

Stage  SCREEN

Director's Amended Text



*The School
For
Scandal*

by Richard Brinsley Sheridan

GREENWICH
THEATRE LONDON

Director's deletion

Director's alteration

A Portrait

Addressed to a lady with the comedy of
The School for Scandal

Tell me, ye prim adepts in scandal's school,
 Who rail by precept and detract by rule,
 Lives there no character so tried, so known,
 So decked with grace, and so unlike your own,
 That even *you* assist her fame to raise, 5
 Approve by envy, and by silence praise?
 Attend! A model shall attract your view,
 Daughters of calumny. I summon *you*.
You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
 Or fond creation of the muse and love. 10
 Attend, ye virgin critics shrewd and sage,
 Ye matron censors of this childish age,
 Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare
 A fixed antipathy to young and fair—
 By cunning cautious, or by nature cold, 15
 In maiden malice virulently bold.
 Attend, ye skilled to coin the precious tale,
 Creating proof, where innuendoes fail;
 Whose practised memories, cruelly exact,
 Omit no circumstance, except the fact! 20
 Attend, all ye who boast, or old or young,
 The living libel of a slanderous tongue!
 So shall my theme as far contrasted be
 As saints by fiends, or hymns by calumny.
 Come, gentle Amoret—for 'neath that name 25
 In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame.
 Come, for but *thee* whom seeks the muse; and while
 Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,
 With timid grace and hesitating eye
 The perfect model which I boast supply! 30
 Vain muse, couldst thou the humblest sketch create
 Of *her*, or slightest charm could imitate,
 Could thy blessed strain, in kindred colours, trace
 The faintest wonder of her form or face,
 Poets would study the immortal line, 35
 And Reynolds own his art subdued by *thine*!

That art, which well might added lustre give
 To nature's best, and heaven's superlative,
 On Granby's cheek might bid new glories rise,
 Or point a purer beam from Devon's eyes! 40
 Hard is the task to shape that beauty's praise,
 Whose judgement scorns the homage flattery pays!
 But, praising Amoret, we cannot err:
 No tongue o'ervalues heaven, or flatters *her*!
 Yet *she*—by fate's perverseness!—she alone 45
 Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise her *own*.
 Adorning fashion, unadorned by dress,
 Simple from taste, and not from carelessness,
 Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,
 Not stiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild, 50
 No state has Amoret, no studied mien.
 She apes no goddess, and she moves no queen!
 The softer charm that in her manner lies
 Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise;
 It justly suits th'expression of her face; 55
 'Tis less than dignity, and more than grace!
 On her pure cheek the native hue is such,
 That, formed by heaven to be admired so much,
 The hand that made her with such partial care
 Might well have fixed a fainter crimson there, 60
 And bade the gentle inmate of her breast,
 Enshrinèd modesty, supply the rest.
 But who the peril of her lips shall paint?
 Strip them of smiles—still, still all words were faint!
 But, moving, love himself appears to teach 65
 Their action, though denied to rule her speech!
 And thou, who seest her speak, and dost not hear,
 Mourn not her distant accents 'scape thine ear.
 Mourn not her distant accents 'scape thine ear.
 Viewing those lips, thou still may'st make pretence
 To judge of what she says, and swear 'tis sense; 70
 Clothed with such grace, with such expression fraught,
 They move in meaning, and they pause in thought!
 But dost thou farther watch, with charmed surprise,
 The mild irresolution of her eyes,
 Curious to mark how frequent they repose 75
 In brief eclipse and momentary close?
 Ah, seest thou not! An ambushed Cupid there,

Too timorous of his charge, with jealous care
 Veils and unveils those beams of heavenly light,
 Too full, too fatal else for mortal sight! 80
 Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
 In pardoning dimples hope a safe retreat.
 What though her peaceful breast should ne'er allow
 Subduing frowns to arm her altered brow,
 By love I swear, and by his gentle wiles, 85
 More fatal still the mercy of her smiles!
 Thus lovely, thus adorned, possessing all
 Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,
 The height of vanity might well be thought
 Prerogative in her, and nature's fault. 90
 Yet gentle Amoret, in mind supreme
 As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme;
 And, half mistrustful of her beauty's store,
 She bars with wit those darts too keen before.
 Graced by those signs which truth delights to own— 95
 The timid blush and mild submitted tone—
 Whate'er she says, though sense appear throughout,
 Bears the unartful hue of female doubt.
 Decked with that charm, how lovely wit appears;
 How graceful science, when that robe she wears! 100
 Such, too, her talents and her bent of mind
 As speak a sprightly heart, by thought refined;
 A taste for mirth, by contemplation schooled,
 A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled;
 A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide; 105
 An awe of talent, which she owns with pride.
 Peace, idle muse! No more thy strain prolong;
 But yield a theme thy warmest praises wrong.
 Just to her merit, though thou canst not raise
 Thy feeble verse, behold th'acknowledged praise 110
 Has spread conviction through the envious train
 And cast a fatal gloom o'er scandal's reign!
 And, lo, each pallid hag, with blistered tongue,
 Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung,
 Owns all the colours just, the outline true, 115
Thee my inspirer, and my model *Crewe*!

The Characters of the Play

Sir Peter Teazle	<i>Mr King</i>
Sir Oliver Surface	<i>Mr Yates</i>
Joseph Surface	<i>Mr Palmer</i>
Charles Surface	<i>Mr Smith</i>
Crabtree	<i>Mr Parsons</i>
Sir Benjamin Backbite	<i>Mr Dodd</i>
Rowley	<i>Mr Aickin</i>
Moses	<i>Mr Baddeley</i>
Trip	<i>Mr Lamash</i>
Snake	<i>Mr Packer</i>
Careless	<i>Mr Farren</i>
Sir Toby Bumper	<i>Mr Gaudry</i>
[Two Gentlemen]	
[Servant to Lady Sneerwell]	
[Servant to Joseph Surface]	
Lady Teazle	<i>Mrs Abington</i>
Maria	<i>Miss P. Hopkins</i>
Lady Sneerwell	<i>Miss Sherry</i>
Mrs Candour	<i>Miss Pope</i>
[Maid to Lady Teazle]	

[SCENE: LONDON]

Prologue

Written by David Garrick, Esq.

Spoken by Mr King

A school for scandal! Tell me, I beseech you,
 Needs there a school this modish art to teach you?
 No need of lessons *now* the knowing think;
 We might as well be taught to eat and drink,
 Caused by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours 5
 Distress our fair ones, let 'em read the papers:
 Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit,
 Crave what you will, there's *quantum sufficit*.
 'Lud', cries my Lady Wormwood, who loves tattle
 And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle. 10
 Just risen at noon, all night at cards, when threshing,
 'Strong tea and scandal! Bless me, how refreshing!
 Give me the papers, Lisp. How bold and free.' [*Sips*]
 "Last night Lord L—" [*Sips*] "was caught with Lady D—."
 For aching heads what charming sal volatile! [*Sips*] 15
 "If Mrs B—will still continue flirting,
 We hope she'll draw, or we'll undraw, the curtain."
 Fine satire poz. In public all abuse it;
 But by ourselves—" [*Sips*] "—our praise we can't refuse it.
 Now, Lisp, read *you*. There at that dash and star.' [*Sips*] 20
 'Yes, ma'am. "A certain lord had best beware,
 Who lives not twenty miles from Grosvenor Square,
 For should he Lady W—find willing,
 Wormwood is bitter—" 'O, that's me. The villain!
 Throw it behind the fire, and never more 25
 Let that vile paper come within my door.'
 Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart;
 To reach *our* feelings, we ourselves must smart.
 Is our young bard so young to think that he
 Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny? 30
 Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
 Alas, the devil is sooner raised than laid.
 So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging;
 Cut scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
 Proud of your smiles, once lavishly bestowed, 35
 Again our young Don Quixote takes the road.

To show his gratitude, he draws his pen,
And seeks this hydra, scandal, in its den,
From his fell gripe the frighted fair to save.
Though he should fall, th'attempt must please the brave.
For your applause, all perils he would through;
He'll fight—that's write—a cavalliero true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for *you*.

Act I: Scene I

Lady Sneerwell's house

LADY SNEERWELL *at the dressing-table*, SNAKE *drinking chocolate*

LADY SNEERWELL The paragraphs, you say, Mr Snake, were all inserted?

SNAKE They were, madam; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.

LADY SNEERWELL Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall? 5

SNAKE That is in as fine a train as your ladyship could wish. In the common course of things, 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.

LADY SNEERWELL Why, truly, Mrs Clackit has a very pretty talent and a great deal of industry. 10

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 being disinherited, of four forced elopements, as many close confinements, nine separate maintenances, and two divorces. 15
Nay, I have more than once traced her causing a *tête-à-tête* in the *Town and Country Magazine*, when the parties perhaps have never seen each other's faces before in the course of their lives.

LADY 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 outline often extravagant. She wants that delicacy of hint and mellowness of sneer which distinguish your ladyship's scandal. 20

LADY SNEERWELL Ah, you are partial, Snake.

SNAKE Not in the least. Everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a look than many can with the most laboured detail, even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it. 25

LADY SNEERWELL Yes, my dear Snake, and 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. 30

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. 35

LADY SNEERWELL I conceive 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 eldest possessing the most amiable character and universally well spoken of, the other 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. Now, on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me why you, the widow of a city knight with a good jointure, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr Surface—and more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria. 40 45 50

LADY SNEERWELL Then, at once to unravel this mystery I must inform you that love has no share whatever in the intercourse between Mr Surface and me.

SNAKE No!

LADY 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. 55

SNAKE Yet still I am more puzzled why you should interest yourself in his success.

LADY SNEERWELL Heavens, how dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto through shame have 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? 60

SNAKE Now indeed your conduct appears consistent. But how came you and Mr Surface so confidential? 65

LADY 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.

SNAKE Yet Sir Peter vows he has not his equal in England; and, above all, he praises him as a man of sentiment. 70

LADY SNEERWELL True, and with the assistance of his sentiments and hypocrisy he has brought him entirely into his interests with regard to Maria.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

Enter SERVANT

SERVANT Mr Surface.

75

LADY SNEERWELL Show him up.

Exit SERVANT

He generally calls about this time; I don't wonder at people's giving him to me for a lover.

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE

JOSEPH SURFACE My dear Lady Sneerwell, how do you do today?—
Mr Snake, your most obedient.

80

LADY 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 SURFACE Madam, it is impossible for me to suspect a man of
Mr Snake's sensibility and discernment.

85

LADY SNEERWELL Well, well, no compliments now; but tell me when you saw your mistress Maria, or—what is more material to me—your brother?

JOSEPH SURFACE I have not seen either since I left you; but I can inform
you that they never meet. Some of your stories have taken a good effect on Maria.

90

LADY SNEERWELL Ah, my dear Snake, the merit of this belongs to you.
—But do your brother's distresses increase?

JOSEPH SURFACE Every hour. I am told he has had another execution
in the house yesterday. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I ever heard of.

95

LADY SNEERWELL Poor Charles!

JOSEPH SURFACE True, madam; notwithstanding his vices, one can't help feeling for him. Ay, poor Charles! I'm sure I wish it was 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—

100

LADY SNEERWELL O lud, you are going to be moral and forget that you are among friends.

105

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 reclaimed, can be so only by a person of your ladyship's superior accomplishments and understanding.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

SNAKE I believe, Lady Sneerwell, here's company coming. I'll go and
copy the letter I mentioned to you. —Mr Surface, your most obedient. 110
JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, your very devoted.

Exit SNAKE

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

LADY SNEERWELL Why so? 115

JOSEPH SURFACE 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.

LADY SNEERWELL And do you think he would betray us?

JOSEPH SURFACE Nothing more likely. Take my word for't, Lady 120
Sneerwell. That fellow hasn't virtue enough to be faithful even to his
own villany. Ha! Maria!

Enter MARIA

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

MARIA O, there is that disagreeable lover of mine, Sir Benjamin
Backbite, has just called at my guardian's with his odious uncle 125
Crabtree, so I slipped out and run hither to avoid them.

LADY SNEERWELL Is that all?

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

LADY SNEERWELL Nay, now you are severe, 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? 130

MARIA O, he has done nothing; but 'tis for what he has said. His
conversation is a perpetual libel on all his acquaintance.

JOSEPH SURFACE Ay, and the worst of it is there is no advantage in not 135
knowing him for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend—
and his uncle's as bad.

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

MARIA For my part, I own, madam, wit loses its respect with me when I
see it in company with malice. What do you think, Mr Surface? 140

JOSEPH SURFACE Certainly, madam, to smile at the jest which plants a
thorn in another's breast is to become a principal in the mischief.

LADY 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 145
stick. What's your opinion, Mr Surface?

JOSEPH SURFACE To be sure, madam, that conversation where the spirit of raillery is suppressed will ever appear tedious and insipid.

LADY SNEERWELL 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. 150

Enter SERVANT

SERVANT Madam, Mrs Candour is below, and, if your ladyship's at leisure, will leave her carriage. 155

LADY SNEERWELL Beg her to walk in.

[*Exit* SERVANT]

Now, Maria, however, here is a character to your taste, for though Mrs Candour is a little talkative, everybody allows her to be the best-natured and best sort of woman.

MARIA Yes; with a very gross affectation of good nature and benevolence she does more mischief than the direct malice of old Crabtree. 160

JOSEPH SURFACE I'faith, 'tis very true, Lady Sneerwell. Whenever I hear the current running again the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Candour undertakes their defence. 165

LADY SNEERWELL Hush, here she is

Enter MRS CANDOUR

MRS 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 SURFACE Just so, indeed, madam. 170

MRS 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 I am very sorry, ma'am, the town has so little to do.

MRS CANDOUR True, true, child; but there's no stopping people's tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it—as I indeed was to learn from the same quarter that your guardian, Sir Peter and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately so well as could be wished. 175

MARIA 'Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

MRS CANDOUR Very true, child; but what's to be done? People will talk; 180

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 is no minding what one hears—though to be sure I had this from very good authority.

MARIA Such reports are highly scandalous. 185

MRS CANDOUR So they are, child. Shameful! Shameful! But the world is so censorious, no character escapes. Lud 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. 190

MARIA I'll answer for't there are no grounds for the report.

MRS CANDOUR O, 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 Casino, though to be sure that matter was never rightly cleared up. 195

JOSEPH SURFACE 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.

MRS CANDOUR To be sure they are. Tale-bearers are as bad as the 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 Clackit assured me Mr and Mrs Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife like the rest of their acquaintances. 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, 200
no; tale-bearers, as I said before, are just as bad as tale-makers. 205

JOSEPH SURFACE Ah, Mrs Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good nature!

MRS CANDOUR I confess, Mr Surface, I cannot bear to hear people attacked behind their backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against one's acquaintances, I own I always love to think the best. By the bye, I hope 'tis not true that your brother is absolutely ruined. 215

JOSEPH SURFACE I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, ma'am.

