER Well, well, I'll call in, just to look after my own character.

L.TEAZLE Then, indeed, you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. Good bye to ye!

Exit

SIR PETER So, I have gain'd much by my intended expostulation. Yet how pleasingly she appears when she is doing everything in her power to plague me!

Enter ROWLEY

ROWLEY Sir Peter, your servant. How is it with you, sir?

SIR PETER Very bad, Master Rowley, very bad. I meet with nothing but crosses and vexations.

ROWLEY What can have happened to trouble you since yesterday?

SIR PETER A good question to a married man!

ROWLEY Nay, I'm sure your Lady can't be the cause of your uneasiness.

SIR PETER Why, has anybody told you she was dead?

ROWLEY Come, come, Sir Peter, you love her, notwithstanding your tempers don't exactly agree.

SIR PETER The fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am myself the sweetest temper'd man alive, and hate a teasing temper - and so I tell her a hundred times a day.

ROWLEY Indeed!

SIR PETER Aye - and what is very extraordinary, in all our disputes she is always in the wrong. But Lady Sneerwell, and the set she meets at her house, encourage the perverseness of her disposition. Then to complete my vexations, Maria, my ward, whom I ought to have the power of a father over, is determined to turn rebel too. She absolutely refuses the man I have long resolved on for her husband - meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother.

ROWLEY You know, Sir Peter, I have always taken the liberty to differ with you on the subject of these two young gentlemen. I only wish you may not be deceived in your good opinion of Joseph. For Charles (my life on't!), he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honour'd master, was at his years nearly as wild a spark. Yet on his sudden death, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament his loss.

SIR PETER You are wrong, Master Rowley, you are wrong. On their father's

death, you know, I acted as a kind of guardian to them both, till their uncle Sir Oliver's eastern liberality gave them an early independence. No person could have more opportunities of judging of their hearts, and I was never mistaken in my life. Joseph is indeed a model for the young men of the age. He is a Man of Sentiment, and acts up to the sentiments he professes; but for Charles, take my word for't, if he had any grain of virtue by descent, he has dissipated it with the rest of his inheritance. My old friend, Sir Oliver, will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied.

- ROWLEY I am sorry to find you so violent against the young man, because this may be the most critical period of his fortune. I came hither with news!
- SIR PETER What? Let me hear.
- ROWLEY Sir Oliver is arrived from the Indies and at this moment in town.
- SIR PETER You astonish me. I thought you did not expect him this month.
- ROWLEY I did not; but his passage has been remarkably quick.
- SIR PETER Egad, I shall rejoice to see him. 'Tis fifteen years since we met. But does he know I am married?
- ROWLEY Yes, and will soon wish you joy.
- SIR PETER What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption? Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at matrimony together, and he has been steady to his text. Well, I'll instantly give orders for his reception, for I must go mind my reputation at Lady Sneerwell's. But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.
- ROWLEY By no means.
- SIR PETER I should never be able to stand Noll's jokes. I'd have him think, Lord forgive me, that we are a very happy couple.
- ROWLEY Then you must be very careful not to differ while he is in the house with you.
- SIR PETER Egad, and so we must - and that's impossible. Ah, Master Rowley, when an old bachelor marries a young wife, he deserves - no, the crime carries its punishment along with it.

Exeunt

Scene 3 [Act2 Sc2]

Lady Sneerwell's Reception Room
SNEERWELL, CANDOUR, CRABTREE, BACKBITE and JOSEPH SURFACE. MAID in attendance

- SNEERWELL Nay, positively, we *will* hear it.
- JOSEPH Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.
- ALL Yes, the epigram if you please.
- BACKBITE Oh, plague on't, uncle! 'Tis mere nonsense.
- CRABTREE No, no. 'Fore Gad, very clever for an extempore.
- BACKBITE But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the circumstance. You must know that one day last week as Lady Betty Curricle was taking the dust in Hyde Park in a sort of duodecimo phaeton, she desired me to write some verses on her ponies, upon which I took out my pocket-book and in one moment produced the following:
- Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies;
Other horses are clowns, but these macaronis.
To give 'em this title I'm sure isn't wrong,
Their legs are so slim and their tails are so long.*
- CRABTREE There, ladies, done in the smack of a whip and on horseback, too.
- JOSEPH A very Phoebus mounted. Indeed, Sir Benjamin!
- BACKBITE Oh, dear sir! Trifles, trifles.
- Enter JAMES*
- CANDOUR I must have a copy.
- JAMES Lady Teazle and Miss Maria.
- Enter LADY TEAZLE and MARIA
Exit JAMES*
- SNEERWELL Lady Teazle! I hope we shall see Sir Peter?
- L. TEAZLE I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.
- SNEERWELL Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit down to piquet with Mr Surface.
- MARIA I take very little pleasure in cards; however, I'll do as your ladyship pleases.
- L. TEAZLE [*Aside*] I am surprised that Mr. Surface should sit down with her. When Sir Peter is not by he is wont to be my lover, as far as is allowable by fashion.
- CANDOUR Now, I'll die; but you are so scandalous I'll forswear your society.
- L. TEAZLE What's the matter, Mrs Candour?
- CANDOUR They'll not allow our friend Miss Vermilion to be handsome.
- SNEERWELL Oh, surely she is a pretty woman.
- CRABTREE I am very glad you think so, ma'am.
- CANDOUR She has a charming fresh colour.

- L. TEAZLE Yes, when it is fresh put on.
- CANDOUR Oh, fie! I'll swear her colour is natural. I have seen it come and go.
- L. TEAZLE I daresay you have, ma'am. It goes off at night and comes on again in the morning.
- BACKBITE True, Lady Teazle, it not only comes and goes, but, what's more, egad - her maid can fetch and carry it.
- CANDOUR Ha, ha, ha! How I hate to hear you talk so. But surely now, her sister is - or was - very handsome.
- CRABTREE Who - Mrs Evergreen? Oh, Lord, she's six and fifty if she's an hour.
- CANDOUR Now positively you wrong her. Fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost - and I don't think she looks more.
- BACKBITE Ah, there is no judging by her looks unless one could see her face.
- SNEERWELL Well, well, if Mrs Evergreen does take some pains to repair the ravages of time, you must allow she effects it with great ingenuity; and surely that's better than the careless manner in which the widow Ochre caulks her wrinkles.
- BACKBITE Nay, now, Lady Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. It is not that she paints so ill - but, when she has finished her face, she joins it on so badly to her neck that she looks like a mended statue, in which the connoisseur sees at once that the head's modern, though the trunk's antique.
- CRABTREE Ha, ha, ha! Well said, nephew!
- CANDOUR Ha, ha, ha! Well, you make me laugh, but I vow I hate you for it. What do you think of Miss Simper?
- BACKBITE Why, she has very pretty teeth.
- L. TEAZLE Yes; and on that account, when she is neither speaking nor laughing (which very seldom happens), she never absolutely shuts her mouth, but leaves it always on a jar, as it were thus.
- SNEERWELL Very well, Lady Teazle; I see you can be a little severe.
- L. TEAZLE 'Tis naught but justice. But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry.
- Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE*
- SIR PETER *[Aside]* Mercy on me, here is the whole set. *[Aloud]* Ladies, your most obedient. *[Aside]* A character dead at every word, I suppose.
- CANDOUR I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious - and Lady Teazle as bad as anyone.
- SIR PETER It must be very distressing to you, Mrs Candour, I dare swear.

- CANDOUR Oh, they will allow good qualities to nobody - not even good nature to our friend Mrs Pursy.
- L. TEAZLE What, the fat dowager who was at Mrs Codille's last night?
- CANDOUR Nay, her bulk is her misfortune; and when she takes such pains to get rid of it, you ought not to reflect on her.
- SNEERWELL That's very true, indeed.
- L. TEAZLE Yes, I know she almost lives on acids and small whey; laces herself by pulleys; and often in the hottest noon of summer, you may see her on a little squat pony, with her hair plaited up behind like a drummer's, and puffing round the ring on a full trot.
- CANDOUR I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.
- SIR PETER *[Aside]* Yes, a good defence truly.
- CANDOUR But Sir Benjamin is as censorious as Miss Sallow.
- CRABTREE Yes, and she is a curious being to pretend to be censorious - an awkward gawky without any one good point under Heaven!
- CANDOUR Positively you shall not be so severe. Miss Sallow is a near relation of mine by marriage, and as for her person great allowance is to be made; for a woman labours under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six and thirty.
- SNEERWELL Though surely she is handsome still - and for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candlelight it is not to be wondered at.
- CANDOUR True, and then as to her manner - upon my word I think it is particularly graceful considering she never had the least education. For you know her mother was a Welsh milliner and her father a sugar-baker at Bristol.
- BACKBITE Ah, you are both of you too good-natured.
- SIR PETER *[Aside]* Yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! Mercy on me!
- CANDOUR For my part I own I cannot bear to hear a friend ill spoken of.
- SIR PETER *[Aside]* No, to be sure!
- CANDOUR So I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions *she* has to be critical in beauty.
- CRABTREE Oh, to be sure. She has herself the oddest countenance that ever was seen. 'Tis a collection of features from all the different countries of the globe.
- BACKBITE So she has indeed. An Irish front ...
- CRABTREE Caledonian locks ...
- BACKBITE Dutch nose ...

- CRABTREE Austrian lip ...
- BACKBITE Complexion of a Spaniard ...
- CRABTREE And teeth *à la Chinoise!*
- BACKBITE In short, her face resembles a *table d'hote* at Spa, where no two guests are of a nation -
- CRABTREE Or a congress at the close of a general war - wherein all the members, even to her eyes, appear to have a different interest, and her nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.
- CANDOUR Ha, ha, ha!
- SIR PETER [*Aside*] Mercy on my life - a person they dine with twice a week!
- SNEERWELL Go, go; you are a couple of provoking toads.
- CANDOUR Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so. For give me leave to say that Mrs Ogle -
- SIR PETER Madam, madam, I beg your pardon. There's no stopping these good gentlemen's tongues. But when I tell *you*, Mrs Candour, that the lady they are abusing is a particular friend of mine, I hope you'll not take her part.
- SNEERWELL Ha, ha, ha! Well said, Sir Peter! But you are a cruel creature, too phlegmatic yourself for a jest, and too peevish to allow wit in others.
- SIR PETER Ah, madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.
- L. TEAZLE True, Sir Peter. I believe they are so near akin that they can never be united.
- BACKBITE Or rather, madam, suppose them to be man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.
- L. TEAZLE But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal I believe he would have it put down by Parliament.
- SIR PETER 'Fore Heaven, madam, if they were to consider the sporting with reputation of as much importance as poaching on manors and pass an Act for the Preservation of Fame, I believe there are many would thank them for the bill.
- SNEERWELL Lud, Sir Peter, would you deprive us of our privileges?
- SIR PETER Aye, madam; and then no person should be permitted to kill characters or run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.
- SNEERWELL Go, you monster!
- CANDOUR But sure you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear?

SIR PETER Yes, madam, I would have law merchant for them too; and in all cases of slander currency, whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured parties should have a right to come on any of the endorsers.

CRABTREE Well, for my part I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.

SIR PETER Oh, nine out of ten of the malicious inventions are founded on some ridiculous misrepresentation.

SNEERWELL Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room?

Enter JAMES, who whispers to SIR PETER

SIR PETER I'll be with him directly.

Exit JAMES

[Aside] I'll get away unperceived.

SNEERWELL Sir Peter, you are not leaving us?

SIR PETER Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me.

Exit SIR PETER

BACKBITE Well, certainly, Lady Teazle, that lord of yours is a strange being. I could tell you some stories of him would make you laugh heartily if he were not your husband.

L. TEAZLE Oh, pray don't mind that. Come, do let's hear them.

Exeunt all but JOSEPH and MARIA

JOSEPH Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society.

MARIA How is it possible I should? If to raise malicious smiles at the misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province of wit or humour, Heaven grant me a double portion of dullness!

JOSEPH Yet they appear more ill-natured than they are. They have no malice at heart.

MARIA Then is their conduct still more contemptible, for, in my opinion, nothing could excuse the intemperance of their tongues but a natural and ungovernable bitterness of mind.

JOSEPH Undoubtedly, madam; and it has always been a sentiment of mine that to propagate a malicious truth wantonly is more despicable than to falsify from revenge. But can you, Maria, feel thus for others and be unkind to me alone? Is hope to be denied the tenderest passion?

MARIA Why will you distress me by renewing the subject?

JOSEPH Ah, Maria, you would not treat me thus and oppose your guardian

Sir Peter's will, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favoured rival.

MARIA Ungenerously urged! But whatever my sentiments are of that unfortunate young man, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother.

JOSEPH Nay, but Maria, do not leave me with a frown. By all that's honest I swear - *[Kneels]*

Enter LADY TEAZLE

[Aside] Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle. *[Aloud]* You must not – no, you shall not – for though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle –

MARIA Lady Teazle!

