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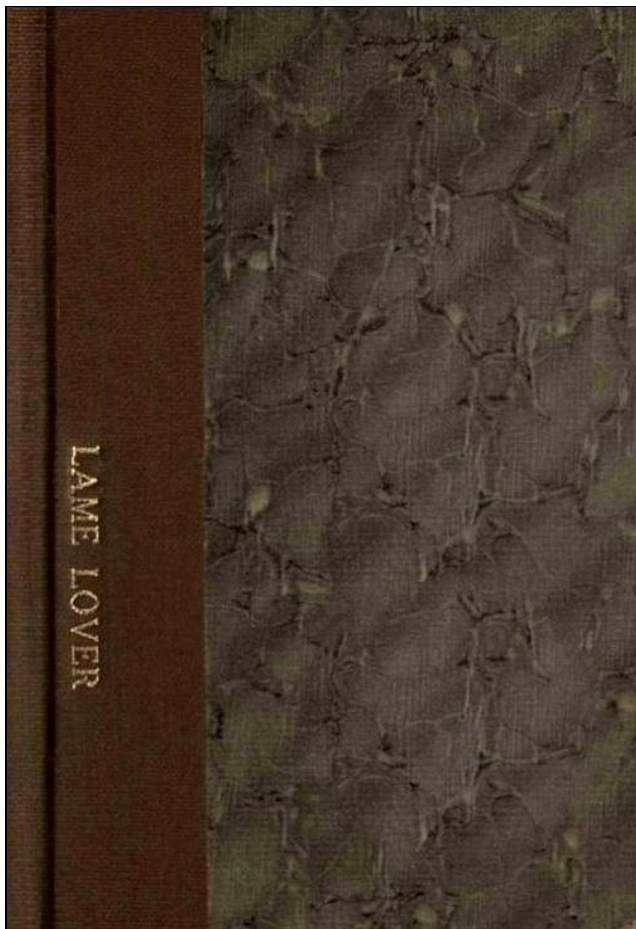
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE LAME LOVER: A COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS ***



THE LAME LOVER,

A COMEDY

IN THREE ACTS.

As it is Performed at the

THEATRE-ROYAL in the HAY-MARKET.

By SAMUEL FOOTE, Esq.

LONDON,

Printed for PAUL VAILLANT: and sold by P. ELMSLY, in the Strand; and ROBINSON
and ROBERTS, No. 25, Pater-noster-Row. MDCCLXX.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

FRANCIS SEYMOUR CONWAY,

EARL OF HERTFORD,

LORD CHAMBERLAIN OF

HIS MAJESTY'S HOUSEHOLD,

TO WHOSE

POLITENESS AND CANDOUR

THE AUTHOR

OWES EVERY ACKNOWLEDGMENT,

THIS COMEDY IS

GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST OBLIGED

AND

MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

North End.

SAM. FOOTE.

PROLOGUE.

Written and Spoken by Mr. GENTLEMAN.

*Prologues, like cards of compliment, we find,
Most as unmeaning as politely kind;
To beg a favour, or to plead excuse,
Of both appears to be the gen'ral use.*

*Shall my words, tipt with flattery, prepare
A kind exertion of your tend'rest care?
Shall I present our Author to your sight,
All pale and trembling for his fate this night?
Shall I solicit the most pow'rful arms
To aid his cause—the force of beauty's charms?
Or tell each critic, his approving taste
Must give the sterling stamp, wherever plac'd?
This might be done—but so to seek applause
Argues a conscious weakness in the cause.
No—let the Muse in simple truth appear,
Reason and Nature are the judges here:
If by their strict and self-describing laws,
The sev'ral characters to-night she draws;
If from the whole a pleasing piece is made,
On the true principles of light and shade;
Struck with the harmony of just design,
Your eyes—your ears—your hearts, will all combine
To grant applause:—but if an erring hand
Gross disproportion marks in motley band,
If the group'd figures false connexions show,
And glaring colours without meaning glow,
Your wounded feelings, turn'd a diff'rent way,
Will justly damn—th' abortion of a play.*