MRS 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 220

Splint, Captain Quinze and Mr Nickit—all up, I hear, within this week! So, if Charles is undone, he'll find half his acquaintances ruined too; and that, you know, is a consolation.
 JOSEPH SURFACE Doubtless, ma'am, a very great one. 225

Enter SERVANT

SERVANT Mr Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite.

Exit SERVANT

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

Enter CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE

CRABTREE Lady Sneerwell, I kiss your hands.—Mrs Candour, I don't believe you are acquainted with my nephew Sir Benjamin Backbite. 230
 Egad, ma'am, he has a pretty wit, and is a pretty poet too.—Isn't he, Lady Sneerwell?

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE O fie, uncle.

CRABTREE Nay, egad, 'tis true. I'll back him at a rebus or a charade against the best rhymers in the kingdom. Has your ladyship heard the epigram he wrote on Lady Frizzle's feather catching fire? Do, Benjamin, repeat it—or the charade you made last night extempore at Mrs Drowsy's *conversazione*. Come now, your first is the name of a fish, your second a great naval commander, and— 235

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Uncle, now prithee— 240

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

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

SIR BENJAMIN 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. 245

CRABTREE 'Fore heaven, ma'am, they'll immortalize you; you'll be handed down to posterity like Petrarch's Laura or Waller's Sacharissa. 250

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Yes, madam; I think you will like them, when you shall see in a beautiful quarto page, where a neat rivulet of text shall murmur through a meadow of margin. 'Fore Gad, they will be the most elegant things of their kind. 255

- CRABTREE But, ladies, that's true—have you heard the news?
- MRS 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.
- MRS CANDOUR Impossible! 260
- CRABTREE Ask Sir Benjamin.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE 'Tis very true, ma'am. Everything is fixed and the wedding-livery bespoke.
- CRABTREE Yes, and they *do* say there were pressing reasons for't.
- LADY SNEERWELL Why, I *have* heard something of this before. 265
- MRS CANDOUR It can't be, and I wonder anyone should believe such a story of so prudent a lady as Miss Nicely.
- SIR BENJAMIN 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. 270
- MRS CANDOUR Why, to be sure, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prudent lady of her stamp as a fever is generally 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. 275
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE True, madam. There are valetudinarians in reputation as well as constitution, who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air and supply their want of stamina by care and circumspection.
- MRS CANDOUR Well, but this may be all mistake. You know, Sir Benjamin, very trifling circumstances often give rise to the most injurious tales. 280
- 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? 285
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE O, to be sure, the most whimsical circumstance.
- LADY SNEERWELL How was it, pray?
- CRABTREE Why, one evening at Mrs Ponto's assembly, the conversation happened to turn on the difficulty of 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 old dowager Lady 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 laughing. However, 'twas the next morning everywhere 295

- 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 farm-house where the babies were put out to nurse. 300
- LADY 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 SURFACE 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. 305
- JOSEPH SURFACE Charles has been imprudent, sir, to be sure; but I hope no busy people have already prejudiced Sir Oliver against him. He may reform. 310
- SIR BENJAMIN 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. If the Old Jewry were a ward, I believe Charles would be an alderman. No man more popular there. 'Fore Gad, I hear he pays as many annuities as the Irish tontine, and that whenever he's sick they have prayers for the recovery of his health in the synagogue. 315
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Yet no man lives in greater splendour. They tell me, when he entertains his friends he can sit down to dinner with a dozen of his own securities, have a score of tradesmen waiting in the antechamber and an officer behind every guest's chair. 320
- JOSEPH SURFACE This may be entertainment to you, gentlemen; but you pay very little regard to the feelings of a brother. 325
- MARIA [*aside*] Their malice is intolerable.—Lady Sneerwell, I must wish you a good morning, I'm not very well.
- Exit* MARIA
- MRS CANDOUR O, dear, she changed colour very much!
- LADY SNEERWELL Do, Mrs Candour, follow her; she may want assistance. 330
- MRS CANDOUR That I will, with all my soul, ma'am. Poor dear girl, who knows what her situation may be!
- Exit* MRS CANDOUR
- LADY SNEERWELL 'Twas nothing but that she could not bear to hear Charles reflected on, notwithstanding their difference.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE The young lady's penchant is obvious. 335

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

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. Come, I'll assist you.

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Mr Surface, I did not mean to hurt you—but, depend upon't, your brother is utterly undone. [*Going*] 340

CRABTREE O lud, ay, undone as ever man was—can't raise a guinea. [*Going*]

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE And everything sold, I'm told, that was movable. [*Going*]

CRABTREE I have seen one that was at his house. Not a thing left but some empty bottles that were overlooked, and the family pictures, which, I believe, are framed in the wainscot. [*Going*] 345

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE And I'm very sorry to hear also some bad stories against him. [*Going*]

CRABTREE O, he has done many mean things; that's certain! [*Going*] 350

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE But, however, as he's your brother—[*Going*]

CRABTREE We'll tell you all another opportunity.

Exeunt CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE

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

JOSEPH SURFACE And I believe the abuse was no more acceptable to your ladyship than to Maria. 355

LADY SNEERWELL I doubt her affections are farther engaged than we imagined. But the family are to be here this evening, so you may as well dine where you are, and we shall have an opportunity of observing farther. In the meantime, I'll go and plot mischief, and you shall study sentiments. 360

Exeunt

Act I: Scene II

Sir Peter Teazle's house

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 miserable dog ever since that ever committed wedlock. We tiffed a little going to church, and came to a quarrel before the bells were 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 she now plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of the fashion and the town with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass-plat out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by my old acquaintance, paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune and contradicts all my humours. Yet the worst of it is I doubt I love her, or I should never bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.

Enter ROWLEY

ROWLEY O, Sir Peter, your servant. How is it with you, sir?
SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 TEAZLE A good question to a married man.
ROWLEY Nay, I'm sure your lady, Sir Peter, can't be the cause of your uneasiness.
SIR PETER TEAZLE Why, has anyone told you she was dead?
ROWLEY Come, come, Sir Peter! You love her, notwithstanding your tempers do not exactly agree.
SIR PETER TEAZLE But the fault is entirely hers, Master Rowley. I am myself the sweetest-tempered man alive and hate a teasing temper, and so I tell her a hundred times a day.
ROWLEY Indeed!

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay; 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, and absolutely refuses the man whom I have long resolved on for her husband, meaning, I suppose, to bestow herself on his profligate brother. 35

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 opinion of the elder. For Charles—my life on't, he will retrieve his errors yet. Their worthy father, once my honoured master, was at his years nearly as wild a spark; yet, when he died, he did not leave a more benevolent heart to lament his loss. 40

SIR PETER TEAZLE You are wrong, Master Rowley. 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. Of course, no person could have more opportunities of judging 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 the other, take my word for't, if he had any grains of virtue by descent, he has dissipated them with the rest of his inheritance. Ah, my old friend Sir Oliver will be deeply mortified when he finds how part of his bounty has been misapplied! 45 50

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 that will surprise you. 55

SIR PETER TEAZLE What! Let me hear.

ROWLEY Sir Oliver *is* arrived and at this moment in town.

SIR PETER TEAZLE How! You astonish me. I thought you did not expect him this month! 60

ROWLEY I did not, but his passage has been remarkably quick.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Egad, I shall rejoice to see my old friend; 'tis sixteen years since we met. We have had many a day together. But does he still enjoin us not to inform his nephews of his arrival?

ROWLEY Most strictly. He means, before it is known, to make some trial of their dispositions. 65

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ah, there needs no art to discover their merits! However, he shall have his way. But pray, does he know, I am married?

ROWLEY Yes, and will soon wish you joy.

SIR PETER TEAZLE What, as we drink health to a friend in a consumption? Ah, Oliver will laugh at me. We used to rail at 70

matrimony together, but he has been steady to his text. Well, he must be at my house, though; I'll instantly give orders for his reception. But, Master Rowley, don't drop a word that Lady Teazle and I ever disagree.

ROWLEY By no means.

75

SIR PETER TEAZLE For I should never be able to stand Noll's jokes. So I'd have him think, lord forgive me, that we are a very happy couple.

ROWLEY I understand you; but then you must be very careful not to differ while he's in the house with you.

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 the punishment along with it.

80

Exeunt

Act II Scene I

Sir Peter Teazle's house

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE and LADY TEAZLE

SIR PETER TEAZLE Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll not bear it!

LADY 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. 5

SIR PETER TEAZLE Very well, ma'am, very well! So a husband is to have no influence, no authority?

LADY TEAZLE Authority! No, to be sure. If you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me and not married me. I am sure you were old enough. 10

SIR PETER TEAZLE Old enough! Ay, 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.

LADY TEAZLE My extravagance! I'm sure I'm not more extravagant than a woman of fashion ought to be. 15

SIR PETER TEAZLE No, no, madam; you shall throw away no more sums on such unmeaning luxury. 'Slife, to spend as much to furnish your dressing-room with flowers in winter as would suffice to turn the Pantheon into a greenhouse and give a *fête-champêtre* at Christmas! 20

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

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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. 25

LADY TEAZLE No, no, I don't; 'twas a very disagreeable one, or I should never have married you.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, yes, madam, you were then in somewhat a humbler style, the daughter of a plain country squire. Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first—sitting at your tambour in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys by your side, your hair 30

- combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with
fruits in worsted of your own working. 35
- LADY TEAZLE O yes, I remember if 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 TEAZLE Yes, yes, ma'am; 'twas so indeed. 40
- LADY TEAZLE And then you know my evening amusements—to draw
patterns for ruffles which I had not the materials to make, to play
Pope Joan with the curate, to read a novel to my aunt, or to be stuck
down to an old spinet to strum my father to sleep after a fox-chase.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE I am glad you have so good a memory. Yes, madam, 45
these were the recreations I took you from. But now you must have
your coach—*vis-a-vis*—and three powdered footmen before your
chair, and in 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. 50
- LADY TEAZLE No, I swear I never did that; I deny the butler and the
coach-horse.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE This, madam, was your situation; and what have I
not done for you? I have made you woman of fashion, of fortune, of
rank; in short, I have made you my wife. 55
- LADY TEAZLE Well then, and there is but one thing more you can make
me to add to the obligation; and that is—
- SIR PETER TEAZLE My widow, I suppose? SIR PETER TEAZLE And that is?
- LADY TEAZLE Hem, hem! LADY TEAZLE Your widow.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Thank you, madam. But don't flatter yourself, for, 60
though your ill conduct may disturb my peace, it shall never break my
heart, I promise you. However, I am equally obliged to you for
the hint.
- LADY TEAZLE Then why will you endeavour to make yourself so
disagreeable to me, and thwart me in every little elegant expense? 65
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 'Slife, madam, I say, had you any of these elegant
expenses when you married me?
- LADY TEAZLE Lud, Sir Peter, would you have me be out of the fashion?
- SIR PETER TEAZLE The fashion indeed! What had you to do with the
fashion before you married me? 70
- LADY TEAZLE For my part, I should think you would like to have your
wife thought a woman of taste.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay, there again—taste! Zounds, madam, you had no
taste when you married me.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

LADY TEAZLE That's very true indeed, Sir Peter; and, after having married you, I am sure 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. 75

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay, there's another precious circumstance; a charming set of acquaintance you have made there. 80

LADY TEAZLE Nay, Sir Peter, they are people of rank and fortune, and remarkably tenacious of reputation.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, egad, they are tenacious of reputation with a vengeance, for they don't choose anybody should have a character but themselves. Such a crew! Ah, many a wretch has rid on a hurdle who has done less mischief than those utterers of forged tales, coiners of scandal, and clippers of reputation. 85

LADY TEAZLE What, would you restrain the freedom of speech?

SIR PETER TEAZLE O, they have made you just as bad as anyone of the society. 90

LADY 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. 95

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

LADY TEAZLE Then indeed you must make haste after me, or you'll be too late. So good-bye to ye.

Exit LADY TEAZLE

SIR PETER TEAZLE So I have gained much by my intended expostulations. Yet with what a charming air she contradicts everything I say, and how pleasingly she shows her contempt of my authority. Well, though I can't make her love me, there is a great satisfaction in quarrelling with her, and I think she never appears to such advantage as when she's doing everything in her power to plague me. 100
105

Exit

Act II Scene II

Lady Sneerwell's house

LADY SNEERWELL, MRS CANDOUR, CRABTREE,
SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE, *and* JOSEPH SURFACE

LADY SNEERWELL Nay, positively, we will hear it.

JOSEPH SURFACE Yes, yes, the epigram, by all means.

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Plague on't, uncle! 'Tis mere nonsense

CRABTREE No, no; 'fore Gad, very clever for an extempore.

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE But, ladies, you should be acquainted with the
circumstance. You must know that one day last week, as Lady Betty
Currie 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: 5

Sure never were seen two such beautiful ponies;

Other horses are clowns, and these macaronies.

Nay, 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. 15

JOSEPH SURFACE A very Phoebus mounted, indeed, Sir Benjamin.

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE O, dear sir, trifles, trifles!

Enter LADY TEAZLE *and* MARIA

MRS CANDOUR I must have a copy.

LADY SNEERWELL [*greeting her*] Lady Teazle. I hope we shall see
Sir Peter. 20

LADY TEAZLE I believe he'll wait on your ladyship presently.

LADY SNEERWELL Maria, my love, you look grave. Come, you shall sit
down to cards with Mr Surface.

MARIA I take very little pleasure in cards. However, I'll do as your
ladyship pleases. 25

LADY TEAZLE [*aside*] I am surprised Mr Surface should sit down with
her. I thought he would have embraced this opportunity of speaking
to me before Sir Peter came.

- MRS CANDOUR [*speaking to CRABTREE and SIR BENJAMIN, while coming forward*] Now I'll die but you are so scandalous I'll forswear your society. 30
- LADY TEAZLE What's the matter, Mrs Candour?
- MRS CANDOUR They'll not allow our friend Miss Vermilion to be handsome. 35
- LADY SNEERWELL O, surely she's a pretty woman.
- CRABTREE I am very glad you think so, ma'am.
- MRS CANDOUR She has a charming fresh colour.
- LADY TEAZLE Yes, when it is fresh put on.
- MRS CANDOUR O, fie, I'll swear her colour is natural. I have seen it come and go. 40
- LADY TEAZLE I dare swear you have, ma'am. It goes of a night and comes again in the morning.
- MRS CANDOUR Ha, ha, ha! How I hate to hear you talk so. But surely, now, her sister is, or was, very handsome. 45
- CRABTREE Who? Mrs Evergreen? O lud, she's six-and-fifty if she's an hour.
- MRS CANDOUR Now, positively, you wrong her. Fifty-two or fifty-three is the utmost, and I don't think she looks more.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Ah, there is no judging by her looks, unless one could see her face. 50
- LADY 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 Ocre caulks her wrinkles. 55
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Nay, now, Lady Sneerwell, you are severe upon the widow. Come, come, 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. 60
- CRABTREE Ha, ha, ha! Well said, nephew!
- MRS CANDOUR Ha, ha, ha! Well, you make me laugh; but I vow I hate you for't. What do you think of Miss Simper?
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Why, she has very pretty teeth.
- LADY 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. 65
- MRS CANDOUR How can you be so ill-natured?
- LADY TEAZLE Nay, I allow even that's better than the pains Mrs Prim takes to conceal her losses in front. She draws her mouth till it 70

positively resembles the aperture of a poor's-box, and all her words appear to slide out edgeways.