JOSEPH Yet were Sir Peter to suspect -

L. TEAZLE What is this? Child, you are wanted in the next room.

Exit MARIA

What is all this, pray?

JOSEPH Oh, the most unlucky circumstance in nature. Maria has somehow suspected the tender concern I have for your happiness and threatened to acquaint Sir Peter with her suspicions, and I was just endeavouring to reason with her when you came in.

L. TEAZLE Indeed! But you seemed to adopt a very tender mode of reasoning. Do you usually argue on your knees?

JOSEPH Oh, she's a child and I thought a little bombast - but, Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgment on my library, as you promised?

L. TEAZLE No, no; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion sanctions.

JOSEPH True - a mere Platonic *cicisbeo* - what every London wife is entitled to.

L. TEAZLE Certainly one must not be out of the fashion. However, I have so much of my country prejudices left that, though Sir Peter's ill humour may vex me ever so, it shall never provoke me to -

JOSEPH The only revenge in your power. Well, I applaud your moderation.

L. TEAZLE Go, you are an insinuating wretch! But we shall be missed. Let us join the company.

JOSEPH But we had best not return together.

L. TEAZLE Well, don't stay, for Maria shan't come to hear any more of your reasoning, I promise you.

Exit

JOSEPH A curious dilemma my appetites have run me into! I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character. Yet to usurp Sir Peter's bedchamber, while he admires my virtue, is a refinement in pleasure I find I am unable to resist.

Exit

Scene 4 [Act2 Sc3]

Sir Peter Teazle's House

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY

SIR OLIVER Ha, ha, ha! So my old friend is married, hey? A young wife out of the country. That he should have stood bluff to old bachelor so long and sink into a husband at last.

ROWLEY But you must not rally him on the subject, Sir Oliver. 'Tis a tender point, I assure you, though he has been married only seven months.

SIR OLIVER Then he has been just half a year on the stool of repentance! Poor Peter! But you say he has entirely given up on Charles - never sees him, hey?

ROWLEY His prejudice against him is astonishing, and I am sure greatly increased by a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's ill fame.

SIR OLIVER Aye, I am told there are now a set of malicious, prating gossips, both male and female, in London who murder characters to kill time, and will rob a young fellow of his good name before he has years to know the value of it. But I am not to be prejudiced against my nephew by such, I promise you. No, no, if Charles has done nothing false or mean, I shall compound for his extravagance.

ROWLEY Then, my life on't, you will reclaim him. Ah, sir, it gives me new life to find that your heart is not turned against him, and that the son of my good old master has one friend however left.

SIR OLIVER Shall I forget, Master Rowley, when I was at his years myself? Egad, my brother and I were neither of us very prudent youths - and yet, I believe, you have not seen many better men than your old master was.

ROWLEY Sir, 'tis this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family. But here comes Sir Peter.

SIR OLIVER Mercy on me, he's greatly altered. One may read husband in his face at this distance!

Enter SIR PETER

SIR PETER Sir Oliver - my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times!

- SIR OLIVER Thank you - thank you, Sir Peter! And i'faith I am as glad to find you well, believe me.
- SIR PETER Oh, 'tis a long time since we met - fifteen years, I doubt, Sir Oliver, and many a cross accident in the time.
- SIR OLIVER Aye, I have had my share. But what – I find you are married, hey? Well, well, it can't be helped, and so I wish you joy with all my heart.
- SIR PETER Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver. Yes, I have entered into the happy state. But we'll not talk of that now.
- SIR OLIVER True, true, Sir Peter. Old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting. No, no, no.
- ROWLEY *[To SIR OLIVER]* Take care, pray, sir.
- SIR OLIVER Well - so one of my nephews is a wild rogue, hey?
- SIR PETER Wild! Ah, my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there; he's a lost young man, indeed. But come, let's not talk of that now. Let's share a bottle of good wine, and talk of the Indies and old times, eh Rowley? Tomorrow, after breakfast, will be time enough to take the joy from your homecoming with news of your reprobate nephew.
- SIR OLIVER Now, Sir Peter, don't be severe against your old friend's son. He may have been foolish but, odds my life, I hate to see prudence clinging to the green suckers of youth; 'tis like ivy round a sapling and spoils the growth of the tree.
- SIR PETER Well, well, tomorrow ...

Exeunt

Scene 5

At the house of CHARLES SURFACE. Morning
Enter a Footman, TRIP, with a crate of wine, and MARIA

- TRIP 'Tis a queer sort of life, madam. 'Tis as well there is credit to be had in this world else my fellows and I should starve along with our master, Mr Charles.
- MARIA Mr Charles must not borrow on credit. Advise him against it at all costs.
- TRIP I might, madam, were I not in debt to half a dozen brokers myself. One must have means to go about in the world.
- MARIA I am sorry to hear it. Credit is a very great evil.
- TRIP Starvation is a greater. My master will be merry today and sad tomorrow and that's the long and short of it.

- MARIA Why do not his friends advise him? They cannot wish him ruined.
- TRIP Why madam, to his friends he is a very prince of prudence. They will enjoy his liberality while they may. You may hear them even now, madam. They have been gaming all night.
- MARIA Well, I have some regard for him even if they do not. Give these jewels to your master. He may sell them so some of his creditors may yet be satisfied.
- TRIP He is too good-natured, madam. 'Tis best I sell them for him. My commission is standard, I assure you.
- MARIA They are for your master. He may do with them as he chooses.
- CHARLES *[Off]* Trip!
- TRIP You may deliver them in person
- CHARLES *[Nearer]* Trip!
- MARIA I may on no account see him. I have given my word.
- TRIP Madam -
- Exit MARIA*
- CHARLES *[Entering]* Trip! Where are you Trip?
- TRIP Here, sir.
- CHARLES We need more wine. *[Picking a bottle from the crate]* Was that another creditor you have seen off?
- TRIP No, creditor, sir, but a means of credit, with no interest asked. You have had visitors this morning have given you means to pay off all your debts.
- CHARLES What? Is my uncle returned already?
- TRIP I cannot say, sir, for I never saw your uncle. Unless he bears a likeness to Sir Peter Teazle's pretty ward, I'm sure t'was not him.
- CHARLES Maria was here?
- TRIP She was, sir. *[Handing them to him]* With her jewels, which she puts freely at your disposal.
- CHARLES Her goodness shames my folly.
- TRIP Then I see there is more profit in folly than in wisdom. There came another before her - one Snake, an ambassador from Lady Sneerwell. Her ladyship is - how'd he put it - "sensible that a person of your character and birth must earn regard" and so forth, and straightway hands me a bankers' draft from her ladyship for you to draw on.
- CHARLES Ods-my-life! I never knew Lady Sneerwell to show me any particular partiality ere now.
- TRIP *[Aside]* Blind as well as bankrupt! *[Aloud]* If you have any more

such admirers, we may set up in business for ourselves and lend out at interest.

CHARLES I care naught for Lady Sneerwell's favour - and too much for Maria's. Go now and return each gift to their rightful owner.

TRIP Consider, sir. We cannot live without money.

CHARLES Nay, you rogue, we cannot live without honour. Take 'em back I say.

Exit Charles

TRIP 'Tis hard to gain and lose a fortune, and all before breakfast.

Exit Trip

Scene 6 [Act3 Sc1]

Sir Peter Teazle's House

Enter SIR PETER, SIR OLIVER and ROWLEY, a Maid in attendance

SIR PETER So there you have it, Sir Oliver. Charles is a bankrupt and a scoundrel. But his brother will make you amends; Joseph is what a youth should be. Everybody in the world speaks well of him.

SIR OLIVER I am sorry to hear it. Everybody speaks well of him? Pshaw! Then he has bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius and virtue.

SIR PETER What, Sir Oliver, do you blame him for not making enemies?

SIR OLIVER Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them.

SIR PETER Well, well - you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.

SIR OLIVER Oh, plague of his sentiments! If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. But, don't mistake me, Sir Peter; I don't mean to defend Charles's errors. But before I form my judgment of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and our friend Rowley here I think has planned something for the purpose?

ROWLEY I have indeed, Sir Oliver, and Sir Peter shall own for once he has been mistaken.

SIR PETER Oh, my life on Joseph's honour!

SIR OLIVER Well, let us put that to test. Rowley, what is your scheme?

ROWLEY Why, sir, there is one Mr Stanley, who is very nearly related to Joseph and Charles by their mother. He was once a merchant in Dublin but now languishes there in the Black Dog - the debtors' prison - after being ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. Since his imprisonment he has applied to both the young men by

letter. From Mr Joseph he has received nothing but evasive promises of future service, while Charles has done all that his extravagance has left him power to do; and he is at this time endeavouring to raise a sum of money, part of which, in the midst of his own distresses, I know he intends for the service of poor Stanley.

SIR OLIVER Ah, he is my brother's son.

SIR PETER Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to -

ROWLEY Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother that Stanley has obtained release from his confinement to apply personally to his friends in London; and, as they have neither of them ever met him, let Sir Oliver disguise himself in poor Stanley's character and he will have a fair opportunity of judging at least of the benevolence of their dispositions. And believe me, sir, you will find in the younger brother one who, in the midst of folly and dissipation, has still a generous heart.

SIR PETER Pshaw! What signifies his having an open heart, or purse either, when he has nothing left to give? Well, well, make the trial if you please. But where is the fellow whom you sent for, Rowley, for Sir Oliver to examine relative to Charles's affairs?

ROWLEY Below, waiting his commands.

SIR PETER Pray, let us have him in.

ROWLEY *[To Maid]* Desire Mr Credit to walk upstairs. – Sir Oliver, no-one can give you better intelligence. Young Credit is a rascal banker, who has loaned money to Charles himself and knows – pound for pound – the depth of his indebtedness. I have convinced him he has no chance of recovering his sums but through your own bounty, so you may depend on his fidelity to his own interests. Here he comes.

Enter CREDIT

This is Sir Oliver.

SIR OLIVER Sir, I understand you have lately had great dealings with my nephew Charles.

CREDIT Yes, Sir Oliver, I made the mistake of lending him money.

SIR OLIVER Unfortunate, indeed!

CREDIT But I have done all in my power to assist him. This morning I was to have brought him a gentleman from the City, who will, I believe, advance him some more.

SIR PETER What - one Charles has never had money from before?

CREDIT Yes. Mr Premium of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker, but now living very much in retirement.

- SIR PETER In ignorant retirement, you mean?
- CREDIT As you will, sir.
- SIR PETER Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me. Charles, you say, does not know Mr Premium?
- CREDIT They are not acquainted.
- SIR PETER Now then, Sir Oliver, you may have a better opportunity of satisfying yourself than by an old romancing tale of a poor relation. Go with our friend Credit in the person of Mr Premium, and then, I'll answer for it, you'll see your nephew in all his glory.
- SIR OLIVER Egad, I like this idea better than the other. And afterwards I may visit Joseph as the unfortunate Stanley.
- SIR PETER True. So you may.
- ROWLEY Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure. However, Credit, you understand Sir Peter and will be faithful?
- CREDIT You may depend upon me. There is a fee for brokering the introduction.
- SIR OLIVER So be it. I'll accompany you as soon as you please. But hold, I have forgot one thing. How the plague shall I be able to pass for a Jew?
- CREDIT A Jew, sir? I don't understand. Premium, like myself, is a Christian.
- SIR OLIVER Is he? I'm sorry to hear it. But then again, a'n't I rather too smartly dressed to look like a money-lender?
- SIR PETER Not at all; 'twould not be out of character if you went in your own carriage. Would it, Credit?
- CREDIT Not in the least.
- SIR OLIVER Well, but how must I talk? There's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.
- CREDIT The great point is to push your advantage to the limit.
- SIR OLIVER I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent on the loan - at least.
- CREDIT Lord! If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately.
- SIR OLIVER Hey, what the plague! How much then?
- CREDIT That depends upon the circumstances. If he appears not very anxious for the supply, you should require only forty or fifty per cent. But if you find him in great distress you must ask double.
- SIR PETER A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver.
- SIR OLIVER Truly, I think so and not unprofitable.

CREDIT Then, you know, you haven't the money yourself, but are forced to borrow it for him of an old friend.

SIR OLIVER Oh, I borrow it of a friend, do I?

CREDIT Yes, and your friend is inflexible in matters of business; but you can't help that.

SIR OLIVER My friend is an 'unconscionable dog', is he?

CREDIT If you will, sir. He himself has not the money by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss.

SIR OLIVER He is forced to sell stock at a great loss, is he? Well, that's very kind of him.

SIR PETER I'faith, Sir Oliver - Mr Premium, I mean - you'll soon be master of the trade.

SIR OLIVER So - so. Credit shall give me further instructions as we go together.

SIR PETER You will not have much time, for your nephew lives hard by.

SIR OLIVER Oh, never fear; my tutor appears so able, that though Charles lived in the next street, it must be my own fault if I am not a complete rogue before I turn the corner.