*As Farquhar has observ'd, our English law,
Like a fair spreading oak, the Muse should draw,
By Providence design'd, and wisdom made
For honesty to thrive beneath its shade;
Yet from its boughs some insects shelter find,
Dead to each nobler feeling of the mind,
Who thrive, alas! too well, and never cease
To prey on justice, property, and peace.*

*At such to-night, with other legal game,
Our vent'rous author takes satiric aim;
And brings, he hopes, originals to view,
Nor pilfers from th' Old Magpie, nor the New¹.
But will to Candour cheerfully submit;
She reigns in boxes, galleries, and pit.*

[1.](#) Alluding to Mr. Garrick's Prologue to the Jubilee.

Dramatis Personæ.

MEN.

Sir LUKE LIMP, *Mr. Foote.*
Serjeant CIRCUIT, *Mr. Vandermere.*
Colonel SECRET, *Mr. Robson.*
JACK, *Mr. Weston.*

Mr. WOODFORD, *Mr. Knowles.*

Mr. FAIRPLAY, *Mr. Wheeler.*
First SERVANT, *Mr. Dancer.*
Second SERVANT, *Mr. Griffiths.*

WOMEN.

Mrs. CIRCUIT, *Mrs. Gardner.*
CHARLOT, *Mrs. Jewell.*
Mrs. SIMPER, *Mrs. Saunders*
BETTY, *Mrs. Read.*

THE LAME LOVER.

ACT I.

Enter Serjeant CIRCUIT and CHARLOT.

CHARLOT.

I tell you, Sir, his love to me is all a pretence: it is amazing that you, who are so acute, so quick in discerning on other occasions, should be so blind upon this.

SERJEANT.

But where are your proofs, Charlot? What signifies your opening matters which your evidence cannot support?

CHARLOT.

Surely, Sir, strong circumstances in every court should have weight.

SERJEANT.

So they have collaterally, child, that is by way as it were of corroboration, or where matters are doubtful; then indeed, as Plowden wisely observes "Les circonstances ajout beaucoup depoids aux faits."—You understand me?

CHARLOT.

Not perfectly well.

SERJEANT.

Then to explain by case in point; A, we will suppose, my dear, robs B of a watch upon Hounslow heath—dy'e mind, child?

CHARLOT.

I do, Sir.

SERJEANT.

A, is taken up and indicted; B swears positively to the identity of A.—Dy'e observe?

CHARLOT.

Attentively.

SERJEANT.

Then what does me A, but sets up the alibi C, to defeat the affidavit of B.—You take me.

CHARLOT.

Clearly.

SERJEANT.

So far you see then the ballance is even.

CHARLOT.

True.

SERJEANT.

But then to turn the scale, child, against A, in favour of B, they produce the circumstance D, viz. B's watch found in the pocket of A; upon which, the testimony of C being contradicted by B,—no, by D,—why then A, that is to say C,—no D,—joining B, they convict C,—no, no, A,—against the affidavit of C.—So this being pretty clear, child, I leave the application to you.

CHARLOT.

Very obliging, Sir. But suppose now, Sir, it should appear that the attention of Sir Luke Limp is directed to some other object, would not that induce you to—

SERJEANT.

Other object! Where?

CHARLOT.

In this very house.

SERJEANT.

Here! why the girl is non compos; there's nobody here, child, but a parcel of Abigals.

CHARLOT.

No, Sir?

SERJEANT.

No.

CHARLOT.

Yes, Sir, one person else.

SERJEANT.

Who is that?

CHARLOT.

But remember, Sir, my accusation is confined to Sir Luke.

SERJEANT.

Well, well.

CHARLOT.

Suppose then, Sir, those powerful charms which made a conquest of you, may have extended their empire over the heart of Sir Luke?