LADY SNEERWELL Very well, Lady Teazle. I see you can be a little severe.

LADY TEAZLE In defence of a friend it is but justice. But here comes Sir Peter to spoil our pleasantry!

75

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ladies, your most obedient. [*Aside*] Mercy on me, here is the whole set! A character dead at every word, I suppose.

MRS CANDOUR I am rejoiced you are come, Sir Peter. They have been so censorious, they will allow good qualities to nobody—not even good nature to our friend Mrs Pursy.

80

LADY TEAZLE What, the fat dowager, who was at Mrs Codille's last night?

MRS 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.

LADY SNEERWELL That's very true indeed.

85

LADY 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 platted up behind like a drummer's, and puffing round the Ring on a full trot.

MRS CANDOUR I thank you, Lady Teazle, for defending her.

90

SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, a good defence, truly.

MRS 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!

MRS CANDOUR Positively, you shall not be so very severe. Miss Sallow is a relation of mine by marriage, and, as for her person, great allowance is to be made, for, let me tell you, a woman labours under many disadvantages who tries to pass for a girl at six-and-thirty.

95

LADY SNEERWELL Though surely she is handsome still. And for the weakness in her eyes, considering how much she reads by candle-light, it is not to be wondered at.

100

MRS 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.

105

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Ah, you are both of you too good-natured!

SIR PETER TEAZLE [*Aside*] yes, damned good-natured! This their own relation! Mercy on me!

- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE And Mrs Candour is of so moral a turn, she can sit for an hour to hear Lady Stucco talk sentiment. 110
- LADY TEAZLE Nay, I vow Lady Stucco is very well with the dessert after dinner, for she's just like the French fruit one cracks for mottos—made up of paint and proverb.
- MRS CANDOUR Well, I never will join in ridiculing a friend; and so I constantly tell my cousin Ogle, and you all know what pretensions she has to be critical in beauty. 115
- CRABTREE O, 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.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE So she has indeed. An Irish front. 120
- CRABTREE Caledonian locks.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Dutch nose.
- CRABTREE Austrian lip.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Complexion of a Spaniard.
- CRABTREE And teeth *à la Chinoise*. 125
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* 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. 130
- MRS CANDOUR Ha, ha, ha!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE [*aside*] Mercy on my life! A person they dine with twice a week!
- MRS CANDOUR Nay, but I vow you shall not carry the laugh off so, for give me leave to say that Mrs Ogle— 135
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 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.
- LADY SNEERWELL Well said, Sir Peter. But you are a cruel creature— 140
too phlegmatic yourself for a jest and too peevish to allow wit in others.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ah, madam, true wit is more nearly allied to good nature than your ladyship is aware of.
- LADY TEAZLE True, Sir Peter. I believe they are so near akin that they 145
can never be united.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Or rather, madam, suppose them man and wife, because one seldom sees them together.
- LADY TEAZLE But Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal, I believe he

- would have it put down by Parliament. 150
- SIR PETER TEAZLE '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.
- LADY SNEERWELL O lud, Sir Peter, would you deprive us of our privileges? 155
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay, madam. And then no person should be permitted to kill characters or run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows.
- LADY SNEERWELL Go, you monster 160
- MRS CANDOUR But sure you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 party should have a right to come on any of the endorsers. 165
- CRABTREE Well, for my part, I believe there never was a scandalous tale without some foundation.
- LADY SNEERWELL Come, ladies, shall we sit down to cards in the next room? 170
- Enter SERVANT. He whispers to SIR PETER TEAZLE*
- SIR PETER TEAZLE I'll be with them directly. [Exit SERVANT]
- [*Aside*] I'll get away unperceived.
- LADY SNEERWELL Sir Peter, you are not leaving us?
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Your ladyship must excuse me; I'm called away by particular business. But I leave my character behind me. 175
- Exit SIR PETER TEAZLE*
- SIR BENJAMIN 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 wasn't your husband.
- LADY TEAZLE O, pray don't mind that. Come, do let's hear 'em.
- LADY TEAZLE *and* SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE *join* MRS CANDOUR *and* CRABTREE, *all talking as they are going into the next room*
- JOSEPH SURFACE [*rising with MARIA*] Maria, I see you have no satisfaction in this society. 180

MARIA How is it possible I should? If to raise malicious smiles at the infirmities or misfortunes of those who have never injured us be the province of wit or humour, heaven grant me a double portion of dullness. 185

JOSEPH SURFACE 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. 190

JOSEPH SURFACE [*kneeling*] 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 this subject?

JOSEPH SURFACE Ah, Maria, you would not treat me thus and oppose your guardian's, Sir Peter's, wishes, but that I see that profligate Charles is still a favoured rival. 195

MARIA Ungenerously urged. But, whatever my sentiments of that unfortunate young man are, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother. 200

Enter LADY TEAZLE

JOSEPH SURFACE Nay, but, Maria, do not leave me with a frown. By all that's honest, I swear—[*aside*] Gad's life, here's Lady Teazle!

JOSEPH SURFACE *rises*

[*To* MARIA] You must not, no, you shall not, for though I have the greatest regard for Lady Teazle—

MARIA Lady Teazle! 205

JOSEPH SURFACE Yet, were Sir Peter to suspect—

LADY TEAZLE [*coming forward*] What's this, pray? Do you take her for me!—Child, you are wanted in the next room.

Exit MARIA

What is all this, pray?

JOSEPH SURFACE O, 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. 210

LADY TEAZLE Indeed; but you seemed to adopt a very tender method of reasoning. Do you usually argue on your knees? 215

JOSEPH SURFACE O, she's a child, and I thought a little bombast—but, Lady Teazle, when are you to give me your judgement on my library as

you promised?

LADY TEAZLE No, no; I begin to think it would be imprudent, and you know I admit you as a lover no further than fashion requires. 220

JOSEPH SURFACE True, a mere platonic cicisbeo—what every London wife is entitled to.

LADY 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 never shall provoke me to— 225

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

LADY TEAZLE Go, you are an insinuating wretch. But we shall be missed; let us join the company.

JOSEPH SURFACE But we had best not return together. 230

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

Exit LADY TEAZLE

JOSEPH SURFACE A curious dilemma, truly, my politics have run me into. I wanted at first only to ingratiate myself with Lady Teazle that she might not be my enemy with Maria, and I have—I don't know how— 235
become her serious lover. Sincerely, I begin to wish I had never made such a point of gaining so very good a character, for it has led me into so many cursed rogueries that I doubt I shall be exposed at last.

Exit

Act II Scene III

Sir Peter Teazle's house

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE and ROWLEY

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ha, ha, ha! And so my old friend is married, hey?

A young wife out of the country! Ha, ha, ha! 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. 5

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

ROWLEY His prejudice against him is astonishing, and, I am sure, greatly increased by a jealousy of him with Lady Teazle, which he has been industriously led into by a scandalous society in the neighbourhood, who have contributed not a little to Charles's ill name. Whereas the truth is, I believe, if the lady is partial to either of them his brother is the favourite. 15

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ay, I know. There are a set of malicious prating prudent gossips, both male and female, 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. 20

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 SURFACE What, 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. 25

ROWLEY Sir, 'tis this reflection gives me assurance that Charles may yet be a credit to his family. But here comes Sir Peter. 30

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Egad, so he does. Mercy on me, he's greatly altered, and seems to have a settled married look. One may read husband in his face at this distance.

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE

- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ha, Sir Oliver, my old friend! Welcome to England a thousand times! 35
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Thank you, thank you, Sir Peter! And, i'faith, I am as glad to find you well, believe me.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ah, 'tis a long time since we met—sixteen years, I doubt, and many a cross accident in the time.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ay, I have had my share. But, what, I find you are married. Hey, my old boy! Well, well, it can't be helped, and so I wish you joy with all my heart. 40
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Thank you, thank you, Sir Oliver. Yes, I have entered into the happy state, but we'll not talk of that now.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE True, true, Sir Peter; old friends should not begin on grievances at first meeting. No, no, no. 45
- ROWLEY [*to SIR OLIVER SURFACE*] Take care, pray, sir.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, so one of my nephews, I find, is a wild rogue, hey?
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Wild! Ah, my old friend, I grieve for your disappointment there. He's a lost young man indeed. However, his brother will make you amends. Joseph is indeed what a youth should be; everybody in the world speaks well of him. 50
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE I am sorry to hear it; he has too good a character to be an honest fellow. Everybody speaks well of him! Pshaw! Then he has bowed as low to knaves and fools as to the honest dignity of genius or virtue. 55
- SIR PETER TEAZLE What, Sir Oliver, do you blame him for not making enemies?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, if he has merit enough to deserve them. 60
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, well, you'll be convinced when you know him. 'Tis edification to hear him converse; he professes the noblest sentiments.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ah, plague on his sentiments! If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly. But, however, don't mistake me, Sir Peter. I don't mean to defend Charles's errors. But, before I form my judgement of either of them, I intend to make a trial of their hearts; and my friend Rowley and I have planned something for the purpose. 65
- ROWLEY And Sir Peter shall own he has been for once mistaken. 70
- SIR PETER TEAZLE O, my life on Joseph's honour!
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, come; give us a bottle of good wine, and

we'll drink the lads' healths and tell you our scheme.

SIR PETER TEAZLE *Allons* then.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE And don't, Sir Peter, be so severe against your old friend's son. Od's my life, I am not sorry that he has run out of the course a little. For my part, 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. 75

Exeunt

Act III Scene I

Sir Peter Teazle's house

SIR PETER TEAZLE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, *and* ROWLEY

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well then, we will see this fellow first and have our wine afterwards. But how is this, Master Rowley? I don't see the jet of your scheme.

ROWLEY Why, sir, this Mr Stanley whom I was speaking of is nearly related to them by their mother. He was once a merchant in Dublin, but has been ruined by a series of undeserved misfortunes. He has applied by letter since his confinement both to Mr Surface and Charles. From the former 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. 5 10

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ah, he is my brother's son!

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, but how is Sir Oliver personally to—

ROWLEY Why, sir, I will inform Charles and his brother that Stanley has obtained permission to apply in person to his friends; and, as they have neither of them ever seen him, let Sir Oliver assume his 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 youngest brother one who in the midst of folly and dissipation has still, as our immortal bard expresses it, 'a tear for pity and a hand open as the day for melting charity'. 15 20

SIR PETER TEAZLE Pshaw! What signifies his having an open hand, 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 brought for Sir Oliver to examine relative to Charles's affairs? 25

ROWLEY Below, waiting his commands, and no one can give him better intelligence. This, Sir Oliver, is a friendly Jew, who, to do him justice, has done everything in his power to bring your nephew to a proper sense of his extravagance. 30

SIR PETER TEAZLE Pray let us have him in.

ROWLEY [*to SERVANT offstage*] Desire Mr Moses to walk upstairs.

SIR PETER TEAZLE But why should you suppose he will speak the truth?

ROWLEY O, I have convinced him that he has no chance of recovering certain sums advanced to Charles, but through the bounty of Sir Oliver, who he knows is arrived; so that you may depend on his fidelity to his interest. I have also another evidence in my power, one Snake, whom I have detected in a matter little short of forgery, and shall shortly produce to remove some of your prejudices, Sir Peter, relative to Charles and Lady Teazle.

SIR PETER TEAZLE I have heard too much on that subject.

ROWLEY Here comes the honest Israelite.

Enter MOSES

[*Introducing* MOSES] This is Sir Oliver.

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

MOSES Yes, Sir Oliver; I have done all I could for him, but he was ruined before he came to me for assistance.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE That was unlucky, truly, for you have had no opportunity of showing your talents.

MOSES None at all. I hadn't the pleasure of knowing his distresses till he was some thousands worse than nothing.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Unfortunate indeed! But I suppose you have done all in your power for him, honest Moses?

MOSES Yes, he knows that. This very evening I was to have brought him a gentleman from the city who doesn't know him and will, I believe, advance him some money.

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

MOSES Yes, Mr Premium of Crutched Friars, formerly a broker.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Egad, Sir Oliver, a thought strikes me. Charles you say, doesn't know Mr Premium?

MOSES Not at all.

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 my friend Moses and represent Mr Premium, and then I'll answer for't you will see your nephew in all his glory.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Egad, I like this idea better than the other, and I may visit Joseph afterwards as old Stanley.

SIR PETER TEAZLE True, so you may.

ROWLEY Well, this is taking Charles rather at a disadvantage, to be sure. However, Moses, you understand Sir Peter and will be faithful.

- MOSES You may depend upon me. This is near the time I was to have gone.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE I'll accompany you as soon as you please, Moses. But hold; I have forgot one thing. How the plague shall I be able to pass for a Jew? 75
- MOSES There's no need. The principal is Christian.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Is he? I'm very sorry to hear it. But then again, a'n't I rather too smartly dressed to look like a moneylender?
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Not at all. 'Twould not be out of character if you went in your own carriage—would it, Moses? 80
- MOSES Not in the least.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, but how must I talk? There's certainly some cant of usury and mode of treating that I ought to know.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE O, there's not much to learn. The great point, as I take it, is to be exorbitant enough in your demands—hey, Moses? 85
- MOSES Yes, that's a very great point.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE I'll answer for't I'll not be wanting in that. I'll ask him eight or ten per cent on the loan, at least.
- MOSES If you ask him no more than that, you'll be discovered immediately. 90
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Hey, what the plague! How much then?
- MOSES 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 and want the moneys very bad, you may ask double. 95
- SIR PETER TEAZLE A good honest trade you're learning, Sir Oliver.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Truly I think so, and not unprofitable.
- MOSES Then, you know, you haven't the moneys yourself, but are forced to borrow them for him of a friend. 100
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE O, I borrow it of a friend, do I?
- MOSES Yes, and your friend is an unconscionable dog, but you can't help it.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE My friend is an unconscionable dog, is he?
- MOSES Yes, and he himself hasn't the moneys by him, but is forced to sell stock at a great loss. 105
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE He is forced to sell stock, is he? At a great loss, is he? Well, that's very kind of him.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE I'faith, Sir Oliver—Mr Premium, I mean—you'll soon be master of the trade. **But, Moses, wouldn't you have him run out a little against the Annuity Bill? That would be in character, I should think.** 110

MOSES Very much.

ROWLEY And lament that a young man now must be at years of discretion before he is suffered to ruin himself.

115

MOSES Ay, great pity!