Exeunt SIR OLIVER and CREDIT

SIR PETER So now I think Sir Oliver will be convinced. You are partial, Rowley, and would have prepared Charles for the other plot.

ROWLEY No, upon my word, Sir Peter.

SIR PETER I could show you such evidence as would make you convict Charles as a blackguard.

ROWLEY You may show me your evidence, but I cannot promise to believe it.

SIR PETER *[Taking a letter from his pocket]* Well, let me show –

Enter MARIA

Ah, Maria! I would speak with my ward, Rowley.

ROWLEY Of course, Sir Peter.

Exit ROWLEY

SIR PETER So, child, Mr Joseph returned with you last evening?

MARIA No, sir, he did not. He was engaged with – with another.

SIR PETER Well, Maria, do you not reflect the more you converse with that amiable young man what return his partiality for you deserves?

MARIA Indeed, Sir Peter, your frequent importunity on this subject distresses me extremely. You compel me to declare that I know no man who has ever paid me a particular attention whom I would not prefer to Mr Surface.

- SIR PETER So - here's perverseness! No, no, Maria, 'tis Charles only whom you would prefer. 'Tis evident his vices and follies have won your heart.
- MARIA This is unkind, sir. You know I have obeyed you in not seeing him. And I have heard enough to convince me that he is unworthy my regard. Yet I cannot think it culpable, if while my understanding severely condemns his vices, my heart suggests some pity for his distresses.
- SIR PETER Well, well, pity him as much as you please, but give your heart and hand to a worthier object.
- MARIA Never to his brother.
- SIR PETER Go, perverse and obstinate! But take care, madam; you have never yet known what the authority of a guardian is. Don't compel me to inform you of it.
- MARIA I can only say you shall not have just reason. 'Tis true, by my father's will I am for a short period bound to regard you as his substitute, but must cease to think you so when you would compel me to be miserable.
- Exit*
- SIR PETER Was ever man so crossed as I am? - everything conspiring to fret me! I had not been involved in matrimony a fortnight before her father, a hale and hearty man, died - on purpose I believe, for the pleasure of plaguing me with the care of his daughter. And now I am plagued with new insinuations. Here is a letter would seem to come from Charles - but 'tis not signed, that appears to be addressed to my wife - but she's not nam'd. Oh I am in a wilderness of doubt and fear.
- L. TEAZLE *[Off]* Sir Peter -
- SIR PETER Here she comes. She appears in great good humour. How happy I should be if I could tease her into loving me, though but a little.
- Enter LADY TEAZLE*
- L. TEAZLE Lud, Sir Peter, I hope you haven't been quarrelling with Maria? It is not using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not by.
- SIR PETER Ah, Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make me good-humoured at all times.
- L. TEAZLE I am sure I wish I had, for I want you to be in a charming sweet temper at this moment. Do be good-humoured now and let me have two hundred pounds, will you?
- SIR PETER Two hundred pounds! What, a'n't I to be in a good humour without paying for it? But speak to me thus and i'faith there's nothing I could refuse you. You shall have it. Shall I receive the receipt from your lips?

- L. TEAZLE Oh, no. There - my note of hand will do as well.
- SIR PETER *[Kissing her hand]* And you shall no longer reproach me with not giving you an independent settlement. I mean shortly to surprise you. But shall we always live thus, hey?
- L. TEAZLE If you please. I'm sure I don't care how soon we leave off quarrelling provided you'll own you were tired first.
- SIR PETER Well, then let our future contest be who shall be most obliging.
- L. TEAZLE I assure you, Sir Peter, good nature becomes you. You look now as you did before we were married, when you used to walk with me under the elms and tell me stories of what a gallant you were in your youth and chuck me under the chin, you would, and ask me if I thought I could love an old fellow who would deny me nothing - didn't you?
- SIR PETER Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive -
- L. TEAZLE Aye, so I was, and would always take your part when my acquaintance used to abuse you and turn you into ridicule.
- SIR PETER Indeed!
- L. TEAZLE Aye, and when my cousin Sophy has called you a stiff, peevish old bachelor and laughed at me for thinking of marrying one who might be my father, I have always defended you and said I didn't think you so ugly by any means - and I dared say you'd make a very good sort of husband.
- SIR PETER And you prophesied right. And we shall now be the happiest couple -
- L. TEAZLE And never differ again?
- SIR PETER No, never. Though at the same time indeed, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your temper very narrowly, for in all our quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always began first.
- L. TEAZLE I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter. Indeed you always gave the provocation.
- SIR PETER Now see, my angel! Take care. Contradicting isn't the way to keep friends.
- L. TEAZLE Then don't you begin it, my love.
- SIR PETER There, now, you - you - are going on. You don't perceive, my life, that you are just doing the very thing which you know always makes me angry.
- L. TEAZLE Nay, you know if you will be angry without any reason, my dear -
- SIR PETER There now, you want to quarrel again.
- L. TEAZLE No, I'm sure I don't; but if you will be so peevish -

- SIR PETER There now! Who begins first?
- L. TEAZLE Why, you to be sure. I said nothing; but there's no bearing your temper.
- SIR PETER No, no, madam! The fault's in your own temper.
- L. TEAZLE Aye, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.
- SIR PETER Your cousin Sophy is a forward impertinent gipsy.
- L. TEAZLE You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.
- SIR PETER Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on me if ever I try to be friends with you any more!
- L. TEAZLE So much the better.
- SIR PETER No, no, madam. 'Tis evident you never cared a pin for me and I was a madman to marry you - a pert rural coquette that had refused half the honest squires in the neighbourhood.
- L. TEAZLE And I am sure I was a fool to marry you - an old dangling bachelor, who was single at fifty only because he never could meet with anyone who would have him.
- SIR PETER Aye, aye, madam; but you were pleased enough to listen to me. You never had such an offer before.
- L. TEAZLE No? Didn't I refuse Sir Tivy Terrier, who everybody said would have been a better match - for his estate is just as good as yours - and he has broke his neck since we have married?
- SIR PETER I have done with you, madam! You are an unfeeling, ungrateful - But there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of everything that is bad. Yes, madam, I could now believe the gossip relative to you and that young man.
- L. TEAZLE What young man?
- SIR PETER Charles, madam. That libertine and spendthrift.
- L. TEAZLE Take care, Sir Peter! You had better not insinuate any such thing. I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you.
- SIR PETER Very well, madam, very well! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce! I'll make an example of myself for the benefit of all old bachelors. Let us separate, madam.
- L. TEAZLE Agreed, agreed! And now, my dear Sir Peter, we are of a mind once more, we may be the happiest couple and never differ again, you know. Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see, and I shall only interrupt you; so bye, bye!
- Exit*
- SIR PETER Plagues and tortures! Can't I make her angry either? Oh, I am the miserablest fellow! But I'll not bear her presuming to keep her

temper. No. She may break my heart, but she shan't keep her temper.

He takes out the letter

And this cursed letter, with its simpering gallantries – does it convict her and Charles? Does it give substance to the rumours? I almost wish it did, for then I would be rid of this curs'd uncertainty. I will open my mind on the subject to my friend Joseph. He will give me his opinion sincerely. *[Going]* I am the sweetest-tempered man alive!

Exit

Scene 7 [Act3 Sc2]

Charles Surface's house

TRIP at the harpsichord. Enter CREDIT and SIR OLIVER

TRIP Ah, Master Credit, and Mr. er - ! If you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether - What's the gentleman's name?

SIR OLIVER *[Aside to Credit]* Credit, what is my name?

CREDIT Mr Premium.

TRIP Premium. Very well.

Exit, taking snuff

SIR OLIVER To judge by the servants one wouldn't believe the master was ruined. But what - sure, this was my brother's house?

CREDIT I understand Mr Joseph sold it to Mr Charles, with the furniture, pictures, etc., just as the old gentleman left it. Mr Joseph took away only a small parcel of books to make a show. Sir Peter thought it great extravagance in Mr Charles to buy it.

SIR OLIVER In my mind the other's economy in selling it to him was more reprehensible by half.

Enter TRIP

TRIP My master says you must wait, gentlemen; he is at cards with company and can't speak with you yet.

SIR OLIVER If he knew who it was wanted to see him, perhaps he wouldn't have sent such a message.

TRIP Yes, yes, sir; he knows you are here. I didn't forget little Premium. No, no, no.

SIR OLIVER Very well. And I pray, sir, what may be your name?

TRIP Trip, sir. My name is Trip, at your service.

SIR OLIVER Well, then, Mr Trip, you have a pleasant sort of place here, I guess?

TRIP Why, yes. Here are three or four of us pass our time agreeably

enough, but then our wages are sometimes a little in arrear - and not very great either. But fifty pounds a year, and find our own bags and bouquets.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Fifty pounds! Bags and bouquets! Halters and bastinadoes!

TRIP But *à propos*, Credit, have you been able to get me that little bill discounted?

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Wants to raise money - mercy on me! Has his distresses too, I warrant, like a lord!

CREDIT *[Gives him the note]* 'Twas not to be done, indeed, Mr Trip.

TRIP Good lack, you surprise me! My friend Brush has endorsed it, and I thought when he put his name at the back of a bill 'twas as good as cash.

CREDIT No, 'twouldn't do. You must do better than Brush.

TRIP A small sum - but twenty pounds.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Twenty pounds!

TRIP Hark'ee, Credit, do you think you couldn't get it me by way of annuity?

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* An annuity! Ha, ha! A footman raise money by way of annuity! Well done, luxury, egad!

CREDIT Well, but you must insure your place.

TRIP Oh, with all my heart! I'll insure my place, and my life too, if you please.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* It's more than I would your neck.

CREDIT What might you deposit?

TRIP Why, nothing capital of my master's wardrobe has dropped lately; but I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter clothes, with equity of redemption before November. Or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver. These - with a few pair of point ruffles, as a collateral security?

CREDIT Well, well.

Bell rings

TRIP Egad, I heard the bell. I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce you. Don't forget the annuity, master Credit! This way, Mr Premium. Insure my place, you know.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* If the man be a shadow of the master, this is the temple of dissipation indeed.

Exeunt

Scene 8 [Act3 Sc3]

Charles' Reception Room

Enter CHARLES, CARELESS, SIR TOBY, HARRY etc.

- CHARLES 'Fore Heaven, 'tis true - there's the great degeneracy of the age! Many of our acquaintance have taste, spirit, and politeness; but plague on't they won't drink.
- CARELESS It is so, indeed, Charles. They give in to all the substantial luxuries of the table, and abstain from nothing but wine and wit.
- CHARLES And then what man can pretend to be a believer in love, who is an abjurer of wine? 'Tis the test by which the lover knows his own heart. Fill a dozen bumpers to a dozen beauties, and she that floats atop is the maid that has bewitched you.
- CARELESS Now then, Charles, be honest and give us your real favourite.
- CHARLES Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give me a round of her peers, which is impossible – on earth.
- CARELESS Oh, we'll find some canonized vestals or heathen goddesses that will do, I warrant.
- CHARLES Here then, bumpers, you rogues! Bumpers! Maria! Maria!
- SIR TOBY Maria who?
- CHARLES Oh, damn the surname! 'Tis too formal to be registered in love's calendar. But now, Sir Toby, beware! We must have beauty superlative.
- CARELESS Nay, never study, Sir Toby. We'll stand to the toast though your mistress should want an eye, and you know you have a song will excuse you.
- SIR TOBY Egad, so I have, and I'll give him the song instead of the lady.
- SONG*
- Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen;
Here's to the widow of fifty;
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant queen,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.*
- CHORUS *Let the toast pass,
Drink to the lass,
I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass!*
- Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize;
Now to the maid who has none, sir!
Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but one, sir!*

Let the toast pass, etc.

*Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow!
Now to her that's brown as a berry!
Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now to the girl that is merry!*

Let the toast pass, etc.

*For let 'em be clumsy, or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather.
So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
And let us e'en toast them together!*

Let the toast pass, etc.

Enter TRIP and whispers to CHARLES

- CHARLES Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little. Careless, take the chair, will you?
- CARELESS Nay, prithee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropped in by chance?
- CHARLES No, faith! To tell you the truth, 'tis a banker and a broker, who are come by appointment.
- CARELESS Oh, damn it, let's have the banker in.
- SIR TOBY Aye, and the broker too, by all means.
- HARRY Yes, yes, the banker and the broker!
- CHARLES Egad, with all my heart! Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in.

Exit TRIP

- CARELESS Charles, let us give them some generous burgundy and perhaps they'll grow conscientious.
- CHARLES Oh, hang 'em, no! Wine does but draw forth a man's natural qualities, and to make them drink would only be to whet their knavery.