SERJEANT.

Why, hussy, you don't hint at your mother-in-law?

CHARLOT.

Indeed, Sir, but I do.

SERJEANT.

Ay; why this is point blank treason against my sovereign authority: but can you, Charlot, bring proof of any overt acts?

CHARLOT.

Overt acts!

SERJEANT.

Ay; that is any declaration by writing, or even word of mouth is sufficient; then let 'em demur if they dare.

CHARLOT.

I can't say that, Sir; but another organ has been pretty explicit.

SERJEANT.

Which?

CHARLOT.

In those cases a very infallible one—the eye.

SERJEANT.

Pshaw! nonsense and stuff.—The eye!—The eye has no authority in a court of law.

CHARLOT.

Perhaps not, Sir, but it is a decisive evidence in a court of love.

SERJEANT.

Hark you, hussy, why you would not file an information against the virtue of madam your mother; you would not insinuate that she has been guilty of crim. con.?

CHARLOT.

Sir, you mistake me; it is not the lady, but the gentleman I am about to impeach.

SERJEANT.

Have a care, Charlot! I see on what ground your action is founded—jealousy.

CHARLOT.

You were never more deceiv'd in your life; for it is impossible, my dear Sir, that jealousy can subsist without love.

SERJEANT.

Well.

CHARLOT.

And from that passion (thank heaven) I am pretty free at present.

SERJEANT.

Indeed!

CHARLOT.

A sweet object to excite tender desires!

SERJEANT.

And why not, hussy?

CHARLOT.

First as to his years.

SERJEANT.

What then?

CHARLOT.

I own, Sir, age procures honor, but I believe it is very rarely productive of love.

SERJEANT.

Mighty well.

CHARLOT.

And tho' the loss of a leg can't be imputed to Sir Luke Limp as a fault—

SERJEANT.

How!

CHARLOT.

I hope, Sir, at least you will allow it a misfortune.

SERJEANT.

Indeed!

CHARLOT.

A pretty thing truly, for a girl, at my time of life, to be ty'd to a man with one foot in the grave.

SERJEANT.

One foot in the grave! the rest of his body is not a whit the nearer for that.—There has been only an execution issued against part of his personals, his real estate is unencumbered and free—besides, you see he does not mind it a whit, but is as alert, and as merry, as a defendant after non-suiting a plaintiff for omitting an S.

CHARLOT.

O! Sir! I know how proud Sir Luke is of his leg, and have often heard him declare, that he would not change his bit of timber for the best flesh and bone in the kingdom.

SERJEANT.

There's a hero for you!

CHARLOT.

To be sure, sustaining unavoidable evils with constancy is a certain sign of greatness of mind.

SERJEANT.

Doubtless.

CHARLOT.

But then to derive a vanity from a misfortune, will not I'm afraid be admitted as a vast instance of wisdom, and indeed looks as if the man had nothing better to distinguish himself by.

SERJEANT.

How does that follow?

CHARLOT.

By inunendo.

SERJEANT.

Negatur.

CHARLOT.

Besides, Sir, I have other proofs of your hero's vanity, not inferior to that I have mention'd.

SERJEANT.

Cite them.

CHARLOT.

The paltry ambition of levying and following titles.

SERJEANT.

Titles! I don't understand you?

CHARLOT.

I mean the poverty of fastening in public upon men of distinction, for no other reason but because of their rank; adhering to Sir John till the Baronet is superceded by my Lord; quitting the puny Peer for an Earl; and sacrificing all three to a Duke.

SERJEANT.

Keeping good company! a laudable ambition!

CHARLOT.

True, Sir, if the virtues that procur'd the father a peerage, could with that be entail'd on the son.

SERJEANT.

Have a care, hussy—there are severe laws against speaking evil of dignities.—

CHARLOT.

Sir!

SERJEANT.