SIR PETER TEAZLE And abuse the public for allowing merit to an Act whose only object is to snatch misfortune and imprudence from the rapacious relief of usury and give the minor a chance of inheriting his estate, without being undone by coming into possession.

120

SIR OLIVER SURFACE So, so. Moses shall give me further instructions as we go together.

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

SIR OLIVER SURFACE O, 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.

125

Exeunt SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* MOSES

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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—

130

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, go bring me this Snake, and I'll hear what he has to say presently. I see Maria and want to speak with her.

Exit ROWLEY

I should be glad to be convinced my suspicions of Lady Teazle and Charles were unjust. I have never yet opened my mind on this subject to my friend Joseph. I'm determined I will do it. He will give me his opinion sincerely.

135

Enter MARIA

So, child, has Mr Surface returned with you?

MARIA No sir; he was engaged.

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

140

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.

145

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 neither seeing
nor corresponding with him. I have heard enough to convince me 150
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 TEAZLE Well, well, pity him as much as you please, but give
your heart and hand to a worthier object. 155

MARIA Never to his brother.

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 160
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 MARIA

SIR PETER TEAZLE Was ever man so crossed as I am! Everything
conspiring to fret me! I hadn't been involved in matrimony a fortnight 165
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. But here
comes my helpmate! 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

LADY TEAZLE Lud, Sir Peter, I hope you haven't been quarrelling with 170
Maria. It isn't using me well to be ill-humoured when I am not by!

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ah, Lady Teazle, you might have the power to make
me good-humoured at all times.

LADY 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 175
have two hundred pounds, will you?

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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; but seal me a bond for
the repayment. 180

LADY TEAZLE O, no! [*Offering her hand to be kissed*] There, my note of
hand will do as well.

SIR PETER TEAZLE [*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? 185

- LADY 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 TEAZLE Well, then let our future contest be who shall be most obliging.
- LADY 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? 190
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, yes, and you were as kind and attentive.
- LADY TEAZLE Ay, so I was, and would always take your part when my acquaintance used to abuse you and turn you into ridicule.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Indeed!
- LADY TEAZLE Ay, 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 that I dared say you'd make a very good sort of a husband. 200
- SIR PETER TEAZLE And you prophesied right, and we shall certainly now be the happiest couple. 205
- LADY TEAZLE And never differ again.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE No, never; though at the same time, indeed, my dear Lady Teazle, you must watch your temper very narrowly, for in all our little quarrels, my dear, if you recollect, my love, you always began first. 210
- LADY TEAZLE I beg your pardon, my dear Sir Peter; indeed you always gave the provocation.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Now, see, my angel, take care! Contradicting isn't the way to keep friends. 215
- LADY TEAZLE Then don't you begin it, my love!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 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.
- LADY TEAZLE Nay, you know, if you will be angry without any reason— 220
- SIR PETER TEAZLE There, now, you want to quarrel again.
- LADY TEAZLE No, I am sure I don't; but if you will be so peevish—
- SIR PETER TEAZLE There, now, who begins first?
- LADY TEAZLE Why, you, to be sure. I said nothing but there's no bearing your temper. 225
- SIR PETER TEAZLE No, no, madam; the fault's in your own temper.

- LADY TEAZLE Ay, you are just what my cousin Sophy said you would be.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Your cousin Sophy is a forward impertinent gipsy.
- LADY TEAZLE You are a great bear, I'm sure, to abuse my relations.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Now may all the plagues of marriage be doubled on 230
me if ever I try to be friends with you any more.
- LADY TEAZLE So much the better.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 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. 235
- LADY 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 TEAZLE Ay, ay, madam; but you were pleased enough to
listen to me. You never had such an offer before. 240
- LADY 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 been married!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE I have done with you, madam. You are an unfeeling,
ungrateful—but there's an end of everything. I believe you capable of 245
anything that's bad. Yes, madam, I now believe the reports relative to
you and Charles, madam—yes, madam, you and Charles—are not
without grounds.
- LADY TEAZLE Take care, Sir Peter. You had better not insinuate any
such thing! I'll not be suspected without cause, I promise you. 250
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 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.
- LADY 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 255
again, you know. Ha, ha! Well, you are going to be in a passion, I see,
and I shall only interrupt you. So, bye-bye!
- Exit* LADY TEAZLE
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Plagues and tortures! Can't I make her angry
neither! O, I am the miserable fellow. But I'll not bear her presuming
to keep her temper. No, she may break my heart, but she shan't keep 260
her temper.

Exit

Act III Scene II

Charles Surface's house

Enter TRIP, MOSES, and SIR OLIVER SURFACE

TRIP Here, Master Moses. If you'll stay a moment, I'll try whether Mr—
what's the gentleman's name?

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Mr—[*aside*] Moses, what *is* my name?

MOSES Mr Premium.

TRIP Premium. Very well.

5

Exit TRIP, *taking snuff*

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

MOSES Yes, sir. Mr Charles bought it of Mr Joseph with the furniture,
pictures, etc., just as the old gentleman left it. Sir Peter thought it a
great peice of extravagance in him!

10

SIR OLIVER SURFACE 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 has company and
can't speak with you yet.

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

15

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

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

20

TRIP Trip, sir; my name is Trip, at your service.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE 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.

25

SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Bags and bouquets! Halts and
bastinadoes!

- TRIP But apropos, Moses, have you been able to get me that little bill 30
discounted?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Wants to raise money too! Mercy on me!
Has his distresses, I warrant, like a lord, and affects creditors and
duns!
- MOSES 'Twas not be done indeed, Mr Trip. 35
- MOSES *gives TRIP the note*
- TRIP Good lack, you surprise me. My friend Brush has endorsed it, and
I thought when he put his mark on the back of a bill 'twas as good as
cash.
- MOSES No, 'twouldn't do.
- TRIP A small sum, but twenty pounds. Harkee, Moses, do you think you 40
couldn't get it me by way of annuity?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] An annuity! Ha, ha, ha! A footman raise
money by annuity! Well done, luxury, egad!
- MOSES But you must insure your place.
- TRIP O, with all my heart. I'll insure my place, and my life too, if you 45
please.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] It's more than I would your neck.
- TRIP But then, Moses, it must be done before this damned register
takes place. One wouldn't like to have one's name made public, you
know. 50
- MOSES No, certainly. But is there nothing you could 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, I 55
should think, Moses, with a few pair of point ruffles as a collateral
security—hey, my little fellow?
- MOSES Well, well.
- [*Bell rings offstage*]
- TRIP Gad, I heard the bell. I believe, gentlemen, I can now introduce
you.—Don't forget the annuity, little Moses.—This way, gentlemen.— 60
Insure my place! You know—
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] If the man be a shadow of his master, this
is the temple of dissipation indeed!

Exeunt

Act III Scene III

Another room in Charles Surface's house

CHARLES SURFACE, CARELESS, SIR TOBY BUMPER, *and*
TWO GENTLEMEN, *at a table with wine, etc*

CHARLES SURFACE '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. 5

CHARLES SURFACE O, certainly society suffers by it intolerably, for now, instead of the social spirit of raillery that used to mantle over a glass of bright burgundy, their conversation is become just like the spa water they drink, which has all the pertness and flatulence of champagne without its spirit or flavour. 10

FIRST GENTLEMAN But what are they to do who love play better than wine?

CARELESS True. There's **Harry Toby** diets himself for gaming and is now under a hazard-regimen.

CHARLES SURFACE Then he'll have the worst of it. What, you wouldn't train a horse for the course by keeping him from corn. For my part, egad, I am now never so successful as when I am a little merry. Let me throw on a bottle of champagne and I never lose. At least I never feel my losses, which is exactly the same thing. 15

SECOND GENTLEMAN Ay, that I believe. 20

CHARLES SURFACE 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 at top is the maid that has bewitched you.

CARELESS Now then, Charles, be honest and give us your real favourite. 25

CHARLES SURFACE Why, I have withheld her only in compassion to you. If I toast her, you must give a round of her peers, which is impossible—on earth!

CARELESS O then we'll find some canonized vestals or heathen goddesses that will do, I warrant. 30

CHARLES SURFACE Here then. Bumpers, you rogues, bumpers! Maria, Maria.

All drink

FIRST GENTLEMAN Maria who?

CHARLES SURFACE O damn the surname! 'Tis too formal to be registered in love's calendar. But now, Sir Toby Bumper, beware; we must have beauty superlative. 35

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 BUMPER Egad, so I have, and I'll give him the song instead of the lady. [*Sings*] 40

SONG AND CHORUS

*Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen,
Here's to the widow of fifty,
Here's to the flaunting, extravagant quean,
And here's to the housewife that's thrifty.* 45

CHORUS *Let the toast pass,
Drink to the lass,*

*I'll warrant she'll prove an excuse for a glass!
Here's to the charmer whose dimples we prize!
Now to the maid who has none, sir.* 50

*Here's to the girl with a pair of blue eyes,
And here's to the nymph with but one, sir!*

CHORUS *Let the toast pass, etc.*

*Here's to the maid with a bosom of snow,
Now to her that's as brown as a berry.* 55

*Here's to the wife with a face full of woe,
And now for the damsel that's merry.*

CHORUS *Let the toast pass, etc.*

*For let 'em be clumsy or let 'em be slim,
Young or ancient, I care not a feather.* 60

*So fill a pint bumper quite up to the brim,
And let us e'en toast 'em together!*

CHORUS *Let the toast pass, etc.*

ALL Bravo, bravo!

Enter TRIP. He whispers to CHARLES SURFACE

CHARLES SURFACE Gentlemen, you must excuse me a little.—Careless, take the chair, will you? 65

CARELESS Nay, prithee, Charles, what now? This is one of your peerless beauties, I suppose, has dropped in by chance.

CHARLES SURFACE No, faith, to tell you the truth, 'tis a Jew and a broker who are come by appointment. 70

CARELESS O damn it, let's have the Jew in.

FIRST GENTLEMAN Ay, and the broker too, by all means.

SECOND GENTLEMAN Yes, yes, the Jew and the broker.

CHARLES SURFACE Egad, with all my heart.—Trip, bid the gentlemen walk in; though there's one of them a stranger, I can tell you. 75

[Exit TRIP]

CARELESS Charles, let us give them some generous burgundy and perhaps they'll grow conscientious.

CHARLES SURFACE O 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. 80

Enter TRIP, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, and MOSES

So. Honest Moses, walk in; walk in, pray, Mr Premium.—That's the gentleman's name, isn't it, Moses?

MOSES Yes, sir.

CHARLES SURFACE Set chairs, Trip.—Sit down, Mr Premium.—Glasses, Trip.—Sit down, Moses.—Come, Mr Premium, I'll give you a sentiment. Here's success to usury.—Moses, fill the gentleman a bumper. 85

MOSES [*draining his glass*] Success to usury.

CHARLES SURFACE Right, Moses. Usury is prudence and industry and deserves to succeed. 90

SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*drinking a little of his bumper*] Then here is all the success it deserves.

CARELESS No, no, that won't do. Mr Premium; you have demurred to the toast, and must drink it in a pint bumper.

FIRST GENTLEMAN A pint bumper at least. 95

MOSES O pray, sir, consider Mr Premium's a gentleman.

CARELESS And therefore loves good wine.

SECOND GENTLEMAN Give Moses 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. 100

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

CHARLES SURFACE No, hang it, Careless; you shan't. Mr Premium's a

stranger.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Od, I wish I was well out of this company. 105

CARELESS Plague on 'em then! If they won't drink, we'll not sit down with 'em. Come, Harry, Toby, the dice are in the next room.—Charles, you'll join us, when you have finished your business with these gentlemen.

CHARLES SURFACE I will. I will. 110

Exeunt SIR TOBY BUMPER and TWO GENTLEMEN

Careless!

CARELESS Well.

CHARLES SURFACE Perhaps I may want you.

CARELESS O you know I am always ready. Word, note, or bond; 'tis all the same to me. 115

Exit CARELESS

MOSES Sir, this is Mr Premium, a gentleman of the strictest honour and secrecy, and always performs what he undertakes.—Mr Premium, this—

CHARLES SURFACE Pshaw, have done! Sir, my friend Moses is a very honest fellow, but a little slow at expression. He'll be an hour giving us our titles. Mr Premium, the plain state of the matter is this. I am an extravagant young fellow, who wants money to borrow; you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who has 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 could get it. Now, sir, you see we are acquainted at once, and may proceed to business without farther ceremony. 120 125

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

CHARLES SURFACE O no, sir; plain dealing in business I always think best. 130

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Sir, I like you the better for't. 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 an unconscionable dog—isn't he, Moses?—and must sell stock to accommodate you, mustn't he, Moses? 135

MOSES Yes, indeed! You know I always speak the truth, and scorn to tell a lie.

CHARLES SURFACE Right! People that speak truth generally do. But these are trifles, Mr Premium. What, I know money isn't to be bought without paying for't. 140

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

- CHARLES SURFACE Not a molehill, nor a twig, but what's in beau-pots
out at the window.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Nor any stock, I presume. 145
- CHARLES SURFACE Nothing but livestock, and that's only a few pointers
and ponies. But pray, Mr Premium, are you acquainted at all with any
of my connections?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Why, to say truth, I am.
- CHARLES SURFACE Then you must know that I have a devilish rich 150
uncle in the East Indies, Sir Oliver Surface, from whom I have the
greatest expectations.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE That you have a wealthy uncle, I have heard; but
how your expectations will turn out is more, I believe, than you can
tell. 155
- CHARLES SURFACE O 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 SURFACE Indeed this is the first I've heard on't.
- CHARLES SURFACE Yes, yes, 'tis just so. Moses knows 'tis true—don't
you, Moses? 160
- MOSES O yes, I'll swear to't.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Egad, they'll persuade me presently I'm at
Bengal.
- CHARLES SURFACE Now I propose, Mr Premium, if it's agreeable to
you, to grant a *post-obit* on Sir Oliver's life, though at the same time 165
the old fellow has been so liberal to me that I give you my word I
should be very sorry to hear anything had happened to him.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Not any 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 170
principal.
- CHARLES SURFACE O, yes, you would. The moment Sir Oliver dies, you
know you'd come on me for the money.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Then I believe I should be the most unwelcome
dun you ever had in your life. 175
- CHARLES SURFACE What, I suppose you are afraid that Sir Oliver is too
good a life.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE No, indeed I am not, though I have heard he is as
hale and healthy as any man of his years in Christendom.
- CHARLES SURFACE There again you are misinformed. No, no, the 180
climate has hurt him considerably. Poor Uncle Oliver. Yes, he breaks
apace, I'm told, and so much altered lately that his nearest relations
don't know him.