Enter TRIP, SIR OLIVER and CREDIT

- CHARLES Honest Credit! Walk in, pray, Mr Premium. That's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Credit?
- CREDIT Of Crutched Friars.
- CHARLES Set chairs, Trip. Sit down, Mr Premium. Glasses, Trip. Sit down, Credit. Come, Mr Premium, I'll give you a sentiment: here's a blessing on all brokers! Trip, fill the broker a bumper.
- CREDIT Mr. Premium is a gentleman, Charles.
- CARELESS And therefore loves good wine.
- SIR TOBY Give young Credit a quart glass. This is mutiny and a high

contempt for the chair.

CARELESS Here, now for't. I'll see justice done to the last drop of my bottle.

SIR OLIVER Nay, pray, gentlemen. I did not expect this usage.

CHARLES No, hang it, you shan't. Mr Premium's a stranger.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Odd! I wish I was well out of their company.

CARELESS Plague on 'em, then! If they don't drink, we'll not sit down with 'em. Come, Harry, let's return to our cards. Charles, you'll join us when you have finished your business?

CHARLES I will! I will!

Exeunt CHARLES's friends

Careless!

CARELESS *[Returning]* Well?

CHARLES Perhaps I may want *you*.

CARELESS Oh, you know I am always ready: word, note, or bond, 'tis all the same to me.

Exit

CHARLES Mr Premium, the plain state of the matter is this: I am an extravagant young fellow who wants to borrow money. You I take to be a prudent old fellow, who have got money to lend. I am blockhead enough to give fifty per cent sooner than not have it, and you, I presume, are rogue enough to take a hundred if you can get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once and may proceed to business without further ceremony.

SIR OLIVER Exceeding frank, upon my word. I see, sir, you are not a man of many compliments.

CHARLES Oh, no, sir. Plain dealing in business I always think best.

SIR OLIVER Sir, I like you the better for it. However, you are mistaken in one thing. I have no money to lend, but I believe I could procure some of a friend. But then he's - what's the word, Credit - inflexible, is he not?

CREDIT But you can't help that.

SIR OLIVER And must sell stock to accommodate you - mustn't he, Credit?

CREDIT Indeed! And at great risk to himself, as the market stands.

CHARLES Right. So 'tis. But these are trifles, Mr Premium. I know money isn't to be bought without paying for't.

SIR OLIVER Well - but what security could you give? You have no land, I suppose?

CHARLES Not a mole-hill, nor a twig, but what's in beau-pots out of the window! But pray, Mr Premium, are you acquainted at all with

any of my connections?

- SIR OLIVER Why, to say truth, I am.
- CHARLES Then you must know that I have a dev'lish rich uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the greatest expectations.
- SIR OLIVER That you have a wealthy uncle I have heard, but how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can tell.
- CHARLES Oh, no. There can be no doubt of it. They tell me I'm a prodigious favourite and that he talks of leaving me everything.
- SIR OLIVER Indeed! This is the first I've heard on't.
- CHARLES Yes, yes, 'tis just so. Credit knows 'tis true, don't you, Credit?
- CREDIT You have told me so, Charles, many times,.
- SIR OLIVER [*Aside*] Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at Bengal.
- CHARLES Now I propose, Mr Premium, if it's agreeable to you, a post obit on Sir Oliver's life; though at the same time the old fellow has been so liberal to me that I give you my word I should be very sorry to hear that anything had happened to him.
- SIR OLIVER Not more than I should, I assure you. But the bond you mention happens to be just the worst security you could offer me - for I might live to a hundred and never recover the principal.
- CHARLES Oh, yes, you would. The moment Sir Oliver dies, you know, you would come on me for the money.
- SIR OLIVER Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome creditor you ever had in your life.
- CHARLES What? I suppose you are afraid now that Sir Oliver is too good a life?
- SIR OLIVER No, indeed I am not - though I have heard he is as hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.
- CHARLES There again you are misinformed. No, no, the climate has hurt him considerably, poor Uncle Oliver. Yes, yes, he breaks apace, I'm told - and so much altered lately that his nearest relations don't know him.
- SIR OLIVER No? Ha, ha, that's droll, egad!
- CHARLES Ha, ha! You're glad to hear that, little Premium.
- SIR OLIVER No, no, I'm not. But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately, is there nothing you could dispose of?
- CHARLES How do you mean?
- SIR OLIVER For instance now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate.

- CHARLES Oh, lud, that's gone long ago. Credit can tell you how better than I can.
- CREDIT All of it. To the auctioneers last April.
- SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Good lack, all the family race-cups and corporation bowls!
[Aloud] Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and complete.
- CHARLES Yes, yes, so it was - vastly too much so for a private gentleman. For my part, I was always of a communicative disposition; so I thought it a shame to keep so much knowledge to myself.
- SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Mercy upon me! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom! *[Aloud]* Pray what are become of the books?
- CREDIT Knocked down to at least five different parties, I understand.
- SIR OLIVER So, so, nothing of the family property left, I suppose?
- CHARLES Not much, indeed, unless you have a mind to the family portraits. I have got a room full of ancestors above; and if you have a taste for paintings, you shall have 'em a bargain.
- SIR OLIVER Sure, you wouldn't sell your forefathers, would you?
- CHARLES Every man of them to the best bidder.
- SIR OLIVER What! Your great-uncles and aunts?
- CHARLES Aye, and my great-grandfathers and grandmothers too.
- SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Now I give him up! *[Aloud]* What the plague, have you no bowels for your own kindred? Odd's life, do you take me for Shylock in the play that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood?
- CHARLES Nay, my little broker, don't be angry. What need you care if you have your money's worth?
- SIR OLIVER Well, I'll be the purchaser. I think I can dispose of the family canvas. *[Aside]* Oh, I'll never forgive him this - never!
- Enter CARELESS*
- CARELESS Come, Charles; what keeps you?
- CHARLES I can't come yet. I' faith, we are going to have a sale in the old library. Here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors.
- CARELESS Oh, hang your ancestors!
- CHARLES No, he may do that afterwards if he pleases. Stay, Careless, we want you. You shall be auctioneer; so come along with us.
- CARELESS Oh, have with you, if that's the case. I can handle a hammer as well as a dice-box.
- SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Oh, the profligates!

CHARLES Come, Credit, you shall be appraiser if we want one.

CREDIT I'll oblige you on this occasion, Charles.

SIR OLIVER You are familiar, Master Credit.

CHARLES Credit knows me well enough, and we must rub along together.
Gad's life, little Premium, you don't seem to like the business.

SIR OLIVER Oh, yes, I do, vastly. Ha, ha! Yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell
one's family by auction. Ha, ha! *[Aside]* Oh, the prodigal!

Exeunt SIR OLIVER & CREDIT

CHARLES To be sure! When a man wants money, where the plague should
he get assistance if he can't make free with his own relations?

Exit

Part Two

MARIA alone on the stage, sings:

The Linnet and the Thrush

The voices in the other room
Swore that her true love was untrue
Their eager tongues pronounced the doom
That she should all their dalliance rue.
And though they spoke but for their sport
The World believed it by default.

*The linnet singing in its cage
Will never my true love dispraise.
If mankind holds our fame but cheap
The pretty birds our secrets keep*

She set her linnet free and built
A cage of gold to house love there
To free her love from taint of guilt
And let the World acquit him fair.
All for his sport she made a swing
With silver bell that he might ring.

*The thrush that nests upon the grove
Does sing its song for my true love
If mankind holds our fame but cheap
The pretty birds our secrets keep.*

Alas, though she was always kind
And fed him wine and dainty food
Yet for sweet liberty he pined.
He cared not if men thought him good.
And when his spirit passed away
The gossips gossiped anyway.

*The linnet and the thrush agree
'Tis best to dwell in liberty.
If mankind holds our fame but cheap
The pretty birds our secrets keep.*

Scene 9 [Act4 Sc1]

The Old Library in Charles's house
Enter CHARLES, SIR OLIVER, CREDIT and CARELESS

- CHARLES Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in. Here they are, the family of the Surfaces, going back to the Conquest.
- SIR OLIVER And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.
- CHARLES Aye, aye, these are done in the true spirit of portrait painting - not

like the works of your modern Raphaels, who give you the strongest resemblance, yet make your own portrait independent of you so that you may sink the original and not hurt the picture. No, no; the merit of these is the inveterate likeness - all stiff and awkward as the originals, and like nothing in human nature beside.

- SIR OLIVER Ah, we shall never see such figures of men again!
- CHARLES I hope not. Well, you see, Master Premium, what a domestic character I am. Here I sit of an evening surrounded by my family. But come, get to your pulpit, Mr Auctioneer. Here's the old library steps will answer the purpose.
- CARELESS Aye, aye, this will do. But, Charles, I have ne'er a hammer - and what's an auctioneer without his hammer?
- CHARLES Egad, that's true. What parchment have we here? *Richard, heir to Thomas ...* Oh, our genealogy in full. Here, Careless, you shall have no common bit of mahogany - here's the family tree for you. You may knock down my ancestors with their own pedigree.
- SIR OLIVER [*Aside*] What an unnatural rogue - an *ex post facto* parricide!
- CARELESS Yes, yes, here's a list of your generation indeed. Faith, Charles, this is the most convenient thing you could have found for the business, for 'twill serve not only as a hammer but a catalogue into the bargain. But come, begin. A-going, a-going, a-going ... !
- CHARLES Bravo, Careless. Well, here's my great-uncle Sir Richard Raveline, a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. He got that cut over his eye at the Battle of Malplaquet. What say you, Mr Premium? Look at him - there's a hero for you, enveloped in wig and regimentals as a general should be! What do you bid?
- CREDIT Premium would have *you* speak.
- CHARLES Why, then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I'm sure that's not dear for a staff-officer.
- SIR OLIVER [*Aside*] Heaven deliver me! His famous uncle Richard for ten pounds! [*Aloud*] Well, sir, I take him at that.
- CHARLES Careless, knock down my uncle Richard.
- CARELESS [*Knocks*] *Gone!*
- CHARLES Here now is a maiden sister of his, my great aunt Deborah, done by Kneller in his best manner, and a very formidable likeness. There she is, you see, a shepherdess feeding her flock. You shall have her for five pounds ten - the sheep are worth the money.
- SIR OLIVER [*Aside*] Ah, poor Deborah - a woman who set such value on herself! [*Aloud*] Five pounds ten - she's mine.
- CHARLES Knock down my aunt Deborah.

- CARELESS Gone!
- CHARLES Here now are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs. You see, Credit, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies their own hair.
- SIR OLIVER Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.
- CREDIT There is a fashion now for such curiosities among the *beau monde*. 'Tis quite the thing.
- CHARLES Well, take that couple for the same.
- CREDIT A recoupable sum, certainly.
- SIR OLIVER Done.
- CHARLES Careless! – This now is a grandfather of my mother's, a learned judge, well known on the western circuit. What do you rate him at, Credit?
- CREDIT Four guineas.
- CHARLES Four guineas! Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig.
- CREDIT No market in London for the western circuit.
- CHARLES Mr Premium, you have more respect for the woolsack. Do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen.
- SIR OLIVER By all means.
- CARELESS Gone.
- CHARLES And these are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt, Esquires, both Tory Members of Parliament and noted speakers; they come at a high price, for in life t'was their custom to be bought and sold.
- SIR OLIVER I daresay it was! I'll take them at your own price for the honour of Parliament.
- CARELESS Well said, little Premium! I'll knock them down at forty.
- CHARLES Here's a jolly fellow. I don't know what relation, but he was Mayor of Manchester. Take him at eight pounds.
- SIR OLIVER No, no; six will do for the mayor.
- CHARLES Come, make it guineas, and I'll throw you the two aldermen there into the bargain.
- SIR OLIVER They're mine.
- CHARLES Careless, knock down the Lord Mayor and aldermen. - But, plague on't, we shall be all day retailing in this manner. Do let us deal wholesale, what say you, Mr Premium? Give us four hundred pounds for the whole of the family in the lump.

- CARELESS Aye, aye, that will be the best way.
- SIR OLIVER Well, well, anything to accommodate you. They are mine. But there is one portrait which you have always passed over.
- CHARLES What, that ill-looking little fellow over the mantel?
- SIR OLIVER Yes, sir, I mean that, though I don't think him so ill-looking a little fellow by any means.
- CHARLES What, that? Oh, that's my uncle Oliver. 'Twas done twenty years since - before he went to India.
- CARELESS Your uncle Oliver! Gad, then you'll never be friends, Charles. That now to me is as stern a looking rogue as ever I saw - an unforgiving eye and a damned disinheriting countenance. An inveterate knave, depend on't, don't you think so, little Premium?
- SIR OLIVER Upon my soul, sir, I do not. I think it is as honest a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive. But I suppose Uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber?
- CHARLES No, hang it! I'll not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and I'll keep his picture while I've a room to put it in.
- SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* The rogue's my nephew after all ! *[Aloud]* But, sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.
- CHARLES I'm sorry for't, for you certainly will not have it. Oons, haven't you got enough of them?
- SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* I forgive him for everything! *[Aloud]* But, sir, when I take a whim in my head, I don't value money. I'll give you as much for that as for all the rest.
- CHARLES Don't tease me, master broker. I tell you I'll not part with it, and there's an end of it.
- SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* How like his father the dog is! I did not perceive it before, but I think I never saw such a striking resemblance. *[Aloud]* Well, well, I have done. Here's your sum.
- CHARLES Thank'ee. - Why, Mr Premium, 'tis eight hundred pounds!
- SIR OLIVER You will not let Sir Oliver go?
- CHARLES Zounds, no! I tell you once more.
- SIR OLIVER Then never mind the difference, we'll balance that another time. But give me your hand on the bargain. You are an honest fellow, Charles. I beg pardon, sir, for being so free. Come, Credit.
- CHARLES *[Aside]* Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow! *[Aloud]* But hark'ee, Premium, you'll prepare lodgings for these ladies and gentlemen.
- SIR OLIVER Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.