Scandalum magnatum is a statute must not be trifled with: why you are

not one of those vulgar sluts that think a man the worse for being a Lord?

CHARLOT.

No, Sir; I am contented with only, not thinking him the better.

SERJEANT.

For all this, I believe, hussy, a right honourable proposal would soon make you alter your mind.

CHARLOT.

Not unless the proposer had other qualities than what he possesses by patent. Besides, Sir, you know Sir Luke is a devotee to the bottle.

SERJEANT.

Not a whit the less honest for that.

CHARLOT.

It occasions one evil at least; that when under its influence, he generally reveals all, sometimes more than he knows.

SERJEANT.

Proofs of an open temper, you baggage: but, come, come, all these are but trifling objections.

CHARLOT.

You mean, Sir, they prove the object a trifle.

SERJEANT.

Why you pert jade; do you play on my words? I say Sir Luke is—

CHARLOT.

Nobody.

SERJEANT.

Nobody! how the deuce do you make that out?—He is neither person attained or outlaw'd, may in any of his majesty's courts sue or be sued, appear by attorney, or in propria persona, can acquire, buy, procure, purchase, possess, and inherit, not only personalities, such as goods, and chattels, but even realities, as all lands, tenements, and hereditaments, whatsoever, and wheresoever.

CHARLOT.

But, Sir—

SERJEANT.

Nay, further child, he may sell, give, bestow, bequeath, devise, demise, lease, or to farm lett, ditto lands, to any person whomsoever—and—

CHARLOT.

Without doubt, Sir; but there are notwithstanding in this town a great number of nobodies, not described by lord Coke.

SERJEANT.

Hey!

CHARLOT.

There is your next-door neighbour, Sir Harry Hen, an absolute blank.

SERJEANT.

How so, Mrs. Pert?

CHARLOT.

What, Sir! a man who is not suffer'd to hear, see, smell, or in short to enjoy the free use of any one of his senses; who, instead of having a positive will of his own, is deny'd even a paltry negative; who can neither resolve or reply, consent or deny, without first obtaining the leave of his lady: an absolute monarch to sink into the sneaking state of being a slave to one of his subjects—Oh fye!

SERJEANT.

Why, to be sure, Sir Harry Hen, is as I may say—

CHARLOT.

Nobody Sir, in the fullest sense of the word—Then your client Lord Solo.

SERJEANT.

Heyday!—Why you would not annihilate a peer of the realm, with a prodigious estate and an allow'd judge too of the elegant arts.

CHARLOT.

O yes, Sir, I am no stranger to that nobleman's attributes; but then, Sir, please to consider, his power as a peer he gives up to a proxy; the direction of his estate, to a rapacious, artful attorney: and as to his skill in the elegant arts, I presume you confine them to painting and music, he is directed in the first by Mynheer Van Eisel, a Dutch dauber; and in the last is but the echo of Signora Florenza, his lordship's mistress and an opera singer.

SERJEANT.

Mercy upon us! at what a rate the jade runs!

CHARLOT.

In short, Sir, I define every individual who, ceasing to act for himself, becomes the tool, the mere engine of another man's will, to be nothing more than a cypher.

SERJEANT.

At this rate the jade will half unpeople the world: but what is all this to Sir Luke? to him, not one of your cases apply.

CHARLOT.

Every one—Sir Luke has not a first principle in his whole composition; not only his pleasures, but even his passions are prompted by others; and he is as much directed to the objects of his love and his hatred, as in his eating, drinking, and dressing. Nay, though he is active, and eternally busy, yet his own private affairs are neglected; and he would not scruple to break an appointment that was to determine a considerable part of his property, in order to exchange a couple of hounds for a lord, or to buy a pad-nag for a lady. In a word—but he's at hand, and will explain himself best; I hear his stump on the stairs.

SERJEANT.

I hope you will preserve a little decency before your lover at least.

CHARLOT.

Lover! ha, ha, ha!

Enter Sir LUKE LIMP.