- SIR OLIVER SURFACE No! Ha, ha, ha! So much altered lately that his relations don't know him! Ha, ha, ha! That's droll, egad! Ha, ha, ha! 185
- CHARLES SURFACE Ha, ha! You're glad to hear that, little Premium.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE No, no, I'm not.
- CHARLES SURFACE Yes, yes, you are. Ha, ha, ha! You know that mends your chance.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE But I'm told Sir Oliver is coming over; nay, some say he is actually arrived. 190
- CHARLES SURFACE Pshaw! Sure I must know better than you whether he's come or not. No, no, rely on't; he is at this moment at Calcutta—isn't he, Moses?
- MOSES O yes, certainly. 195
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Very true; as you say, you must know better than I. Though I have it from pretty good authority—haven't I, Moses?
- MOSES Yes, most undoubted.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE But, sir, as I understand you want a few hundreds immediately, is there nothing you would dispose of? 200
- CHARLES SURFACE How do you mean?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE For instance, now, I have heard that your father left behind him a great quantity of massy old plate.
- CHARLES SURFACE O lud, that's gone, long ago. Moses can tell you how better than I can. 205
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Good luck! All the family race cups and corporation bowls!—Then it was also supposed that his library was one of the most valuable and complete—
- CHARLES SURFACE 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. 210
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Mercy on me! Learning that had run in the family like an heirloom!—Pray what has become of the books?
- CHARLES SURFACE You must inquire of the auctioneer, Master Premium, for I don't believe even Moses can direct you there. 215
- MOSES I never meddle with books.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE So, so. Nothing of the family property left, I suppose?
- CHARLES SURFACE Not much indeed, unless you have a mind to the family pictures. I have got a room full of ancestors above; and if you have a taste for old paintings, egad, you shall have 'em a bargain. 220
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Hey, and the devil! Sure you wouldn't sell your forefathers, would you?
- CHARLES SURFACE Every man of 'em to the best bidder.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

- SIR OLIVER SURFACE What, your great-uncles and -aunts? 225
- CHARLES SURFACE Ay, and my great-grandfathers and -grandmothers too.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Now I give him up!—What the plague! Have you no bowels for your own kindred? Od's life, do you take me for Shylock in the play, that you would raise money of me on your own flesh and blood? 230
- CHARLES SURFACE Nay, my little broker, don't be angry. What need you care, if you have your money's worth?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, I'll be the purchaser. I think I can dispose of the family. [*Aside*] O, I'll never forgive him this—never! 235

Enter CARELESS

- CARELESS Come, Charles; what keeps you?
- CHARLES SURFACE I can't come yet, i'faith! We are going to have a sale above. Here's little Premium will buy all my ancestors.
- CARELESS O, burn your ancestors!
- CHARLES SURFACE No, he may do that afterwards if he pleases. Stay, 240
Careless, we want you. Egad, you shall be auctioneer. So come along with us.
- CARELESS O, have with you, if that's the case. I can handle a hammer as well as a dice-box!
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] O the profligates! 245
- CHARLES SURFACE Come, Moses; you shall be appraiser if we want one.—Gad's life, little Premium, you don't seem to like the business.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE O, yes, I do, vastly. Ha, ha! Yes, yes, I think it a rare joke to sell one's family by auction. Ha, ha! [*Aside*] O, the prodigal! 250
- CHARLES SURFACE 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?

Exeunt

Act IV Scene I

Picture room at Charles Surface's house

Enter CHARLES SURFACE, SIR OLIVER SURFACE, MOSES,
and CARELESS

CHARLES SURFACE Walk in, gentlemen, pray walk in! Here they are,
the family of the Surfaces up to the Conquest.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE And, in my opinion, a goodly collection.

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, ay, these are done in the true spirit of portrait-
painting—no volunteer grace, or expression, not like the works of 5
your modern Raphael, who gives you the strongest resemblance, yet
contrives to 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! 10

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ah, we shall never see such figures of men again.

CHARLES SURFACE No, I hope not. 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 an old 15
gouty chair of my grandfather's will answer the purpose.

CARELESS Ay, ay, this will do. But, Charles, I have ne'er a hammer, and
what's an auctioneer without his hammer?

CHARLES SURFACE Egad, that's true. What parchment have we here?

CHARLES SURFACE *takes down a roll*

'Richard, heir to Thomas...' Our genealogy in full! Here, Careless,
you shall have no common bit of mahogany, here's the family tree for 20
you, you rogue. This shall be your hammer, and now you may knock
down my ancestors with their own pedigree.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] What an unnatural rogue! An *ex post facto*
parricide!

CARELESS Yes, yes, here's a list of your generation indeed. Faith, 25
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 SURFACE Bravo, Careless! Well, here's my great uncle, Sir
Richard Ravelin—a marvellous good general in his day, I assure you. 30
He served in all the Duke of Marlborough's wars, and 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! Not cut out of his feathers, as your modern clipped captains are, but enveloped in wig and regimentals as a general should be. What do you bid? 35
- MOSES Mr Premium would have you speak.
- CHARLES SURFACE Why then, he shall have him for ten pounds, and I am sure that's not dear for a staff officer.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Heaven deliver me! His famous Uncle Richard for ten pounds!—Very well, sir; I take him at that. 40
- CHARLES SURFACE Careless, knock down my Uncle Richard. Here now is a maiden sister of his, my Great-Aunt Deborah, done by Kneller, thought to be 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. 45
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Ah, poor Deborah! A woman who set such a value on herself!—Five pound ten! She's mine.
- CHARLES SURFACE Knock down my Aunt Deborah! Here now are two that were a sort of cousins of theirs.—You see, Moses, these pictures were done some time ago, when beaux wore wigs, and the ladies wore their own hair. 50
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, truly, head-dresses appear to have been a little lower in those days.
- CHARLES SURFACE Well, take that couple for the same.
- MOSES 'Tis good bargain. 55
- CHARLES SURFACE 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, Moses?
- MOSES Four guineas.
- CHARLES SURFACE Four guineas! Gad's life, you don't bid me the price of his wig!—Mr Premium, you have more respect for the woosack; do let us knock his lordship down at fifteen. 60
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE By all means.
- CARELESS Gone.
- CHARLES SURFACE And there are two brothers of his, William and Walter Blunt Esquires, both Members of Parliament, and noted speakers, and—what's very extraordinary—I believe this is the first time they were ever bought and sold. 65
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE That's very extraordinary indeed! I'll take them at your own price for the honour of Parliament. 70
- CARELESS Well said, little Premium. I'll knock 'em down at forty.
- CHARLES SURFACE Here's a jolly fellow. I don't know what relation, but

- he was mayor of Manchester. Take him at eight pounds.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE No, no; six will do for the mayor.
- CHARLES SURFACE Come, make it guineas and I'll throw you the two 75
aldermen here into the bargain.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE They're mine.
- CHARLES SURFACE Careless, knock down the mayor and aldermen.
But, plague on't, we shall be all day, retailing in this manner. Do let us
deal wholesale. What say you, little Premium? Give me three hundred 80
pounds for the rest of the family in the lump.
- CARELESS Ay, ay; that will be the best way.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, well, anything to accommodate you. They
are mine. But there is one portrait, which you have always passed over.
- CARELESS What, that ill-looking little fellow **over the settee?** 85
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, sir, **I mean that,** though I don't think him so
ill-looking a little fellow by any means.
- CHARLES SURFACE What, that? O that's my Uncle Oliver. 'Twas done
before he went to India.
- CARELESS Your Uncle Oliver! Gad! Then you'll never be friends, 90
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 SURFACE Upon my soul, sir, I do not; I think it is as honest 95
a looking face as any in the room, dead or alive. But I suppose your
Uncle Oliver goes with the rest of the lumber?
- CHARLES SURFACE No, hang it, I'll not part with poor Noll. The old
fellow has been very good to me, and, egad, I'll keep his picture, while
I've a room to put it in.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] The rogue's my nephew after all!— But, 100
sir, I have somehow taken a fancy to that picture.
- CHARLES SURFACE I'm sorry for't, for you certainly will not have it.
Oons, haven't you got enough of 'em?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] I forgive him everything!—But, sir, when I
take a whim in my head, I don't value money. I'll give as much for that 105
as for all the rest.
- CHARLES SURFACE Don't tease me, Master Broker; I tell you I'll not
part with it, and there's an end on't.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] How like his father the dog is!—Well, well,
I have done. [*Aside*] **I did not perceive it before, but I think I never saw** 110
such a striking resemblance.—Well, sir, here is a draft for your sum.
- CHARLES SURFACE Why, 'tis for eight hundred pounds!
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE You will not let Oliver go?

- CHARLES SURFACE Zounds, no, I tell you once more.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Then never mind the difference; we'll balance 115
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,
Moses.
- CHARLES SURFACE Egad, this is a whimsical old fellow.—But harkee,
Premium. You'll prepare lodgings for these gentlemen? 120
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, yes, I'll send for them in a day or two.
- CHARLES SURFACE But hold! Do now send a genteel conveyance for
them, for I assure you they were most of them used to ride in their
own carriages.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE I will, I will, for all but Oliver. 125
- CHARLES SURFACE Ay, all but the little honest nabob.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE You're fixed on that?
- CHARLES SURFACE Peremptorily.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] A dear extravagant rogue!—Good day.—
Come, Moses. [*Aside*] Let me hear now who dares call him profligate! 130
Exeunt SIR OLIVER SURFACE *with* MOSES
- CARELESS Why, this is the oddest genius of the sort I ever saw.
- CHARLES SURFACE Egad, he's the prince of brokers, I think. I wonder
how the devil Moses got acquainted with so honest a fellow. Ha, here's
Rowley. Do, Careless, say I'll join the company in a moment.
- CARELESS I will. But don't let that old blockhead persuade you to 135
squander any of that money on old musty debts, or any such nonsense,
for tradesmen, Charles, are the most exorbitant fellows!
- CHARLES SURFACE Very true, and paying them is only encouraging
them.
- CARELESS Nothing else. 140
- CHARLES SURFACE Ay, ay; never fear.

Exit CARELESS

So. This was an odd old fellow indeed! Let me see; two thirds of this
is mine by right. Five hundred and thirty pounds, 'fore heaven! I find
one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took 'em for! Ladies
and gentlemen, your most obedient and very grateful humble servant. 145

Enter ROWLEY

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

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

CHARLES SURFACE Why, there's the point. My distresses are so many 150
 that I can't afford to part with my spirits; but I shall be rich and
 splenetic all in good time. However, I suppose you are surprised that I
 am not sorrowful at parting with so many near relations. To be sure,
 'tis very affecting. But, rot 'em, you see they never move a muscle; so
 why should I? 155

ROWLEY There's no making you serious a moment.

CHARLES SURFACE Yes, faith. I am so now. [*Giving him the draft*] Here,
 my honest Rowley, here; get me this changed, and take a hundred
 pounds of it immediately to old Stanley.

ROWLEY A hundred pounds. Consider only— 160

CHARLES SURFACE 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— 165

CHARLES SURFACE 'Be just before you're generous', hey! Why, so I
 would if I could; but justice is an old lame hobbling beldam, 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 SURFACE Ay, ay, it's all very true; but harkee, Rowley, while I 170
 have, by heaven I'll give. So, damn your economy; and now for hazard.

Exeunt

Act IV Scene II

The parlour at Charles Surface's house

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* MOSES

MOSES Well, sir, I think, as Sir Peter said, you have seen Mr Charles in high glory. 'Tis pity he's so extravagant.

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

MOSES And loves wine and women so much.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE But he wouldn't sell my picture. 5

MOSES And game so deep.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE But he wouldn't sell my picture. O here's Rowley!

Enter ROWLEY

ROWLEY So, Sir Oliver, I find you have made a purchase.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, yes, our young rake has parted with his ancestors like old tapestry. 10

ROWLEY And here has he commissioned me to redeliver you part of the purchase money—I mean, though, in your **necessitous** character of old Stanley.

MOSES Ah, there is the pity of all! He is so damned charitable.

ROWLEY And I left a hosier and two tailors in the hall, who, I'm sure, won't be paid, and this hundred would satisfy 'em! 15

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, well, I'll pay his debts, and his benevolences too. But now I am no more a broker and you shall introduce me to the elder brother as old Stanley.

ROWLEY Not yet a while. Sir Peter, I know, means to call there about this time. 20

Enter TRIP

TRIP O, gentlemen, I beg pardon for not showing you out. This way.—Moses, a word.

Exeunt TRIP *and* MOSES

SIR OLIVER SURFACE There's a fellow for you. Would you believe it! That puppy intercepted the Jew on our coming and wanted to raise money before he got to his master. 25

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

ROWLEY Indeed!

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, they are now planning an annuity business.

Ah, Master Rowley, in my day servants were content with the follies of their masters when they were worn a little threadbare, but now they have their vices, like their birthday clothes, with the gloss on.

30

Exeunt

Act IV Scene III

A library at Joseph Surface's house

JOSEPH SURFACE *and* SERVANT

JOSEPH SURFACE No letter from Lady Teazle?

SERVANT No, sir

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] I am surprised she hasn't 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. However, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great points in my favour.

5

[*Knocking offstage*]

SERVANT Sir, I believe that must be Lady Teazle.

JOSEPH SURFACE Hold! See whether it is or not before you go to the door. I have a particular message for you if it should be my brother.

10

SERVANT [*looking out the window*] 'Tis her ladyship, sir. She always leaves her chair at the milliner's in the next street.

JOSEPH SURFACE Stay, stay. Draw that screen before the window.

Servant draws the screen

That will do. My opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so curious a temper!

15

Exit SERVANT

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 her more in my power.

Enter LADY TEAZLE

LADY TEAZLE What, sentiment in soliloquy! Have you been very impatient now? O lud, don't pretend to look grave. I vow I couldn't come before.

20

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

LADY TEAZLE Upon my word, you ought to pity me. Do you know that Sir Peter is grown so ill-tempered to me of late, and so jealous! Of Charles too! That's the best of the story, isn't it?

25

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] I am glad my scandalous friends keep that up.

LADY 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 SURFACE [*aside*] Indeed I do not.—O 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. 30

JOSEPH SURFACE *and* LADY TEAZLE *sit*

LADY 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 has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation too. That's what vexes me. 35

JOSEPH SURFACE **Ay, madam, to be sure, that is the provoking circumstance.** Without foundation. Yes, yes, there's the mortification indeed, for when a slanderous story is believed against one, there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it. 40

LADY 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. 45

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 broke, and she owes it to the honour of her sex to endeavour to outwit him. 50

LADY 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't.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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. 55

LADY TEAZLE To be sure, what you say is very reasonable. And when the consciousness of my own innocence—

JOSEPH SURFACE Ah, my dear madam, there is the great mistake. 'Tis this very conscious innocence that is of the greatest prejudice to you. What is it makes you negligent of forms and careless of the world's opinion? Why, the consciousness of your innocence. What makes you thoughtless in your conduct and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences? Why, the consciousness of your innocence. What makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper and outrageous at his suspicions? Why, the consciousness of your own innocence. 60
65

LADY TEAZLE 'Tis very true.

JOSEPH SURFACE Now, 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. 70

LADY TEAZLE Do you think so?