CHARLES Do, now, send a genteel conveyance for them, for they were most of them used to ride in their own carriages.

SIR OLIVER I will, I will - for all but Oliver.

CHARLES Aye, all but the little nabob.

SIR OLIVER You're fixed on that?

CHARLES Peremptorily.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* A dear extravagant rogue! *[Aloud]* Good day! Come, Credit. *[Aside]* Let me hear now who calls him profligate!

Exeunt SIR OLIVER and CREDIT

CARELESS Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw.

CHARLES He's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder how the devil Credit got acquainted with so honest a fellow. Careless, say I'll join the company in a few moments.

Enter ROWLEY

CARELESS I will; but don't let that old blockhead, Rowley, persuade you to squander that money on old musty debts; for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows.

CHARLES Very true, and paying them is only encouraging them.

CARELESS Nothing else.

CHARLES Aye, aye, never fear.

Exit CARELESS

Egad, Rowley, you are just come in time to take leave of your old acquaintance.

ROWLEY Yes, I heard they were a-going. But I wonder you can have such spirits under so many distresses.

CHARLES Why, there's the point - my distresses are so many, that I can't afford to part with my spirits. I shall be rich and splenetic all in good time. But I suppose you are surprised that I am not more sorrowful at parting with so many near relations. To be sure, 'tis very affecting; but, you see they never move a muscle, so why should I?

ROWLEY There's no making you serious a moment.

CHARLES Yes, faith, I am so now. Hence, my honest Rowley. Send this immediately to poor Stanley in Dublin.

ROWLEY A hundred pounds! Consider only -

CHARLES Gad's life, don't talk about it! Poor Stanley's wants are pressing, and if you don't make haste, we shall have someone call that has a better right to the money.

ROWLEY Ah, there's the point! I never will cease dunning you with the old

proverb –

CHARLES 'Be just before you're generous'? Why, so I would if I could; but Justice is an old lame hobbling beldame, and I can't get her to keep pace with generosity for the soul of me.

ROWLEY Yet, Charles, believe me, one hour's reflection –

CHARLES Aye, aye, it's all very true, but, hark'ee, Rowley, while I have, by Heaven I'll give. So damn your economy, and now for hazard.

Exit CHARLES

Enter SIR OLIVER and CREDIT

CREDIT Well, sir, I think you may now believe Sir Peter. Your nephew is ruined, of that you may be sure. Such extravagance beggars belief.

SIR OLIVER True, but he wouldn't sell my picture.

CREDIT You know that he overpays his servants several fold.

SIR OLIVER But he wouldn't sell my picture.

CREDIT And he entertains his friends on money he does not have -

SIR OLIVER But he wouldn't sell my picture. Ah, Mr. Rowley.

Enter ROWLEY

ROWLEY Sir Oliver, you're here! I find you have made a purchase.

SIR OLIVER Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry.

ROWLEY *[Taking SIR OLIVER aside]* And here has he commissioned me to re-deliver you part of the purchase-money - I mean, though, in your necessitous character of poor Stanley.

SIR OLIVER There, there, his father's son!

ROWLEY And there's a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid – nor Credit here, neither.

CREDIT On that matter, Sir Oliver, in addition to my broker's fee, I would be obliged if you would honour your nephew's debt to me. Here are the notes.

SIR OLIVER So you are to be paid before all others, Master Credit?

CREDIT I make the first claim. 'Tis how the world goes.

SIR OLIVER Well, well, I'll pay his debts - and his benevolence too. But now I am no more a broker, I shall introduce myself to the elder brother in the character of old Stanley.

Enter TRIP

TRIP Oh, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out; this way. Credit, a word.

CREDIT Aye, aye. – I bid you farewell, 'Little Premium'.

Exeunt TRIP and CREDIT

SIR OLIVER There's a precious rogue for you! And would you believe it, the footman intercepted Credit on our coming and wanted to raise money before he got to his master?

ROWLEY Indeed.

SIR OLIVER Yes, they are now planning an annuity business. Master Rowley, in my days bankers knew their place and servants were like to be content with the manifold follies of their masters.

ROWLEY Indeed.

Exeunt

Scene 10 [Act4 Sc3]

The library in Joseph's house
JOSEPH and WILLIAM

JOSEPH No letter from Lady Teazle?

WILLIAM No, sir.

JOSEPH *[Aside]* I am surprised she has not sent, if she is prevented from coming. Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me. Yet, I wish I may not lose the heiress, through the scrape I have drawn myself in with the wife.

Knocking heard without

WILLIAM Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

JOSEPH See whether it is or not before you go to the door; should it be anyone else I am out for the day.

WILLIAM *[At the window]* 'Tis her ladyship, sir; I suspect she has left her chair in the next street.

JOSEPH Stay, stay. Draw that screen before the window – *[aside]* My opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so anxious a temper - That will do.

WILLIAM draws the screen, and exits

I have a difficult hand to play in this affair. Lady Teazle has lately suspected my views on Maria, but she must by no means be let into that secret - at least, not till I have broken her in.

Enter LADY TEAZLE

L. TEAZLE What! Sentiment in soliloquy now? Have you been very impatient? I vow I couldn't come before.

JOSEPH Oh, madam, punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.

L. TEAZLE Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you know Sir Peter is grown so ill-tempered to me of late - and is now become jealous

of Charles too! That's the best of the story, isn't it?

- JOSEPH *[Aside]* I am glad my scandalous friends have fashioned that.
- L. TEAZLE I am sure I wish he would let Maria marry him and then perhaps he would be convinced; don't you, Mr Surface?
- JOSEPH *[Aside]* Indeed I do not. *[Aloud]* Oh, certainly I do. For then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly girl.
- L. TEAZLE Well, well, I'm inclined to believe you. But isn't it provoking to have the most ill-natured things said to one? And there's my friend Lady Sneerwell circulating I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too. That's what vexes me.
- JOSEPH Aye, madam, to be sure, that's the provoking circumstance - without foundation. Yes, yes, there's the mortification, indeed; for, when a scandalous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it.
- L. TEAZLE No, to be sure, then I'd forgive their malice. But to attack me, who am really so innocent and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody - that is, of any friend; and then Sir Peter, too, to have him so peevish and so suspicious, when I know the integrity of my own heart - indeed, 'tis monstrous!
- JOSEPH But, my dear Lady Teazle, 'tis your own fault if you suffer it. When a husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his wife and withdraws his confidence from her, the original compact is broken; and she owes it to the honour of her sex to outwit him.
- L. TEAZLE Indeed? So that, if he suspects me without cause, it follows that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for it?
- JOSEPH Undoubtedly - for your husband should never be deceived in you; and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment to his discernment.
- L. TEAZLE To be sure, what you say is very reasonable, and when the consciousness of my own innocence -
- JOSEPH Ah, my dear madam, there is the great mistake! What is it makes you negligent of forms, and careless of the world's opinion? Why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct, and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences? Why, the consciousness of your own innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper, and so outraged at his suspicions? Why, the consciousness of your innocence.
- L. TEAZLE 'Tis very true.
- JOSEPH My dear Lady Teazle, if you would but once make a trifling *faux pas*, you can't conceive how cautious you would grow, and how

ready to humour and agree with your husband.

L. TEAZLE Do you think so?

JOSEPH I am sure on't; and then you would find all scandal would cease at once, for, in short, your character at present is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying from too much health.

L. TEAZLE So, so; then I perceive your prescription is that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to secure my reputation?

JOSEPH Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am.

L. TEAZLE Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny.

JOSEPH An infallible one, believe me. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.

L. TEAZLE Why, if my understanding were once convinced –

JOSEPH Oh, certainly, madam, your understanding should be convinced. Heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you thought wrong. I have too much honour to desire it.

L. TEAZLE Don't you think we may as well leave honour out of the argument?

JOSEPH Ah, the ill effects of your country education, I see, still remain with you.

L. TEAZLE I fear they do indeed; and I will fairly own to you that if I could be persuaded to do wrong, it would be by Sir Peter's ill usage sooner than by your honourable logic.

JOSEPH Then let my knowledge of the town be your guide. Only let your morals be corrupted to ensure your good name.

L. TEAZLE Nay, sir, you go too far. I am sure 'tis not fashionable.

JOSEPH I would go further, madam – I am at your service.

L. TEAZLE Pray, sir, keep your distance -

Enter WILLIAM

JOSEPH 'Sdeath, you blockhead - what do you want?

WILLIAM I beg your pardon, sir, but I thought you wouldn't choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him.

JOSEPH Sir Peter! Oons - the devil!

Both rise

L. TEAZLE Sir Peter! O lud, I'm ruined! I'm ruined!

WILLIAM Sir, 'twasn't I let him in.

L. TEAZLE Oh, I'm undone! What will become of me now, Mr Logic? Oh, mercy, he's on the stairs. I'll get behind here - and if ever I'm so imprudent again –

She hides behind the screen

JOSEPH Give me a book.

He sits down. Enter SIR PETER

SIR PETER *[Aside]* Aye, ever improving himself! - Mr Surface, Mr Surface!

JOSEPH Oh, my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon. I have been dozing over a stupid book. I am much obliged to you for this call. You haven't been here, I believe, since I fitted up this room. Books, you know, are the only things I am a coxcomb in.

SIR PETER 'Tis very neat indeed. Well, well, that's proper; and you make even your screen a source of knowledge - hung, I perceive, with maps.

JOSEPH Oh, yes, I find great use in that screen.

SIR PETER I dare say you must. Certainly when you want to find anything in a hurry.

JOSEPH *[Aside]* Aye, or to hide anything in a hurry either.

SIR PETER Well, I have a little private business -

JOSEPH *[To WILLIAM]* You needn't stay.

WILLIAM No, sir.

Exit

JOSEPH Here's a chair, Sir Peter. I beg -

SIR PETER Well, now we are alone, there is a subject, my dear friend, on which I wish to unburden my mind to you - a point of the greatest moment to my peace; in short, my dear friend, Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy.

JOSEPH Indeed? I am very sorry to hear it.

SIR PETER Aye, 'tis too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what's worse, I now have pretty good authority to suppose she must have formed an attachment to another.

JOSEPH You astonish me!

SIR PETER Yes; and, between ourselves, I think I've discovered the person.

JOSEPH You alarm me exceedingly.

SIR PETER What say you to Charles?

JOSEPH My brother! Impossible!

SIR PETER My dear friend, the goodness of your own heart misleads you. You judge of others by yourself.

JOSEPH Yet I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.

SIR PETER Aye, but what is principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?

- JOSEPH *[Aside]* That's very true.
- SIR PETER And then, you know, the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have any very great affection for me; and, if she were to be frail, and I were to make it public, why, the town would only laugh at me - the foolish old bachelor who had married a girl.
- JOSEPH No, you must never make it public.
- SIR PETER But then, again, that the nephew of my old friend, Sir Oliver, should be the person to attempt such a wrong, hurts me more nearly.
- JOSEPH Oh, 'tis not to be credited! There may be a man capable of such baseness, to be sure; but, for my part, till you can give me positive proofs, I cannot but doubt it. However, if it should be proved on him, I disclaim kindred with him; for the man who can break the laws of hospitality and attempt the wife of his friend, deserves to be branded as the pest of society.
- SIR PETER What a difference there is between you. What noble sentiments!
- JOSEPH Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.
- SIR PETER I am sure I wish to think well of her and to remove all ground of quarrel between us. She has lately reproached me more than once with having made no settlement on her, and in our last quarrel she almost hinted that she should not break her heart if I was dead. Now, as we seem to differ in our ideas of expense, I have resolved she shall be her own mistress in that respect for the future. Here, my friend, are the drafts of two deeds, which I wish to have your opinion on. By one she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live; and, by the other, the bulk of my fortune at my death.
- JOSEPH This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous. *[Aside]* I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.
- SIR PETER I am determined she shall have no cause to complain - though I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.
- JOSEPH *[Aside]* Nor I, if I could help it.
- SIR PETER And now, my dear friend, if you please, we will talk over the situation of your affairs with Maria.
- JOSEPH *[Softly]* Oh, no, Sir Peter! Another time, if you please.
- SIR PETER I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affection.
- JOSEPH *[Softly]* I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate! *[Aside]*

'Sdeath, I shall be ruined every way.