Sir LUKE.

Mr. Serjeant, your slave—Ah! are you there my little—O Lord! Miss, let me tell you something for fear of forgetting—Do you know that you are new christen'd, and have had me for a gossip?

CHARLOT.

Christen'd! I don't understand you.

Sir LUKE.

Then lend me your ear—Why last night, as Colonel Kill'em, Sir William Weezy, Lord Frederick Foretop, and I were carelessly sliding the Ranelagh round, picking our teeth, after a damn'd muzzy dinner at Boodle's, who should trip by but an abbess, well known about town, with a smart little nun in her suite. Says Weezy (who, between ourselves, is as husky as hell) Who is that? odds flesh, she's a delicate wench! Zounds! cried Lord Frederick, where can Weezy have been, not to have seen the Harietta before? for you must know Frederick is a bit of Macaroni, and adores the soft Italian termination in *a*.

CHARLOT.

He does?

Sir LUKE.

Yes, a delitanti all over.—Before? replied Weezy; crush me if ever I saw any thing half so handsome before!—No! replied I in an instant; Colonel, what will Weezy say when he sees the Charlotta?—Hey! you little—

CHARLOT.

Meaning me, I presume.

Sir LUKE.

Without doubt; and you have been toasted by that name ever since.

SERJEANT.

What a vast fund of spirits he has!

Sir LUKE.

And why not, my old splitter of causes?

SERJEANT.

I was just telling Charlot, that you was not a whit the worse for the loss.

Sir LUKE.

The worse! much the better, my dear. Consider, I can have neither strain, splint, spavin, or gout; have no fear of corns, kibes, or that another man should kick my shins, or tread on my toes.

SERJEANT.

Right.

Sir LUKE.

What d'ye think I would change with Bill Spindle for one of his drumsticks, or chop with Lord Lumber for both of his logs?

SERJEANT.

No!

Sir LUKE.

No, damn it, I am much better.—Look there—Ha!—What is there I am not able to do? To be sure I am a little awkward at running; but then, to make me amends, I'll hop with any man in town for his sum.

SERJEANT.

Ay, and I'll go his halves.

Sir LUKE.

Then as to your dancing, I am cut out at Madam Cornelly's, I grant, because of the croud; but as far as a private set of six couple, or moving a chair-minuet, match me who can.

CHARLOT.

A chair-minuet! I don't understand you.

Sir LUKE.

Why, child, all grace is confined to the motion of the head, arms, and chest, which may sitting be as fully displayed, as if one had as many legs as a polypus.—As thus—tol de rol—don't you see?

SERJEANT.

Very plain.

Sir LUKE.

A leg! a redundancy! a mere nothing at all. Man is from nature an extravagant creature. In my opinion, we might all be full as well as we are, with but half the things that we have.

CHARLOT.

Ay, Sir Luke; how do you prove that?

Sir LUKE.

By constant experience.—You must have seen the man who makes and uses pens without hands.

SERJEANT.

I have.

Sir LUKE.

And not a twelvemonth agone, I lost my way in a fog, at Mile-End, and was conducted to my house in May-Fair by a man as blind as a beetle.

SERJEANT.

Wonderful!

Sir LUKE.

And as to hearing and speaking, those organs are of no manner of use in

the world.

SERJEANT.

How!

Sir LUKE.

If you doubt it, I will introduce you to a whole family, dumb as oysters, and deaf as the dead, who chatter from morning till night by only the help of their fingers.

SERJEANT.

Why, Charlot, these are cases in point.

Sir LUKE.

Oh! clear as a trout-stream; and it is not only, my little Charlot, that this piece of timber answers every purpose, but it has procured me many a bit of fun in my time.

SERJEANT.

Ay!

Sir LUKE.