JOSEPH SURFACE O, I'm 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 of too much health. 75

LADY TEAZLE So, so. Then I perceive your prescription is that I must sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation.

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

LADY TEAZLE Well, certainly this is the oddest doctrine, and the newest receipt for avoiding calumny. 80

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

LADY TEAZLE Why, if my understanding were once convinced—

JOSEPH SURFACE O, certainly, madam, your understanding *should* be convinced. Yes, yes; heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you *thought* wrong. No, no; I have too much honour to desire it. 85

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Ah, the ill effects of your country education, I see, still remain with you. 90

LADY TEAZLE I doubt 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 your honourable logic, after all. 95

JOSEPH SURFACE Then, by this hand which he is unworthy of—

Enter SERVANT

'Sdeath, you blockhead! What do you want?

SERVANT I beg pardon, sir; but I thought you wouldn't choose Sir Peter to come up without announcing him?

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir Peter! Oons and the devil!

LADY TEAZLE Sir Peter! O lud! I'm ruined, I'm ruined. 100

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

LADY TEAZLE O I'm undone. What will become of me now, Mr Logic? O mercy, he's on the stairs. I'll get behind here. And if ever I am so imprudent again—

LADY TEAZLE *goes behind the screen*

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

JOSEPH SURFACE Give me that book! 105
JOSEPH SURFACE *sits down.* SERVANT *pretends to adjust his hair.*

Enter SIR PETER

SIR PETER TEAZLE [*aside*] Ay, ever improving himself!—Mr Surface, Mr Surface!

JOSEPH SURFACE O, my dear Sir Peter, I beg your pardon. [*Gaping, and throws away the book*] I have been dozing over a stupid book! Well, 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. 110

SIR PETER TEAZLE 'Tis very neat indeed. Well, well, that's proper. And you make even your screen a source of knowledge—hung, I perceive, with maps. 115

JOSEPH SURFACE O yes, I find great use in that screen.

SIR PETER TEAZLE I dare say you must, certainly, when you want to find out anything in a hurry.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] Ay, or to hide anything in a hurry either.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, I have a little private business. 120

JOSEPH SURFACE [*to servant*] You needn't stay.

SERVANT No, sir.

Exit SERVANT

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

[SIR PETER TEAZLE *and* JOSEPH SURFACE *sit*]

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 good friend, Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me extremely unhappy. 125

JOSEPH SURFACE Indeed I'm very sorry to hear it.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, 'tis but too plain she has not the least regard for me; but, what's worse, I have pretty good authority to suspect that she must have formed an attachment to another. 130

JOSEPH SURFACE You astonish me.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, and, between ourselves, I think I have discovered the person.

JOSEPH SURFACE How! You alarm me exceedingly! 135

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ah, my dear friend, I knew you would sympathize with me.

JOSEPH SURFACE Yes, believe me, Sir Peter, such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you.

- SIR PETER TEAZLE I am convinced of it. Ah, it is a happiness to have a friend whom one can trust even with one's family secrets. But have you no guess who I mean? 140
- JOSEPH SURFACE I haven't the most distant idea. It can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE O, no. What say you to Charles? 145
- JOSEPH SURFACE My brother? Impossible!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ah, my dear friend, the goodness of your own heart misleads you; you judge of others by yourself.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Certainly, Sir Peter, the heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slow to credit another's treachery. 150
- SIR PETER TEAZLE True, but your brother has no sentiment; you never hear him talk so.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Yet I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much principle.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay, but what's her principle against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow? 155
- JOSEPH SURFACE That's very true.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE And then you know the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have a 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. 160
- JOSEPH SURFACE That's true, to be sure; they *would* laugh.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Laugh! Ay, and make ballads and paragraphs and the devil knows what of me. 165
- JOSEPH SURFACE No, you must never make it public.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 SURFACE Ay, there's the point; when ingratitude bars the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it. 170
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay, I that was in a manner left his guardian, in whose house he had been so often entertained, who never in my life denied him my advice.
- JOSEPH SURFACE O, '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 this should be proved on him, he is no longer a brother of mine! I disclaim kindred with him, for the man who can break through the laws of hospitality and attempt the wife of his friend deserves to be branded as the pest 175 180

of society.

SIR PETER TEAZLE What a difference there is between you! What noble sentiments!

JOSEPH SURFACE Yet I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honour.

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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; and if I were to die she shall find that I have not been inattentive to her interest while living. 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 after my death.

JOSEPH SURFACE This conduct, Sir Peter, is indeed truly generous! [*Aside*] I wish it may not corrupt my pupil.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, 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 SURFACE [*aside*] Nor I, if I could help it.

SIR PETER TEAZLE And now, my dear friend, if you please we will talk over the situation of your hopes with Maria.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*softly*] No, no, Sir Peter; another time, if you please.

SIR PETER TEAZLE I am sensibly chagrined at the little progress you seem to make in her affection.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*softly*] I beg you will not mention it. What are my disappointments when your happiness is in debate! [*Aside*] 'Sdeath, I should be ruined every way.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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. The man who is entrusted with his friend's distresses can never—

Enter SERVANT

Well, sir?

SERVANT Your brother, sir, is speaking to a gentleman in the street and

says he knows you are within.

JOSEPH SURFACE 'Sdeath, blockhead, I'm not within; I'm out for the day. 220

SIR PETER TEAZLE Stay, hold; a thought has struck me. You shall be at home.

JOSEPH SURFACE Well, well, let him up.

Exit SERVANT

He'll interrupt, Sir Peter. However—

SIR PETER TEAZLE Now, my good friend, oblige me, I entreat you. 225
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 SURFACE O fie, Sir Peter! Would you have me join in so mean a trick? To trepan my brother to— 230

SIR PETER TEAZLE Nay, you tell me you are *sure* he is innocent. If so, you do him the greatest service in 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—

SIR PETER TEAZLE *goes to the screen*

Hey, what the devil! There seems to be one listener here already. I'll swear I saw a petticoat. 235

JOSEPH SURFACE Ha, 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. Harkee. 'Tis a little French milliner, a silly 240
rogue that plagues me; and, having some character, on your coming she ran behind the screen.

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

JOSEPH SURFACE O, 'twill never go any further; you may depend on't. 245

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Well, go in then.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Sly rogue, sly rogue!

SIR PETER TEAZLE *goes into the closet*

JOSEPH SURFACE A very narrow escape indeed! And a curious situation 250
I'm in! To part man and wife in this manner!

LADY TEAZLE [*peeping from screen*] Couldn't I steal off?

JOSEPH SURFACE Keep close, my angel.

SIR PETER TEAZLE [*peeping out*] Joseph, tax him home.

JOSEPH SURFACE Back, my dear friend! 255

LADY TEAZLE [*peeping*] Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in?

JOSEPH SURFACE Be still, my life.

SIR PETER TEAZLE [*peeping*] You're sure the little milliner won't blab?

JOSEPH SURFACE In, in, my good Sir Peter! [*Aside*] 'Fore Gad, I wish I had a key to the door.

260

Enter CHARLES SURFACE

CHARLES SURFACE Hollo! Brother, what has been the matter? Your fellow wouldn't let me up at first. What, have you had a Jew or a wench with you?

JOSEPH SURFACE Neither, brother, I assure you.

CHARLES SURFACE But what has made Sir Peter steal off? I thought he had been with you.

265

JOSEPH SURFACE He *was*, brother; but, hearing you were coming, he didn't choose to stay.

CHARLES SURFACE What, was the old gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?

270

JOSEPH SURFACE No, sir; but I am sorry to find, Charles, that you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great uneasiness.

CHARLES SURFACE Yes, they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men. But how so, pray?

JOSEPH SURFACE To be plain with you, brother, he thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's affections from him.

275

CHARLES SURFACE Who, I? O lud, not I, upon my word. Ha, ha, ha! So the old fellow has found out that he has got a young wife, has he? Or, what's worse, has her ladyship discovered that she has an old husband?

280

JOSEPH SURFACE This is no subject to jest on, brother. He who can laugh—

CHARLES SURFACE True, brother, as you were going to say. Then, seriously, I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

285

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aloud*] Well, it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this.

CHARLES SURFACE To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy to me; but, upon my soul, I never gave her the least encouragement. Besides, you know my attachment to Maria.

290

JOSEPH SURFACE But, sure, brother, even if Lady Teazle had betrayed the fondest partiality for you—

CHARLES SURFACE Why, look'ee, Joseph. I hope I shall never

- deliberately do a dishonourable action; but, if a pretty woman were
purposely to throw herself in my way, and that pretty woman married 295
to a man old enough to be her father—
- JOSEPH SURFACE Well!
- CHARLES SURFACE Why, I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little
of your morality; that's all. But, brother, do you know now that you
surprise me exceedingly by naming *me* with Lady Teazle, for, faith I 300
always understood *you* were her favourite?
- JOSEPH SURFACE O, for shame, Charles; this retort is foolish.
- CHARLES SURFACE Nay, I swear I have seen you exchange such
significant glances.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Nay, nay, sir, this is no jest. 305
- CHARLES SURFACE Egad, I'm serious. Don't you remember? One day
when I called here—
- JOSEPH SURFACE Nay, prithee, Charles—
- CHARLES SURFACE And found you together.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Zounds, sir, I insist— 310
- CHARLES SURFACE And another time when your servant—
- JOSEPH SURFACE **Brother, brother, a word with you.** [*Aside*] Gad, I must
stop him.
- CHARLES SURFACE Informed me, I say, that—
- JOSEPH SURFACE Hush! I beg your pardon, but Sir Peter has overheard 315
all we have been saying. I knew you would clear yourself, or I shouldn't
have consented.
- CHARLES SURFACE How, Sir Peter! Where is he?
- JOSEPH SURFACE Softly. There.
- [JOSEPH SURFACE *points to the closet*]
- CHARLES SURFACE O, 'fore heaven, I'll have him out.—Sir Peter, come 320
forth!
- JOSEPH SURFACE No, no!
- CHARLES SURFACE I say, Sir Peter, come into court.
- CHARLES SURFACE *pulls in* SIR PETER TEAZLE
What, my old guardian, what, turn inquisitor and take evidence,
incog.? 325
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Give me your hand, Charles; I believe I have
suspected you wrongfully. But you mustn't be angry with Joseph; 'twas
my plan.
- CHARLES SURFACE Indeed!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE But I acquit you. I promise you I don't think near so 330
ill of you as I did; what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.
- CHARLES SURFACE Egad, then 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more—

[*half aside*] wasn't it, Joseph?

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ah, you would have retorted on him.

CHARLES SURFACE Ay, ay; that was a joke. 335

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

CHARLES SURFACE But you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter for all that—[*half aside*] mightn't he, Joseph?

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, well, I believe you.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] Would they were both well out of the room. 340

Enter SERVANT, *who whispers to* JOSEPH SURFACE

SIR PETER TEAZLE And in future, perhaps, we may not be such strangers.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside, to* SERVANT] Lady Sneerwell! Stop her by all means.

Exit SERVANT

Gentlemen, I beg pardon; I must wait on you down stairs. Here is a person come on particular business. 345

CHARLES SURFACE Well, you can see him in another room. Sir Peter and I haven't met a long time and I have something to say to him.

JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside*] They must not be left together. I'll contrive to send Lady Sneerwell away, and return directly. [*Aside to Sir Peter*] 350

Sir Peter, not a word of the French milliner.

SIR PETER TEAZLE O not for the world!

Exit JOSEPH SURFACE

Ah, Charles, if you associated more with your brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation. He is a man of sentiment. Well, there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment! 355

CHARLES SURFACE 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 in his house as a girl.

SIR PETER TEAZLE No, no, come, come, you wrong him. No, no, Joseph is no rake, but he is not such a saint in that respect either. [*Aside*] 360
I have a great mind to tell him; we should have such a laugh.

CHARLES SURFACE O hang him! He's a very anchorite, a young hermit.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Harkee; you must not abuse him. He may chance to hear of it again, I promise you.

CHARLES SURFACE Why, you won't tell him? 365

SIR PETER TEAZLE No, but—this way—[*Aside*] Egad, I'll tell him!— Harkee. Have you a mind to have a good laugh at Joseph?

CHARLES SURFACE I should like it of all things.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

- SIR PETER TEAZLE Then, i'faith, we will. [*Aside*] I'll be quit with him
for discovering me. [*Whispering*] He had a girl with him when I called. 370
- CHARLES SURFACE What, Joseph! You jest.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Hush! [*Whispers*] A little French milliner. And the
best of the jest is she's in the room now.
- CHARLES SURFACE The devil she is.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Hush. I tell you. [*Points*] 375
- CHARLES SURFACE Behind the screen! 'Slife, let us unveil her.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE No, no! He's coming. You shan't indeed.
- CHARLES SURFACE O, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Not for the world. Joseph will never forgive me.
- CHARLES SURFACE I'll stand by you. 380
- SIR PETER TEAZLE [*struggling with Charles*] Od's, here he is.

[JOSEPH SURFACE *enters just as CHARLES SURFACE
throws down the screen*]

- CHARLES SURFACE Lady Teazle!—by all that's wonderful!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Lady Teazle!—by all that's horrible!
- CHARLES SURFACE Sir Peter, this is one of the smartest French
milliners I ever saw! Egad, you seem all to have been diverting 385
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 please to explain this matter? What, 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 390
perfectly understand one another. So I'll leave you to yourselves.
[*Going*] Brother, I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man so
much uneasiness! Sir Peter, there's nothing in the world so noble as a
man of sentiment!
- Exit CHARLES SURFACE.*
- SIR PETER TEAZLE, LADY TEAZLE,
and JOSEPH SURFACE stand for some time looking at one another
- JOSEPH SURFACE Sir Peter, notwithstanding I confess that appearances 395
are against me, if you will afford me your patience, I make no doubt
but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE If you please.
- JOSEPH SURFACE The fact is, sir, that Lady Teazle, knowing my
pretensions to your ward Maria—I say Lady Teazle, being 400
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 those pretensions; but on your coming, being apprehensive, as I said, of your jealousy, she withdrew. And this, you may depend on't, is the whole truth of the matter. 405
- SIR PETER TEAZLE A very clear account, upon my word, and I dare swear the lady will vouch for every article of it.
- LADY TEAZLE [*coming forward*] For not one word of it, Sir Peter.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE How! Don't you even think it worthwhile to agree in the lie? 410
- LADY TEAZLE There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE I believe you, upon my soul, ma'am.
- JOSEPH SURFACE [*aside to Lady Teazle*] 'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me? 415
- LADY TEAZLE Good Mr Hypocrite, by your leave, I will speak for myself.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay, let her alone, sir. You'll find she'll make out a better story than you without prompting.
- LADY 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. But I came, seduced by his insidious arguments, at least to listen to his pretended passion, if not to sacrifice your honour to his baseness. 420
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Now I believe the truth is coming indeed.
- JOSEPH SURFACE The woman's mad. 425
- LADY 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 to my heart. And, had I left the place without the shame of this discovery, my future life should have spoke the sincerity of my gratitude. As for that smooth-tongue 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. 440 445
- Exit* LADY TEAZLE
- JOSEPH SURFACE Notwithstanding all this, Sir Peter, heaven knows—
- SIR PETER TEAZLE That you are a villain! And so I leave you to your conscience.
- JOSEPH SURFACE You are too rash, Sir Peter. You shall hear me! The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to— 440
- SIR PETER TEAZLE O!
- Exit* SIR PETER TEAZLE, JOSEPH SURFACE *following and speaking*

Act V Scene I

The library at Joseph Surface's house

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE *and* SERVANT

JOSEPH SURFACE Mr Stanley! Why should you think I would see him?
You must know he comes to ask something!