SIR PETER And though you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with your passion for Maria, I'm sure she's not your enemy in the affair.

JOSEPH Pray, Sir Peter, now, oblige me. I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking of, to bestow a thought on my own concerns -

Enter WILLIAM

Well, sir?

WILLIAM Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street, and says he knows you are within.

JOSEPH 'Sdeath, blockhead - I'm not within. I'm out for the day.

SIR PETER Stay. A thought has struck me. You *shall* be at home.

JOSEPH Well, well, let him up.

Exit WILLIAM

[Aside] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however.

SIR PETER My good friend, oblige me, I entreat you. Before Charles comes, let me conceal myself somewhere; then do you tax him on the point we have been talking on, and his answers may satisfy me at once.

JOSEPH Oh, fie, Sir Peter! Would you have me join in so mean a trick - to trepan my brother?

SIR PETER You tell me you are sure he is innocent; if so, you do him the greatest service by giving him an opportunity to clear himself, and you will set my heart at rest. Come, you shall not refuse me. Here, behind this screen will be - Hey! What the devil! There seems to be one listener there already. I'll swear I saw a petticoat.

JOSEPH Ha, ha! Well, this is ridiculous enough. I'll tell you, Sir Peter, though I hold a man of intrigue to be a most despicable character, yet you know it doesn't follow that one is to be an absolute Joseph either. Hark'ee, 'tis a little French milliner, a silly rogue that plagues me - and having some character on your coming, sir, she ran behind the screen.

SIR PETER You rogue! But, egad, she has overheard all I have been saying of my wife.

JOSEPH Oh, 'twill never go any farther, you may depend upon't. She's French.

SIR PETER No? Then i'faith let her hear it out. Here's a closet will do as well.

JOSEPH Well, go in then.

SIR PETER Sly rogue! Sly rogue!

He goes into the closet

- JOSEPH A curious situation I'm in, to part man and wife in this manner.
- L. TEAZLE *[Peeping front the screen]* Couldn't I steal off?
- JOSEPH Keep close, my angel.
- SIR PETER *[Peeping]* Joseph, tax him home.
- JOSEPH Back, my dear friend.
- L. TEAZLE *[Peeping]* Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?
- JOSEPH Be still, my life.
- SIR PETER *[Peeping]* You're sure the little milliner won't blab?
- JOSEPH In, in, my good Sir Peter. 'Fore Gad, I wish I had a key to this door. (I wish I had a door!)
- Enter CHARLES*
- CHARLES Hullo, brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow would not let me up at first. Have you had a priest or a wench with you?
- JOSEPH Neither, brother, I assure you.
- CHARLES But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.
- JOSEPH He was brother, but hearing you were coming he did not choose to stay.
- CHARLES What, was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?
- JOSEPH No, sir. But I am sorry to find, Charles, you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.
- CHARLES Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men. But how so, pray?
- JOSEPH To be plain with you, brother, he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.
- CHARLES Who, I? O lud, not I, upon my word. Ha, ha! So the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he? Or, what is worse, her ladyship has found out she has an old husband?
- JOSEPH This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh –
- CHARLES True, true, as you were going to say. Seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.
- JOSEPH *[Aloud]* Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear it.
- CHARLES Upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement. Besides, you know my attachment to Maria. And egad brother, you surprise me exceedingly by naming me with Lady Teazle; for, faith, I always understood you were her favourite.

JOSEPH Oh, for shame, Charles! This retort is foolish.

CHARLES Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such significant glances -

JOSEPH Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest -

CHARLES Egad, I'm serious. Don't you remember, one day, when I called in at Lady Sneerwell's -

JOSEPH Nay, prithee, Charles -

CHARLES When I found you together -

JOSEPH Zounds, sir, I insist -

CHARLES And another time -

JOSEPH *[Aside]* Gad, I must stop him.

CHARLES That day in the Park, when -

JOSEPH Hush! I beg your pardon, brother, but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I should not have consented.

CHARLES How, Sir Peter! Where is he?

JOSEPH Softly. *[Points to the closet]* There!

CHARLES Oh, 'fore Heaven, I'll have him out. Sir Peter, come forth!

JOSEPH No, no -

CHARLES I say, Sir Peter, come into court. *[Pulls in SIR PETER]* What! My old guardian! What, turn inquisitor and take evidence *incog.*?

SIR PETER Give me your hand, Charles. I believe I have suspected you wrongfully; but you mustn't be angry with Joseph. 'Twas my plan.

CHARLES Indeed!

SIR PETER But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did. What I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

CHARLES Egad, then, 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more. *[Apart to JOSEPH]* Wasn't it Joseph?

SIR PETER Ah, you would have retorted on him.

CHARLES Aye, aye, that was a joke.

SIR PETER Yes, yes, I know his honour too well.

CHARLES But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter for all that. Mightn't he, Joseph?

SIR PETER Well, well, I believe you.

JOSEPH *[Aside]* Would they were both out of the room!

Enter WILLIAM and whispers to JOSEPH

- SIR PETER And in future, perhaps, we may not be such strangers.
Exit WILLIAM
- JOSEPH Gentlemen, I beg your pardon. I must wait on you downstairs.
Here is a person come on particular business.
- CHARLES Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I have not
met a long time, and I have something to say to him.
- JOSEPH *[Aside]* They must not be left together. *[Aloud]* I'll send this man
away and return directly. *[Apart to SIR PETER]* Sir Peter, not a
word of the French milliner.
- SIR PETER *[Apart to JOSEPH]* I? Not for the world.
Exit JOSEPH
- Ah, Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might
indeed hope for your reformation. There is nothing in the world so
noble as a man of sentiment.
- CHARLES Pshaw, he is too moral by half - and so apprehensive of his good
name, as he calls it, that I suppose he would as soon let a priest
into his house as a girl.
- SIR PETER No! Come, come! You wrong him. Joseph is no rake, but he is no
saint either in that respect. *[Aside]* I have a great mind to tell him.
We should have such a laugh.
- CHARLES Oh, hang him, he's a very anchorite, a young hermit.
- SIR PETER *[Aside]* Egad, I'll tell him. *[Aloud]* Hark'ee, have you a mind to
have a good laugh at Joseph?
- CHARLES I should like it of all things.
- SIR PETER Then, i'faith, we will! *[Aside]* I'll be quit with him for discovering
me. *[Aloud]* He had a girl with him when I called.
- CHARLES What! Joseph? You jest.
- SIR PETER Hush! A little French milliner. And the best of the jest is - she's in
the room now.
- CHARLES The devil she is !
- SIR PETER Hush! I tell you.
He points to the screen
- CHARLES Behind the screen! 'Slife, let's unveil her.
- SIR PETER No, no, he's coming - you shan't indeed.
- CHARLES Come, we'll have a peep at the little milliner.
- SIR PETER Not for the world! Joseph will never forgive me.
- CHARLES I'll stand by you.
- SIR PETER Odds, here he is!

JOSEPH enters just as CHARLES throws down the screen

- CHARLES Lady Teazle - by all that's wonderful!
- SIR PETER Lady Teazle, by all that's damnable!
- CHARLES Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French milliners I ever saw. Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at hide and seek - and I don't see who is out of the secret. Shall I beg your ladyship to inform me? Not a word! Brother, will you be pleased to explain this matter? What, is morality dumb too? Sir Peter, though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now? All mute. Well, though I can make nothing of the affair, I suppose you perfectly understand one another. So I'll leave you to yourselves. *[Going]* Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man cause for so much uneasiness. Sir Peter, there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment!
- Exit CHARLES. They stand for some time looking at each other*
- JOSEPH Sir Peter, notwithstanding I confess that appearances are against me, if you will afford me your patience, I make no doubt but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.
- SIR PETER If you please, sir.
- JOSEPH The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward, Maria - I say, sir - Lady Teazle, being apprehensive of the jealousy of your temper - and knowing my friendship to the family - she, sir, I say - called here - in order that - I might explain these pretensions - but on your coming - being apprehensive - as I said - of your jealousy - she withdrew - and this, you may depend on it, is the whole truth of the matter.
- SIR PETER A very clear account, upon my word; and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.
- L. TEAZLE For not one word of it, Sir Peter.
- SIR PETER How? Don't you even think it worth while to agree in the lie?
- L. TEAZLE There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.
- SIR PETER I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am.
- JOSEPH *[Aside to Lady Teazle]* 'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me?
- L. TEAZLE Good Mr Hypocrite, by your leave, I'll speak for myself.
- SIR PETER Aye, let her alone, sir; you'll find she'll make out a better story than you without prompting.
- L. TEAZLE Hear me, Sir Peter! I came hither on no matter relating to your ward, and even ignorant of this gentleman's pretensions to her. I came seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his

pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness.

SIR PETER Now I believe the truth is coming indeed!

JOSEPH The woman's mad!

L. TEAZLE No, sir, she has recovered her senses, and your own arts have furnished her with the means. Sir Peter, I do not expect you to credit me, but the tenderness you expressed for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated so to my heart that had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongued hypocrite, who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous friend, while he affected honourable addresses to his ward - I behold him now in a light so truly despicable that I shall never again respect myself for having listened to him.

Exit

JOSEPH Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, Heaven knows -

SIR PETER That you are a villain! And so I leave you to your conscience.

Exit

JOSEPH You are too rash, Sir Peter; you shall hear me. *[Disappearing after Sir Peter]* The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to attend to one whose sentiments have ever been sincerely directed towards your own best -

SIR PETER *[Off]* Villain, sir! Villainy, all villainy!

Scene 11 [Act5 Sc1]

The Same

Enter JOSEPH and WILLIAM

JOSEPH Mr Stanley! From Dublin? Why should you think I would see him? You must know what he comes for.

WILLIAM Sir, I should not have let him in, but that Mr Rowley came to the door with him.

JOSEPH Pshaw, blockhead! To suppose that I should now be in a temper to receive visits from poor, Irish relations! Well, why don't you show the fellow up?

WILLIAM I will, sir. Why, sir, it was not my fault that Sir Peter discovered my lady -

JOSEPH Go, fool!

Exit WILLIAM

Sure, Fortune never played a man of my policy such a trick before. My character with Sir Peter, my hopes with Maria, destroyed in a

moment! I shan't be able to bestow even a benevolent sentiment on Stanley. – Here he comes and Rowley with him. I must try to recover myself so I may wear a little charity in my face, however.

Exit

Enter WILLIAM with SIR OLIVER and ROWLEY

SIR OLIVER What, does he avoid us? That was he, was it not?

ROWLEY It was, sir. I fear you are come a little too abruptly.

Exit WILLIAM after JOSEPH

His nerves are so weak that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him.

SIR OLIVER Oh, plague of his nerves! Yet this is he whom Sir Peter extols as a man of the most benevolent way of thinking.

ROWLEY As to that, I cannot pretend to decide; to do him justice, he appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, though he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

Enter WILLIAM

But he's coming. You know immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character.

SIR OLIVER True, and afterwards you'll meet me at Sir Peter's.

ROWLEY Without losing a moment.

Exit

Enter JOSEPH

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* I don't like the complaisance of his features.

JOSEPH Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting. Mr Stanley, I presume.

SIR OLIVER At your service.

JOSEPH Sir, I beg you will do me the honour to sit down. I entreat you, sir.

SIR OLIVER Dear sir, there's no occasion. *[Aside]* Too civil by half.

JOSEPH I have not the pleasure of knowing you, Mr Stanley, but I am extremely happy to see you look so well. You were nearly related to my mother, I think?

SIR OLIVER I was, sir; so nearly that my present distress, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children; else I should not have presumed to trouble you.

JOSEPH Dear sir, there needs no apology. He that is in distress, though a stranger, has a right to claim kindred with the wealthy. I am sure I wish I was of that class and had it in my power to offer you even a

small relief.

SIR OLIVER If your uncle, Sir Oliver, were here, I should have a friend.

JOSEPH I wish he was, sir, with all my heart. You should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir.

SIR OLIVER I should not need one - my distresses would recommend me. But I imagined his bounty had enabled you to become the agent of his charity.

JOSEPH My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed. Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy man; but avarice, Mr Stanley, is the vice of age. I will tell you, my good sir, in confidence, what he has done for me has been a mere nothing; though people, I know, have thought otherwise, and for my part I never chose to contradict the report.

SIR OLIVER What! Has he never transmitted you bullion – gold, or silver rupees?

JOSEPH Oh, dear sir, nothing of the kind! No, no. A few presents now and then - china, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and India crackers. Little more, believe me.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Here's gratitude for twelve thousand pounds! Avadavats and India crackers !

JOSEPH Then, my dear sir, you have heard, I doubt not, of the extravagance of my brother. There are very few would credit what I have done for that unfortunate young man.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Not I, for one!

JOSEPH The sums I have lent him! Indeed I have been exceedingly to blame. It was an amiable weakness; however, I don't pretend to defend it. And now I feel it doubly culpable, since it has deprived me of the pleasure of serving you, Mr Stanley, as my heart dictates.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Dissembler! *[Aloud]* Then, sir, you can't assist me'?

JOSEPH At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but, whenever I have the ability, you may depend upon hearing from me.

SIR OLIVER I am extremely sorry -

JOSEPH Not more than I, believe me. To pity without the power to relieve is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

SIR OLIVER Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.

JOSEPH You leave me deeply affected, Mr Stanley. William, be ready to open the door.

SIR OLIVER Oh, dear sir, no ceremony.

JOSEPH Your very obedient -

SIR OLIVER Sir, your most obsequious -

JOSEPH You may depend upon hearing from me, whenever I can be of service.

SIR OLIVER Sweet sir, you are too good !

JOSEPH In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.

SIR OLIVER Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.

JOSEPH Sir, yours as sincerely.

SIR OLIVER *[Aside]* Charles, you are my heir!

Exit

JOSEPH *[Alone]* This is one bad effect of a good character; it invites application from the unfortunate, and there needs no small degree of address to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities; whereas the sentimental French plate I use instead of it makes just as good a show and pays no tax.

Enter ROWLEY

ROWLEY Mr Surface, your servant. I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention as this note will inform you.

JOSEPH Always happy to see Mr Rowley. *[Aside]* Rascal! *[Reads]* How? 'Oliver Surface'! - my uncle arrived?

ROWLEY He is, indeed. Quite well after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

JOSEPH I am astonished. William, stop Mr Stanley, if he's not gone.

ROWLEY Oh, he's out of reach, I believe.

JOSEPH Why didn't you let me know this when you came in together?

ROWLEY I thought you had particular business. But I must be gone to inform your brother and appoint him here to meet his uncle. He will be with you in a quarter of an hour.

JOSEPH So he says. Well, I am strangely overjoyed at his coming. *[Aside]* Never to be sure was anything so damned unlucky!

ROWLEY I'll tell him how impatiently you expect him.

JOSEPH Do, do. Pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed, I cannot express the sensation I feel at the thought of seeing him!

Exit ROWLEY

[Alone] Certainly his coming just at this time is the cruellest piece

of ill fortune. Sir Peter undeceived puts my fortunes at peril.

Exit

Scene 12 [Act5 Sc2]

Sir Peter Teazle's
MRS CANDOUR and MAID

MAID Indeed, ma'am, my lady will see nobody at present.

CANDOUR Did you tell her it was her friend Mrs Candour?

MAID Yes, ma'am; but she begs you will excuse her.

CANDOUR Do go again. I shall be glad to see her if it be only for a moment, for I am sure she must be in great distress.

Exit MAID

Dear heart, how provoking! I'm not mistress of half the circumstances. We shall have the whole affair in the newspapers before I have dropped the story at a dozen houses.

Enter BACKBITE

Oh, Sir Benjamin, you have heard, I suppose -

BACKBITE Of Lady Teazle and Mr Surface -

CANDOUR And Sir Peter's discovery -

BACKBITE Oh, the strangest piece of business, to be sure!

CANDOUR Well, I never was so surprised in my life. I am so sorry for all parties, indeed I am.

BACKBITE Now, I don't pity Sir Peter at all; he was so extravagantly partial to Mr Joseph.

CANDOUR Mr Joseph! Why, 'twas with Charles Lady Teazle was detected.

BACKBITE No, no, I tell you; Mr Joseph is the gallant.

CANDOUR No such thing! Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr Joseph brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

BACKBITE I tell you I had it from one -

CANDOUR And I have it from one -

BACKBITE Who had it from one, who had it -

CANDOUR From one immediately. But here is Lady Sneerwell; perhaps she knows the whole affair.

Enter LADY SNEERWELL

SNEERWELL So, my dear Mrs Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle.

CANDOUR Aye, my dear friend, who would have thought -

- SNEERWELL Well, there is no trusting appearances, though indeed she was always too lively for me.
- CANDOUR To be sure, her manners were a little too free; but then she was so young!
- SNEERWELL And had, indeed, some good qualities.
- CANDOUR So she had, indeed. But have you heard the particulars?
- SNEERWELL No; but everybody says that Mr Joseph -
- BACKBITE Aye, there I told you Mr Joseph was the man.
- CANDOUR No, no; indeed, the assignation was with Charles.
- SNEERWELL With Charles? You alarm me, Mrs Candour!
- CANDOUR Yes, yes; he was the lover. Mr Joseph, do him justice, was only the informer.
- BACKBITE Well, I'll not dispute with you, Mrs Candour; but, be it which it may, I hope that Sir Peter's wound will not -
- CANDOUR Sir Peter's wound! Oh, mercy! I didn't hear a word of their fighting.
- SNEERWELL Nor I, not a syllable.
- BACKBITE No? What, no mention of the duel?
- CANDOUR Not a word.
- BACKBITE Oh, Lord, yes. They fought before they left the room.
- SNEERWELL Pray let us hear.
- CANDOUR Aye, do oblige us with the duel.
- BACKBITE 'Sir', says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, 'you are a most ungrateful fellow'.
- CANDOUR Aye, to Charles -
- BACKBITE No, no, to Mr Joseph. 'A most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir', says he, 'I insist on immediate satisfaction'.
- CANDOUR Aye, that must have been to Charles; for 'tis very unlikely Mr Joseph should go to fight in his own house.
- BACKBITE Gad's life, ma'am, not at all - 'Immediate satisfaction'. On this, ma'am, Lady Teazle, seeing Sir Peter in such danger, ran out of the room in strong hysterics, and Charles after her, calling out for hartshorn and water. Then, madam, they began to fight with swords -
- Enter CRABTREE*
- CRABTREE With pistols, nephew - pistols. I have it from undoubted authority.
- CANDOUR Oh, Mr Crabtree, then it is all true?

CRABTREE Too true, indeed, madam, and Sir Peter is dangerously wounded -

BACKBITE By a thrust *en segoon* quite through his left side -

CRABTREE By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

CANDOUR Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

CRABTREE Yes, madam; though Charles would have avoided the matter, if he could.

CANDOUR I knew Charles was the person.

BACKBITE My uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

CRABTREE But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude.

BACKBITE That I told you, you know -

CRABTREE Do, nephew, let me speak - and insisted on immediate -

BACKBITE Just as I said -

CRABTREE Odds life, nephew, allow others to know something too. A pair of pistols lay on the bureau (for Mr Joseph, it seems, had come home the night before late from Salthill, where he had been to see the Montem with a friend, who has a son at Eton). So, unluckily, the pistols were left charged.

BACKBITE I heard nothing of this.

CRABTREE Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired, it seems, pretty nearly together. Charles's shot took effect, as I told you, and Sir Peter's missed; but, what is very extraordinary, the ball struck against a little bronze Pliny that stood over the fireplace, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman, who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire.

BACKBITE My uncle's account is more circumstantial, I confess; but I believe mine is the true one, for all that.

SNEERWELL *[Aside]* I am more interested in this affair than they imagine and must have better information.

Exit SNEERWELL

BACKBITE *[After a pause looking at each other]* Ah, Lady Sneerwell's alarm is very easily accounted for.

CRABTREE Yes, yes, they certainly do say - but that's neither here nor there.

CANDOUR But, pray, where is Sir Peter at present?

CRABTREE Oh, they brought him home, and he is now in the house, though the servants are ordered to deny it.

CANDOUR I believe so, and Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending him.

CRABTREE Yes, yes. I saw one of the faculty enter just before me.

BACKBITE Hey! Who comes here?

CRABTREE Oh, this is he - the physician, depend on't.

Enter SIR OLIVER

Well, doctor, what hopes?

CANDOUR Aye, doctor, how's your patient?

BACKBITE Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a small sword?

CRABTREE A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred!

SIR OLIVER Doctor! A wound with a small sword! A bullet in the thorax? Oons! Are you mad, good people?

BACKBITE Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor?

SIR OLIVER I am to thank you for my degree, if I am.

CRABTREE Only a friend of Sir Peter's, then, I presume. But, sir, you must have heard of his accident?

SIR OLIVER Not a word !

CRABTREE Not of his being dangerously wounded?

SIR OLIVER The devil he is !

BACKBITE Run through the body -

CRABTREE Shot in the breast -

BACKBITE By one Mr Surface -

CRABTREE Aye, the younger.

SIR OLIVER What the plague, you seem to differ strangely in your accounts. However you agree that Sir Peter is dangerously wounded.

BACKBITE Oh, yes, we agree there.

CRABTREE Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.

SIR OLIVER Then, upon my word, for a person in that situation he is the most imprudent man alive; for here he comes, walking as if nothing at all was the matter.

Enter SIR PETER

Odds heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I promise you; for we had just given you over.

BACKBITE Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!

SIR OLIVER Why, man, what do you out of bed with a small sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax?

SIR PETER A small sword, and a bullet?

SIR OLIVER Aye, these gentlemen would have killed you without law or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor to make me an accomplice.

- SIR PETER Why, what is all this?
- BACKBITE We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortune.
- SIR PETER *[Aside]* So, so. All over the town already.
- CRABTREE Though, Sir Peter, you were certainly vastly to blame to marry at all at your years.
- SIR PETER Sir, what business is that of yours?
- CANDOUR Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied.
- SIR PETER Plague on your pity, ma'am! I desire none of it.
- BACKBITE However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet on this occasion.
- SIR PETER Sir, I desire to be master in my own house.
- CRABTREE 'Tis no uncommon case; that's one comfort.
- SIR PETER I insist on being left to myself. Without ceremony I insist on your leaving my house directly!
- CANDOUR Well, well, we are going - and depend on't, we'll make the best report of you we can.
- SIR PETER Leave my house!
- CRABTREE And tell how hardly you have been treated.
- SIR PETER Leave my house!
- BACKBITE And how patiently you bear it.
- SIR PETER Fiends! Vipers! Furies! Oh, that their own venom would choke them!
- Exeunt CANDOUR, BACKBITE & CRABTREE*
- SIR OLIVER They are very provoking indeed, Sir Peter.
- Enter ROWLEY*
- ROWLEY I heard high words - what has ruffled you, Sir Peter?
- SIR PETER Pshaw! What signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?
- ROWLEY Well, I'm not inquisitive.
- SIR OLIVER Well, Sir Peter, I have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.
- SIR PETER A precious couple they are!
- ROWLEY Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgment was right, Sir Peter.
- SIR OLIVER Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.

ROWLEY Aye, as Sir Peter says, he is a Man of Sentiment.

SIR OLIVER And acts up to the sentiments he professes.

ROWLEY It certainly is edification to hear him talk.

SIR OLIVER Oh, he's a model for the young men of the age! But how's this, Sir Peter, you don't join us in your friend Joseph's praise, as I expected.

SIR PETER Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better.

ROWLEY What? Do you say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?

SIR PETER Pshaw! Plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you.

ROWLEY Then, to fret you no longer, Sir Peter, we are indeed acquainted with it all. I met Lady Teazle coming from Mr Surface's so humbled that she deigned to request me to be her advocate with you.

SIR PETER And does Sir Oliver know all this?

SIR OLIVER Every circumstance.

SIR PETER What? Of the closet and the screen, hey?

SIR OLIVER Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. Oh, I have been vastly diverted with the story! Ha, ha, ha!

SIR PETER 'Twas very pleasant .

SIR OLIVER I never laughed more in my life, I assure you. Ha, ha, ha!

SIR PETER Oh, vastly diverting. Ha, ha, ha!

ROWLEY To be sure, Joseph with his sentiments! Ha, ha, ha!

SIR PETER Yes, yes, his sentiments! Ha, ha, ha! Hypocritical villain.

SIR OLIVER Aye, and that rogue Charles to pull Sir Peter out of the closet! Ha, ha, ha!

SIR PETER Ha, ha! 'Twas devilish entertaining, to be sure.

SIR OLIVER Ha, ha, ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down. Ha, ha!

SIR PETER Yes, yes, my face when the screen was thrown down. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, I must never show my head again.

SIR OLIVER But, come, come, it isn't fair to laugh at you neither, my old friend, though, upon my soul, I can't help it.

SIR PETER Oh, pray don't restrain your mirth on my account. It does not hurt me at all. I laugh at the whole affair myself. Yes, yes, I think being a standing jest for all one's acquaintance a very happy situation.

Oh, yes, and then of a morning to read the paragraphs about 'Mr S', 'Lady T', and 'Sir P' will be so entertaining.

ROWLEY Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools.

LADY TEAZLE enters, sees company and exits

Ah, Lady Teazle! – [To SIR PETER] I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does.