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Pshaw! Blockhead, to suppose that I should now be in 5
a temper to receive visits from poor relations! Well, why don't you show the fellow up?

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Go, fool! 10

Exit SERVANT

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'm in a rare humour to listen to other people's distresses! I shan't be able to bestow a benevolent sentiment on Stanley. So, here he comes, and Rowley with him. I *must* try to recover myself and put a 15
little charity into my face, however.

Exit JOSEPH SURFACE

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* ROWLEY

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

ROWLEY It was, sir. But I doubt you are come a little too abruptly; his nerves are so weak, that the sight of a poor relation may be too much for him. I should have gone first, to break you to him. 20

SIR OLIVER SURFACE A 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 his way of thinking, I can't pretend to decide, for, 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 25
as to indulge himself in the exercise of it.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yet has a string of charitable sentiments, I suppose, at his fingers' ends!

ROWLEY Or rather at his tongue's end, Sir Oliver; for I believe there is no sentiment he has more faith in than that 'charity begins at home'. 30

SIR OLIVER SURFACE And his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all.

ROWLEY I doubt you'll find it so. But he's coming. I mustn't seem to interrupt you; and you know, immediately as you leave him, I come in to announce your arrival in your real character. 35

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

ROWLEY Without losing a moment.

Exit ROWLEY

SIR OLIVER SURFACE So. I don't like the complaisance of his features.

Enter JOSEPH SURFACE *and* SERVANT

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, I beg you ten thousand pardons for keeping you a moment waiting. Mr Stanley, I presume? 40

SIR OLIVER SURFACE At your service.

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

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Dear sir, there's no occasion. [*Aside*] Too civil by half! 45

[JOSEPH SURFACE *and* SIR OLIVER SURFACE *sit*]

JOSEPH SURFACE 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, Mr Stanley?

SIR OLIVER SURFACE I was, sir—so nearly that my present poverty, I fear, may do discredit to her wealthy children. Else I should not have presumed to trouble you. 50

JOSEPH SURFACE 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. 55

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

JOSEPH SURFACE I wish he were here, sir, with all my heart. You should not want an advocate with him, believe me, sir. 60

SIR OLIVER SURFACE 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 SURFACE My dear sir, you were strangely misinformed.

- Sir Oliver is a worthy man, a very worthy sort of man. But avarice, 65
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 SURFACE What, has he never transmitted you bullion, 70
rupees, pagodas?
- JOSEPH SURFACE O, dear sir, nothing of the kind. No, no, a few presents
now and then. China, shawls, congou tea, avadavats, and Indian
crackers. Little more, believe me.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Here's gratitude for twelve thousand 75
pounds! **Avadavats and Indian crackers!**
- JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SURFACE [*aside*] Not I for one! 80
- JOSEPH SURFACE 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 power of serving *you*, Mr Stanley, as my heart
directs. 85
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Dissembler!—Then, sir, you cannot assist
me?
- JOSEPH SURFACE At present, it grieves me to say, I cannot; but whenever
I have the ability you may depend upon hearing from me.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE I am extremely sorry. 90
- JOSEPH SURFACE Not more than I am, believe me. To pity, without the
power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Kind sir, your most obedient humble servant.
- JOSEPH SURFACE You leave me deeply affected, Mr Stanley.
[*To SERVANT*] William, be ready to open the door. 95
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE O, dear sir, no ceremony.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Your very obedient.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Sir, your most obsequious.
- JOSEPH SURFACE You may depend on hearing from me, whenever I can
be of service. 100
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Sweet sir, you are too good.
- JOSEPH SURFACE In the meantime I wish you health and spirits.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Your ever grateful and perpetual humble servant.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, yours as sincerely.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE [*aside*] Now I am satisfied! 105

Exeunt SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* SERVANT

JOSEPH SURFACE [*alone*] This is one bad effect of a good character; it invites applications 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. 110

Enter ROWLEY *and* SERVANT

ROWLEY Mr Surface, your servant. I was apprehensive of interrupting you, though my business demands immediate attention, as this note will inform you. 115

JOSEPH SURFACE Always happy to see Mr Rowley. [*Reads*] How! 'Oliver Surface'! My uncle arrived!

ROWLEY He is indeed—we have just parted—quite well after a speedy voyage, and impatient to embrace his worthy nephew.

JOSEPH SURFACE I am astonished!—[*To* SERVANT] William, stop Mr Stanley, if he's not gone. 120

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

JOSEPH SURFACE 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. 125

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

ROWLEY You will be delighted to see how well he looks. 130

JOSEPH SURFACE O, I'm rejoiced to hear it. [*Aside*] Just at this time!

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

JOSEPH SURFACE Do, do; pray give my best duty and affection. Indeed I cannot express the sensations I feel at the thought of seeing him!

Exit ROWLEY

His coming just at this time is the cruellest piece of ill fortune! 135

Exit

Act V Scene II

Sir Peter Teazle's house

Enter MRS CANDOUR *and* MAID

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

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

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

MRS 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

5

Exit MAID

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

Enter SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE

O, dear Sir Benjamin, you have heard, I suppose?

10

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Of Lady Teazle and Mr Surface?

MRS CANDOUR And Sir Peter's discovery?

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE O, the strangest piece of business to be sure.

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

15

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Now I don't pity Sir Peter at all. He was so extravagant, partial to Mr Surface.

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

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE No such thing. Mr Surface is the gallant.

20

MRS CANDOUR No, no, Charles is the man. 'Twas Mr Surface brought Sir Peter on purpose to discover them.

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE I tell you I have it from one—

MRS CANDOUR And I have it from one—

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Who had it from one who had it—

25

MRS CANDOUR From one immediately—but here's Lady Sneerwell. Perhaps she knows the whole affair.

Enter LADY SNEERWELL

- LADY SNEERWELL So, my dear Mrs Candour, here's a sad affair of our friend Lady Teazle.
- MRS CANDOUR Ay! My dear friend, who could have thought it! 30
- LADY SNEERWELL Well, there is no trusting appearances. Though, indeed, she was always too lively for me.
- MRS CANDOUR To be sure her manners were a little too free; but she was very young.
- LADY SNEERWELL And had indeed some good qualities. 35
- MRS CANDOUR So she had indeed. But have you heard the particulars?
- LADY SNEERWELL No; but everybody says that Mr Surface—
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Ay, there; I told you Mr Surface was the man.
- MRS CANDOUR No, no, indeed; the assignation was with Charles.
- LADY SNEERWELL With Charles! You alarm me, Mrs Candour. 40
- MRS CANDOUR Yes, yes, he was the lover. Mr Surface, do him justice, was only the informer.
- SIR BENJAMIN 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—
- MRS CANDOUR Sir Peter's wound! O mercy! I didn't hear a word of their fighting. 45
- LADY SNEERWELL Nor I a syllable!
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE No! What, no mention of the duel?
- MRS CANDOUR Not a word.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE O lord, yes, yes; they fought before they left the room. 50
- LADY SNEERWELL Pray let us hear.
- MRS CANDOUR Ay, do oblige us with the duel.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE 'Sir', says Sir Peter, immediately after the discovery, 'you are a most ungrateful fellow'. 55
- MRS CANDOUR Ay, to Charles.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE No, no, to Mr Surface. 'A most ungrateful fellow; and old as I am, sir', says he, 'I insist on immediate satisfaction'.
- MRS CANDOUR Ay, that must have been to Charles, for 'tis very unlikely Mr Surface should go to fight in his own house. 60
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Gad's life, ma'am, not at all. 'Giving me immediate satisfaction.' On this, madam, 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— 65

Enter CRABTREE

CRABTREE With pistols, nephew. I have it from undoubted authority.

MRS CANDOUR O, Mr Crabtree, then it is all true.

CRABTREE Too true indeed, ma'am, and Sir Peter's dangerously wounded. 70

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE By a thrust in *seconde*, quite through his left side.

CRABTREE By a bullet lodged in the thorax.

MRS CANDOUR Mercy on me! Poor Sir Peter!

CRABTREE Yes, ma'am; though Charles would have avoided the matter if he could. 75

MRS CANDOUR I knew Charles was the person.

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE O, my uncle, I see, knows nothing of the matter.

CRABTREE But Sir Peter taxed him with the basest ingratitude. 80

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE That I told you, you know.

CRABTREE Do, nephew, let me speak. And insisted on immediate—

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Just as I said.

CRABTREE Od's life, nephew, allow others to know something too.

A pair of pistols lay on the bureau; for Mr Surface, it seems, had come the night before late from Salt Hill, where he had been to see the Montem with a friend who has a son at Eton. So, unluckily, the pistols were left charged. 85

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE I heard nothing of this.

CRABTREE Sir Peter forced Charles to take one, and they fired—it 90

seems, pretty nearly together. Charles's shot took place, 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 chimney piece, 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. 95

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

LADY SNEERWELL [*aside*] I am more interested in this affair than they imagine and must have better information. 100

Exit LADY SNEERWELL

SIR BENJAMIN 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.

MRS CANDOUR But pray where is Sir Peter at present? 105
 CRABTREE O, they brought him home, and he is now in the house,
 though the servants are ordered to deny it.
 MRS CANDOUR I believe so. And Lady Teazle, I suppose, attending
 him?
 CRABTREE Yes, yes. I saw one of the faculty enter just before me. 110
 SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Hey, who comes here?
 CRABTREE O, this is he; the physician, depend on't.
 MRS CANDOUR O certainly, it must be the physician, and now we shall
 know.

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE

CRABTREE Well, doctor, what hopes? 115
 MRS CANDOUR Ay, doctor, how's your patient?
 SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Now, doctor, isn't it a wound with a small-
 sword?
 CRABTREE A bullet lodged in the thorax, for a hundred!
 SIR OLIVER SURFACE Doctor! A wound with a small-sword! And a bullet 120
 in the thorax! Oons, are you mad, good people?
 SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Perhaps, sir, you are not a doctor.
 SIR OLIVER SURFACE Truly 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 this accident? 125
 SIR OLIVER SURFACE Not a word!
 CRABTREE Not of his being dangerously wounded?
 SIR OLIVER SURFACE The devil he is!
 SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Run through the body.
 CRABTREE Shot in the breast. 130
 SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE By one Mr Surface.
 CRABTREE Ay, the younger.
 SIR OLIVER SURFACE Hey! What the plague! You seem to differ
 strangely in your accounts. However, you agree that Sir Peter is
 dangerously wounded? 135
 SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE O, yes, we agree there.
 CRABTREE Yes, yes, I believe there can be no doubt of that.
 SIR OLIVER SURFACE 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. 140

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

Enter SIR PETER TEAZLE

- Od's heart, Sir Peter, you are come in good time, I promise you, for we had just given you over.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Egad, uncle, this is the most sudden recovery!
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Why, man, what do you do out of bed with a small-sword through your body, and a bullet lodged in your thorax! 145
- SIR PETER TEAZLE A small-sword and a bullet?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ay, these gentlemen would have killed you, without law or physic, and wanted to dub me a doctor, to make me an accomplice.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Why, what is all this? 150
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE We rejoice, Sir Peter, that the story of the duel is not true, and are sincerely sorry for your other misfortunes.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE [*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. 155
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Sir, what business is that of yours?
- MRS CANDOUR Though, indeed, as Sir Peter made so good a husband, he's very much to be pitied!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Plague on your pity, ma'am, I desire none of it.
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE However, Sir Peter, you must not mind the laughing and jests you will meet with on the occasion. 160
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Sir, I desire to be master in my own house.
- CRABTREE 'Tis no uncommon case; that's one comfort.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE I insist on being left to myself. Without ceremony, I insist on your leaving my house directly! 165
- MRS CANDOUR Well, well, we are going; and depend on't, we'll make the best report of you we can.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Leave my house!
- CRABTREE And tell how hardly you have been treated.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Leave my house! 170
- SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE And how patiently you bear it.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Fiends! Vipers! Furies! O that their own venom would choke them.
- Exeunt* MRS CANDOUR, SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE, CRABTREE
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE They are very provoking indeed, Sir Peter.

Enter ROWLEY

- ROWLEY I heard high words. What has ruffled you, Sir Peter? 175

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

- SIR PETER TEAZLE Pshaw, what signifies asking? Do I ever pass a day without my vexations?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, I'm not inquisitive. I come only to tell you that I have seen both my nephews in the manner we proposed.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE A precious couple they are! 180
- ROWLEY Yes, and Sir Oliver is convinced that your judgement was right, Sir Peter.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, I find Joseph is indeed the man, after all.
- ROWLEY Yes, as Sir Peter says, he's a man of sentiment.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE And acts up to the sentiments he professes. 185
- ROWLEY It certainly is edification to hear him talk.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE O, he's a model for the young men of the age! But how's this, Sir Peter? You don't join in your friend Joseph's praise as I expected.
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Sir Oliver, we live in a damned wicked world, and the fewer we praise the better. 190
- ROWLEY What, do *you* say so, Sir Peter, who were never mistaken in your life?
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Pshaw! Plague on you both! I see by your sneering you have heard the whole affair. I shall go mad among you! 195
- 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 TEAZLE And does Sir Oliver know all too?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Every circumstance! 200
- SIR PETER TEAZLE What, of the closet, and the screen, hey?
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Yes, yes, and the little French milliner. O, I have been vastly diverted with the story. Ha, ha!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 'Twas very pleasant!
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE I never laughed more in my life, I assure you. 205
Ha, ha!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE O vastly diverting. Ha, ha!
- ROWLEY To be sure, Joseph, with his sentiments! Ha, ha!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, yes, his sentiments. Ha, ha! A hypocritical villain!
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ay, and that rogue Charles! To pull Sir Peter out of the closet! Ha, ha! 210
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Ha, ha! 'Twas devilish entertaining, to be sure.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ha, ha! Egad, Sir Peter, I should like to have seen your face when the screen was thrown down. Ha, ha!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Yes, yes; my face when the screen was thrown down. 215
Ha, ha! O, I must never show my head again!

SIR OLIVER SURFACE 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 TEAZLE O, 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. O yes, and then, of a morning, to read the paragraphs about Mr S—, Lady T—and Sir P—, will be so entertaining! 220

ROWLEY Without affectation, Sir Peter, you may despise the ridicule of fools. But I see Lady Teazle going towards the next room. I am sure you must desire a reconciliation as earnestly as she does. 225

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Perhaps my being here prevents her coming to you. Well, I'll leave honest Rowley to mediate between you. But he must bring you all presently to Mr Surface's, where I am now returning—if not to reclaim a libertine, at least to expose hypocrisy. 230

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

Exit SIR OLIVER SURFACE

SIR PETER TEAZLE She is not coming here, you see, Rowley.

ROWLEY No, but she has left the door of that room open, you perceive. See, she is in tears! 235

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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 O, this is ungenerous in you.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, I know not what to think. You remember, Rowley, the letter I found of hers, evidently intended for Charles? 240

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

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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. 245

ROWLEY Certainly.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Though, when it is known that we are reconciled, people will laugh at me ten times more!

ROWLEY Let them laugh, and retort their malice only by showing them you are happy in spite of it. 250

SIR PETER TEAZLE 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—

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

SIR PETER TEAZLE Hold, my dear 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. 255

Exeunt

Act V Scene III

The library at Joseph Surface's house

JOSEPH SURFACE *and* LADY SNEERWELL

LADY SNEERWELL Impossible! Will not Sir Peter immediately be reconciled to Charles, and of consequence no longer oppose his union with Maria? The thought is distraction to me!

JOSEPH SURFACE Can passion furnish a remedy?

LADY SNEERWELL No, nor cunning either. O, I was a fool, an idiot, to league with such a blunderer! 5

JOSEPH SURFACE Sure, Lady Sneerwell, I am the greatest sufferer; yet you see I bear the accident with calmness.

LADY 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. 10

JOSEPH SURFACE But why should your reproaches fall on me for this disappointment?

LADY SNEERWELL Are not you the cause of it? What had you to do, to bate in your pursuit of Maria to pervert Lady Teazle by the way? Had you not a sufficient field for your roguery in blinding Sir Peter and supplanting your brother? I hate such an avarice of crimes. 'Tis an unfair monopoly and never prospers. 15

JOSEPH SURFACE Well, I admit I have been to blame. I confess I deviated from the direct road of wrong. But I don't think we're so totally defeated neither. 20

LADY SNEERWELL No!

JOSEPH SURFACE You tell me you have made a trial of Snake since we met, and that you still believe him faithful to us. 25

LADY SNEERWELL I do believe so.

JOSEPH SURFACE 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, which some of his former letters to you will serve to support. 30

LADY SNEERWELL This indeed might have assisted.

JOSEPH SURFACE Come, come; it is not too late yet.

[*Knocking offstage*]

But hark! This is probably my uncle Sir Oliver. Retire to that room.
We'll consult farther when he's gone.

LADY SNEERWELL Well, but if he should find you out too. 35

JOSEPH SURFACE O, I have no fear of that. Sir Peter will hold his tongue
for his own credit's sake, and you may depend on't I shall soon
discover Sir Oliver's weak side!

LADY SNEERWELL I have no diffidence of your abilities; only be
constant to one roguery at a time. 40

JOSEPH SURFACE I will, I will.

Exit LADY SNEERWELL

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—Hey! What! This is not Sir Oliver, but
old Stanley again! Plague on't, that he should return to tease me just
now! We shall have Sir Oliver come and find him here and— 45

Enter SIR OLIVER SURFACE *and* SERVANT

Gad's life, Mr Stanley, why have you come back to plague me just at
this time? You must not stay now, upon my word!

SIR OLIVER SURFACE 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. 50

JOSEPH SURFACE 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 SURFACE No, Sir Oliver and I must be acquainted.

JOSEPH SURFACE Zounds, sir, then I insist on your quitting the room
directly. 55

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Nay, sir!

JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, I insist on't. [*To* SERVANT] Here, William, show
this gentleman out.—Since you compel me, sir, not one moment.
[*Going to push* SIR OLIVER SURFACE *out*] This is such insolence.

Enter CHARLES SURFACE

CHARLES SURFACE Hey-dey! 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? 60

JOSEPH SURFACE So! He has been with you too, has he?

CHARLES SURFACE To be sure he has! Why, 'tis as honest a little—but
sure, Joseph, you have not been borrowing money too, have you? 65

JOSEPH SURFACE Borrowing? No! But, brother, you know here we

- expect Sir Oliver every—
 CHARLES SURFACE O Gad, that's true! Noll mustn't find the little
 broker here, to be sure.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Yet Mr Stanley insists— 70
- CHARLES SURFACE Stanley? Why his name's Premium.
- JOSEPH SURFACE No, no, Stanley.
- CHARLES SURFACE No, no, Premium.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Well, no matter which, but—
- CHARLES SURFACE Ay, ay, Stanley or Premium, 'tis the same thing, as
 you say, for I suppose he goes by half a hundred names, besides A.B.s
 at the coffee-house. 75
- [Knock offstage]
- JOSEPH SURFACE Death! Here's Sir Oliver at the door.
 [Knocking again]
- Now I beg, Mr Stanley—
- CHARLES SURFACE Ay, and I beg, Mr Premium— 80
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Gentlemen!
- JOSEPH SURFACE Sir, by heaven, you shall go.
- CHARLES SURFACE Ay, out with him certainly.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE This violence—
- JOSEPH SURFACE 'Tis your own fault. 85
- CHARLES SURFACE Out with him, to be sure.
- As JOSEPH and CHARLES SURFACE are forcing SIR OLIVER SURFACE out,
 enter SIR PETER TEAZLE, LADY TEAZLE, MARIA, and ROWLEY*
- SIR PETER TEAZLE My old friend Sir Oliver! Hey, what in the name of
 wonder! Here are dutiful nephews! Assault their uncle at his first visit!
- LADY TEAZLE Indeed, Sir Oliver, 'twas well we came in to rescue you.
- ROWLEY Truly it was, for I perceive, Sir Oliver, the character of old 90
 Stanley was no protection to you.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Nor of Premium either. The necessities of the
 former couldn't 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. 95
- After a pause, JOSEPH and CHARLES SURFACE turn to each other*
- JOSEPH SURFACE Charles!
- CHARLES SURFACE Joseph!
- JOSEPH SURFACE 'Tis now complete!
- CHARLES SURFACE Very.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Sir Peter, my friend—and Rowley too—look on 100

- that elder nephew of mine. You know what he has already received from my bounty, and 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. 105
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Sir Oliver, I should be more surprised at this declaration if I had not myself found him selfish, treacherous and hypocritical.
- LADY TEAZLE And if the gentleman pleads not guilty to these, pray let him call *me* to his character. 110
- SIR PETER TEAZLE 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.
- CHARLES SURFACE [*aside*] If they talk this way to honesty, what will they say to *me* by and by! 115
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE As for that prodigal, his brother there—
- CHARLES SURFACE [*aside*] Ay, now comes my turn. The damned family pictures will ruin me.
- JOSEPH SURFACE Sir Oliver! Uncle! Will you honour me with a hearing? 120
- CHARLES SURFACE [*aside*] Now, if Joseph would make one of his long speeches, I might recollect myself a little.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE I suppose you would undertake to justify yourself entirely.
- JOSEPH SURFACE I trust I could. 125
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Pshaw! [*To CHARLES SURFACE*] Well, sir, and *you* could *justify* yourself too, I suppose!
- CHARLES SURFACE Not that I know of, Sir Oliver.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE What, little Premium has been let too much into the secret, I presume. 130
- CHARLES SURFACE True, sir. But they were family secrets and should never be mentioned again, you know.
- ROWLEY Come, Sir Oliver, I know you cannot speak of Charles's follies with anger.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Od's heart, no more I can; nor with gravity 135 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 SURFACE To be sure, Sir Oliver, I did make a little free with the family canvas; that's the truth on't. My ancestors may certainly 140 rise in evidence against me; there's no denying it. But believe me

sincere when I tell you—and upon my soul I would not say so 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. 145

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Charles, I believe you. Give me your hand again. The ill-looking little fellow **over the settee** has made your peace, sirrah!

CHARLES SURFACE Then, sir, my gratitude to the original is still increased. 150

LADY TEAZLE [*pointing to Maria*] Yet I believe, Sir Oliver, here is one whom Charles is still more anxious to be reconciled to.

SIR OLIVER SURFACE O, I have heard of his attachment there; and, with the young lady's pardon, if I construe right that blush—

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, child, speak your sentiments. 155

MARIA Sir, I have little to say, but that I shall rejoice to hear that he is happy. For me, whatever claim I had to his affection, I willingly resign it to one who has a better title.

CHARLES SURFACE How, Maria!

SIR PETER TEAZLE Hey-day, what's the mystery now? While he appeared an incorrigible rake, you would give your hand to no one else; and now that he's likely to reform, I warrant you won't have him! 160

MARIA His own heart—and Lady Sneerwell—know the cause.

CHARLES SURFACE Lady Sneerwell!

JOSEPH SURFACE 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. 165

JOSEPH SURFACE *goes to the door*

Enter LADY SNEERWELL

SIR PETER TEAZLE So! Another French milliner, egad! He has one in every room in the house, I suppose.

LADY SNEERWELL Ungrateful Charles! Well may you be surprised and feel for the indelicate situation which your perfidy has forced me into. 170

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

JOSEPH SURFACE I believe, sir, there is but the evidence of one person more necessary to make it extremely clear. 175

SIR PETER TEAZLE And that person, I imagine, is Mr Snake.—Rowley, you were perfectly right to bring him with us, and pray let him appear.

ROWLEY Walk in, Mr Snake.

Enter SNAKE

- I thought his testimony might be wanted. However, it happens unluckily that he comes to confront Lady Sneerwell and not to support her. 180
- LADY 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 have unfortunately been offered double to speak the truth. 185
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Plot and counterplot, egad. I wish your ladyship joy of success of your negotiation.
- LADY SNEERWELL The torments of shame and disappointment on you all! 190
- LADY TEAZLE Hold, Lady Sneerwell. Before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken in writing letters to me from 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 granted her, as she leaves off practice and kills characters no longer. 195
- LADY SNEERWELL You too, madam? Provoking! Insolent! May your husband live these fifty years!
- Exit LADY SNEERWELL*
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Oons, what a fury! 200
- LADY TEAZLE What a malicious creature it is!
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Hey, not for her last wish?
- LADY TEAZLE O, no.
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well, sir, and what have you to say now?
- JOSEPH SURFACE 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 to say. However, lest her revengeful spirit should prompt her to injure my brother, I had certainly better follow her directly. 205
- Exit JOSEPH SURFACE*
- SIR PETER TEAZLE Moral to the last drop!
- SIR OLIVER SURFACE Ay, and marry her, Joseph, if you can. Oil and vinegar, egad! You'll do very well together.
- ROWLEY I believe we have no more occasion for Mr Snake at present.
- SNAKE Before I go, I beg pardon once for all for whatever uneasiness I have been the humble instrument of causing to the parties present. 215

SIR PETER TEAZLE Well, 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 TEAZLE Hey! What the plague! Are you ashamed of having done a right thing once in your life? 220

SNAKE Ah, 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 SURFACE Well, well, we'll not traduce you by saying anything in your praise. Never fear. 225

Exit SNAKE

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

CHARLES and MARIA talk apart

LADY TEAZLE See, Sir Oliver; there needs no persuasion now to reconcile your nephew and Maria. 230

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

CHARLES SURFACE Thank you, my dear uncle.

SIR PETER TEAZLE What, you rogue, don't you ask the girl's consent first? 235

CHARLES SURFACE O, I have done that a long time—above a minute—ago, and she has looked yes.

MARIA For shame, Charles.—I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word!

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Well then, the fewer the better. May your love for each other never know abatement. 240

SIR PETER TEAZLE And may you live as happily together as Lady Teazle and I—intend to do.

CHARLES SURFACE Rowley, my old friend, I am sure you congratulate me, and I suspect too that I owe you much. 245

SIR OLIVER SURFACE You do indeed, Charles.

ROWLEY If my efforts to serve you had not succeeded, you would have been in my debt for the attempt; but deserve to be happy, and you overpay me.

SIR PETER TEAZLE Ay, honest Rowley always said you would reform. 250

CHARLES SURFACE Why, as to reforming, Sir Peter, I'll make no promises; and that I take to be a proof that I intend to set about it. But here shall be my monitor, my gentle guide. Ah, can I leave the virtuous path those eyes illumine?

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

Though thou, dear maid, shouldst waive thy beauty's sway, 255
Thou still must rule, because I will obey.
An humbled fugitive from folly view,
No sanctuary near, but love and *you*.
[*To the audience*]
You can indeed each anxious fear remove, 260
For even scandal dies if you approve.

Exeunt

Epilogue

Written by G. Colman, Esq.

Spoken by Mrs Abington in the character of Lady Teazle

I, who was late so volatile and gay,
 Like a trade-wind, must now blow all one way,
 Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
 To one old rusty weathercock, my spouse.
 So wills our virtuous bard—the motley Bayes 5
 Of crying epilogues and laughing plays!
 Old bachelors, who marry smart young wives,
 Learn from our play to regulate your lives!
 Each bring his dear to town, all faults upon her—
 London will prove the very source of honour. 10
 Plunged fairly in, like a cold bath, it serves,
 When principles relax, to brace the nerves.
 Such is my case; and yet I must deplore
 That the gay dream of dissipation's o'er;
 And say, ye fair, was ever lively wife, 15
 Born with a genius for the highest life,
 Like me untimely blasted in her bloom,
 Like me condemned to such a dismal doom?
 Save money, when I just knew how to waste it!
 Leave London, just as I began to taste it! 20
 Must I then watch the early-crowing cock,
 The melancholy ticking of a clock,
 In the lone rustic hall for ever pounded,
 With dogs, cats, rats, and squalling brats surrounded?
 With humble curate can I now retire, 25
 While good Sir Peter boozes with the squire,
 And at backgammon mortify my soul
 That pants for loo or flutters at a vole?
 Seven's the main! Dear sound, that must expire,
 Lost at hot cockles round a Christmas fire! 30
 The transient hour of fashion too soon spent,
 Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
 Farewell the plumèd head, the cushioned tête,
 That takes the cushion from its proper seat!
 That spirit-stirring drum!—card-drums, I mean— 35
 Spadille, odd trick, pam, basto, king and queen!

And you, ye knockers, that with brazen throat
The welcome visitors' approach denote,
Farewell! All quality of high renown,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious town, 40
Farewell! Your revels I partake no more,
And Lady Teazle's occupation's o'er!
All this I told our bard. He smiled, and said 'twas clear
I ought to play deep tragedy next year.
Meanwhile he drew wise morals from his play, 45
And in these solemn periods stalked away,
'Blessed were the fair, like you her faults who stopped,
And closed her follies when the curtain dropped!
No more in vice or error to engage,
Or play the fool at large on life's great stage.' 50