SIR OLIVER Perhaps my being here prevents her speaking to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you; but he must bring you all presently to my nephew Joseph's, where I am now returning, if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy.

SIR PETER Ah, I'll be present at your discovering yourself there with all my heart, though 'tis a vile unlucky place for discoveries.

ROWLEY We'll follow.

Exit SIR OLIVER

SIR PETER She is not coming back, you see, Rowley.

ROWLEY No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears.

SIR PETER Certainly a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. Don't you think it will do her good to let her pine a little?

ROWLEY Oh this is ungenerous in you.

SIR PETER Well, I know not what to think. You remember, Rowley, the letter I found addressed to her from Charles?

ROWLEY A mere serpentine forgery, Sir Peter, laid in your way on purpose. This is one of the points which I intend Lady Sneerwell's amanuensis, Mr Snake, shall give you conviction on.

SIR PETER I wish I were once satisfied of that. She looks this way. What a remarkably elegant turn of the head she has! Rowley, I'll go to her.

ROWLEY Certainly.

SIR PETER When it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more.

ROWLEY Let them laugh and retort their malice by showing them you are happy in spite of it.

SIR PETER I'faith, so I will! And, if I'm not mistaken, we may yet be the happiest couple in the country.

ROWLEY Nay, Sir Peter, he who once lays aside suspicion –

SIR PETER Hold, Master Rowley! If you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like a sentiment. I have had enough of them to serve me the rest of my life. *Exeunt*

Scene 13 [Act5 Sc3]

The library in Joseph's house
Enter JOSEPH and SNEERWELL

- SNEERWELL Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles and, of course, no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me.
- JOSEPH Can passion furnish a remedy?
- SNEERWELL No, nor cunning neither. Oh, I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer!
- JOSEPH Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.
- SNEERWELL Because the disappointment doesn't reach your heart; your interest only attached you to Maria. Had you felt for her what I have for that ungrateful libertine, neither your temper nor hypocrisy could prevent your showing the sharpness of your vexation.
- JOSEPH But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment?
- SNEERWELL Are you not the cause of it? What had you to do to pause in your pursuit of Maria to pervert Lady Teazle by the way? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in imposing upon Sir Peter, and supplanting your brother but you must endeavour to seduce his wife? I hate such an avarice of crimes; 'tis an unfair monopoly, and never prospers.
- JOSEPH I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong, but why should I be the one to deny my appetites? And I don't think we're so totally defeated neither.
- SNEERWELL No?
- JOSEPH You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us?
- SNEERWELL I do believe so.
- JOSEPH And that he has undertaken, should it be necessary, to swear and prove that Charles is at this time contracted by vows and honour to your ladyship – that there are letters, convincingly forged, to support it?
- SNEERWELL This, indeed, might assist us.
- JOSEPH Come, then; 'tis not too late yet.

Knocking at the door

This is probably my uncle, Sir Oliver: retire to my closet; we'll consult farther when he's gone.

- SNEERWELL Well, but if he should find you out too?
- JOSEPH Oh, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue for his reputation's sake - and you may depend on't I shall soon discover Sir Oliver's weak side!
- SNEERWELL I have no doubt of your abilities. Only be constant to one roguery at a time!
- Exit*
- JOSEPH I will, I will! - So! 'Tis confounded hard, after such bad fortune, to be baited by one's confederate in evil. Well, at all events my character is so much better than Charles's that I certainly -
- Enter WILLIAM*
- What?
- WILLIAM Mr Stanley, again, sir.
- Exit WILLIAM*
- Stanley! Plague on't that he should return to tease me just now.
- Enter SIR OLIVER*
- Gad's life, Mr Stanley, why have you come back to plague me?
- SIR OLIVER Sir, I hear your uncle Oliver is expected here, and though he has been so penurious to you I'll try what he'll do for me.
- JOSEPH Sir, 'tis impossible for you to stay now, so I must beg - come any other time, and I promise you, you shall be assisted.
- SIR OLIVER No. Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.
- JOSEPH Zounds, sir! I insist on your quitting the room directly.
- SIR OLIVER Nay, sir -
- JOSEPH Sir, I insist on't. William! Show this gentleman out. - Since you compel me, sir, not one moment. This is such insolence.
- Enter CHARLES*
- CHARLES Hey day! What's the matter now? What the devil - have you got hold of my little broker here? Zounds, brother, don't hurt little Premium. What's the matter, my little fellow?
- JOSEPH So, he has been with you too, has he?
- CHARLES To be sure he has. Why, he's as honest a little - but sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you?
- JOSEPH Borrowing? No. But, brother, you know we expect Sir Oliver here every -
- CHARLES O Gad, that's true! Noll mustn't find the little broker here, to be sure.
- JOSEPH Yet, Mr Stanley insists -
- CHARLES Stanley! Why his name is Premium.

JOSEPH No, no, Stanley.

CHARLES No, no, Premium.

JOSEPH Well, no matter which. But -

CHARLES Aye, aye, Stanley or Premium, 'tis the same thing, as you say; for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names.

Knocking again

JOSEPH Death, here's Sir Oliver at the door! Now I beg, Mr Stanley -

CHARLES Aye, aye, and I beg, Mr Premium -

SIR OLIVER Gentlemen -

JOSEPH Sir, by Heaven you shall go.

CHARLES Aye, out with him, certainly.

SIR OLIVER This violence -

JOSEPH Sir, 'tis your own fault.

CHARLES Out with him, to be sure.

Both forcing SIR OLIVER out

Enter SIR PETER and LADY TEAZLE, MARIA and ROWLEY

SIR PETER Hey! What in the name of wonder - assault their uncle at a first visit?

L. TEAZLE Indeed, Sir Oliver, 'twas well we came in to rescue you.

ROWLEY Truly it was; for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of 'poor Stanley' was no protection to you.

SIR OLIVER Nor of 'little Premium' either. The necessities of the former could not extort a shilling from that benevolent gentleman: and now, egad, I stood a chance of faring worse than my ancestors and being knocked down without being bid for.

After a pause, JOSEPH and CHARLES turn to each other

JOSEPH Charles!

CHARLES Joseph!

JOSEPH 'Tis now complete.

CHARLES Very!

SIR OLIVER Sir Peter, my friend, and Rowley, too, look on that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my bounty; you know also how gladly I would have regarded half my fortune as held in trust for him. Judge then my disappointment in discovering him to be destitute of truth, charity, and gratitude.

SIR PETER Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration if I had not myself found him to be mean, treacherous, and hypocritical.

- L. TEAZLE And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call me to his character.
- SIR PETER Then, I believe, we need add no more. If he knows himself, he will consider it as the most perfect punishment that he is known to the world.
- SIR OLIVER As for that prodigal, his brother there -
- CHARLES *[Aside]* Aye, now comes my turn. The damned family pictures will ruin me.
- JOSEPH Sir Oliver, Uncle, will you honour me with a hearing?
- SIR OLIVER I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself entirely?
- JOSEPH I trust I could.
- SIR OLIVER Pshaw! *[To CHARLES]* Well, sir, and you could justify yourself too, I suppose?
- CHARLES Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.
- SIR OLIVER What? Little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I suppose?
- CHARLES True, sir; but they were *family secrets* and should not be mentioned again, you know.
- ROWLEY Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies with anger.
- SIR OLIVER Odd's heart, no more I can - nor with gravity either. Sir Peter, do you know the rogue bargained with me for all his ancestors, sold me judges and generals by the foot and maiden aunts as cheap as broken china?
- CHARLES To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with the family canvas, there's no denying it. But believe me sincere when I tell you, and upon my soul I would not say it if I was not, that if I do not appear mortified at the exposure of my follies, it is because I feel at this moment the warmest satisfaction in seeing you, my liberal benefactor.
- SIR OLIVER Charles, I believe you. Give me your hand again. The ill looking little fellow over the mantel has made your peace.
- CHARLES Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased.
- L. TEAZLE Yet I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.
- SIR OLIVER Oh, I have heard of his attachment there; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right that blush -
- SIR PETER Well, child, speak your sentiments!
- MARIA Sir, I have little to say, but that I would rejoice to hear that Charles

is happy. For me, whatever claim I had to his affection, I willingly resign to one who has a better title.

CHARLES How, Maria!

SIR PETER Hey day! What's the mystery now? When he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and now that he is likely to reform, you won't have him.

MARIA His own heart and Lady Sneerwell know the cause.

CHARLES Lady Sneerwell!

JOSEPH Brother, it is with great concern I am obliged to speak on this point, but my regard to justice compels me, and Lady Sneerwell's injuries can no longer be concealed. My Lady!

Enter SNEERWELL

SIR PETER Another French milliner! Egad, he has one in every room in the house!

SNEERWELL Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised, and feel for the indelicate situation which your perfidy has forced me into.

CHARLES Pray, Uncle, is this another plot of yours? For, as I have life, I don't understand it.

JOSEPH I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear.

ROWLEY Indeed there is, Sir Oliver! Pray walk in, Mr Snake!

JOSEPH What?

Enter SNAKE

ROWLEY I too thought Mr Snake's testimony might be wanted; it happens unluckily, however, that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell, not to support her.

SNEERWELL *[Aside]* Villain! Treacherous to me at last! - Speak, fellow, have you too conspired against me?

SNAKE I beg your ladyship ten thousand pardons. You paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question; but I unfortunately have been offered double to speak the truth.

SIR PETER Plot and counterplot, egad!

SNEERWELL The torments of shame and disappointment on you all!

L. TEAZLE Hold, Lady Sneerwell. Before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken in writing letters from me to Charles, and answering them yourself. And let me also request you to make my respects to the scandalous college of which you are president, and inform them, that Lady Teazle, licentiate, begs leave to return the diploma they gave her, as she

leaves off practice and kills characters no longer.

SNEERWELL You too, madam! Provoking insolent! May your husband live these fifty years.

Exit

SIR PETER Oons! what a Fury!

L. TEAZLE What a malicious creature it is!

SIR PETER Hey! Not for her last wish?

L. TEAZLE Oh, no!

SIR OLIVER Well, sir, and what have you to say now?

JOSEPH Sir, I am so confounded to find that Lady Sneerwell could be guilty of suborning Mr Snake in this manner, to impose on us all that I know not what so say. However, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother I had certainly better follow her directly.

Exit

SIR PETER Moral to the last drop!

SIR OLIVER Marry her, Joseph, if you can! Oil and vinegar, egad! They'll do very well together.

ROWLEY I believe we have no more occasion for Mr Snake at present.

SNAKE Before I go, I beg your pardon once for all for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present.

SIR PETER Well, you have made atonement by a good deed at last.

SNAKE But I must request of the company that it shall never be known.

SIR PETER What the plague! Are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life?

SNAKE Sir, consider. I live by the badness of my character. I have nothing but my infamy to depend on, and, if it were once known that I had been betrayed into an honest action, I should lose every friend I have in the world.

SIR OLIVER Well, well, we'll not traduce you by saying anything in your praise, never fear.

Exit SNAKE

SIR PETER There's a precious rogue! Yet that fellow is a writer and a critic.

L. TEAZLE See, Sir Oliver. There needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria.

CHARLES and MARIA are apart

SIR OLIVER Aye, aye, that's as it should be, and, egad, we'll have the wedding tomorrow morning.

SIR PETER *Od's my life! So be it, I agree.*

CHARLES *Here shall we make a new academy;
A liberal and learned Alma Mater.
Come, Maria, do you pronounce our charter.*

MARIA *Let our teaching follow this direction
To value virtue, to pardon imperfection.
Good nature thrive, let true wit go unfetter'd;
So shall we learn to know each other better.
Yet we shall drive, by strict decree of law,
All Sentiment and Scandal from our door.* *Exeunt*

The Epilogue

Enter Mr Mondahl

Have they gone?
Upon my soul, I never was more shocked,
The town traduced, our ancient freedoms mocked!
Those liberties for which our fathers fought
Our glib, seditious author sets at nought.
Pshaw!
True Britons, we breathe Scandal in our air,
'Tis in our blood to gossip, scoff and jeer.
Ye Gods of Gossip, do you my pen inspire,
I'll write a play shall set the town afire –
"Twitter Agonistes or Scandal Resurrected" -
To physic you whom satire has infected.
What, do you cavil? 'Tis tantamount to treason!
I make no doubt he has some private reason ...

To member of the audience

Yes, you good sir, shall I take this occasion
To publicise your last unwise liaison.

To another member of the audience

And you, dear madam, your secret tête-à-tête -
A word from me, 'tis in the next Gazette.
Ah, but these are trifles, pray do not take alarm.
I take my leave, who never did you harm.

A sound on the iphone

Egad, that's rich!
You must hear this, there rumour's going round -
The Reverend Simper! Mr. Justice Frown!
At three-a-bed with 'Dainty' Mistress Hobby!
You long to hear it? I'll tell you in the lobby.

Exit