Why, it was but last summer, at Tunbridge, we were plagued the whole season by a bullet-headed Swiss from the canton of Bern, who was always boasting, what, and how much he dared do; and then, as to pain, no Stoic, not Diogenes, held it more in contempt.—By gods, he vas no more minds it dan notings at all—So, foregad, I gave my German a challenge.

SERJEANT.

As how!—Mind, Charlot.

Sir LUKE.

Why to drive a corkin pin into the calves of our legs.

SERJEANT.

Well, well.

Sir LUKE.

Mine, you may imagine, was easily done—but when it came to the Baron

SERJEANT.

Ay, ay.

Sir LUKE.

Our modern Cato soon lost his coolness and courage, screw'd his nose up to his foretop, rapp'd out a dozen oaths in high Dutch, limp'd away to his lodgings, and was there laid up for a month—Ha, ha, ha!

Enter a Servant, and delivers a Card to Sir Luke.

Sir LUKE *reads*.

"Sir Gregory Goose desires the honour of Sir Luke Limp's company to dine. An answer is desired." Gadso! a little unlucky; I have been engag'd for these three weeks.

SERJEANT.

What, I find Sir Gregory is return'd for the corporation of *Fleesum*.

Sir LUKE.

Is he so? Oh ho!—That alters the case.—George, give my compliments to Sir Gregory, and I'll certainly come and dine there. Order Joe to run to alderman Inkle's, in Threadneedle-street; sorry can't wait upon him, but confin'd to bed two days with *new influenza*.

CHARLOT.

You make light, Sir Luke, of these sort of engagements.

Sir LUKE.

What can a man do? These damn'd fellows (when one has the misfortune to meet them) take scandalous advantage; tease, When will you do me the honour, pray, Sir Luke, to take a bit of mutton with me? Do you name the day—They are as bad as a beggar, who attacks your coach at the mounting of a hill; there is no getting rid of them, without a penny to one, and a promise to t'other.

SERJEANT.

True; and then for such a time too—three weeks! I wonder they expect folks to remember. It is like a retainer in Michaelmas term for the summer assizes.

Sir LUKE.

Not but, upon these occasions, no man in England is more punctual than—

Enter a Servant, who gives Sir Luke a Letter.

From whom?

SERVANT.

Earl of Brentford. The servant waits for an answer.

Sir LUKE.

Answer!—By your leave, Mr. Serjeant and Charlot. [*Reads.*] "Taste for music—Mons. Duport—fail—Dinner upon table at five"—Gadso! I hope Sir Gregory's servant an't gone.

SERVANT.

Immediately upon receiving the answer.

Sir LUKE.

Run after him as fast as you can—tell him, quite in despair—recollect an engagement that can't in nature be missed,—and return in an instant.

CHARLOT.

You see, Sir, the Knight must give way for my Lord.

Sir LUKE.

No, faith, it is not that, my dear Charlot; you saw that was quite an extempore business.—No, hang it, no, it is not for the title; but to tell you the truth, Brentford has more wit than any man in the world; it is that makes me fond of his house.

CHARLOT.

By the choice of his company he gives an unanswerable instance of that.

Sir LUKE.

You are right, my dear girl. But now to give you a proof of his wit: You know Brentford's finances are a little out of repair, which procures him some visits that he would very gladly excuse.

SERJEANT.

What need he fear? His person is sacred; for by the tenth of William and Mary—

Sir LUKE.

He knows that well enough; but for all that—

SERJEANT.

Indeed, by a late act of his own house, (which does them infinite honour) his goods or chattels may be——

Sir LUKE.

Seiz'd upon when they can find them, but he lives in ready-furnish'd lodgings, and hires his coach by the month.

SERJEANT.

Nay, if the sheriff return "non inventus"—

Sir LUKE.

A pox o' your law, you make me lose sight of my story. One morning, a Welch coach-maker came with his bill to my Lord, whose name was unluckily Loyd. My Lord had the man up. You are call'd, I think, Mr. Loyd?—At your Lordship's service, my Lord.—What, Loyd with an L?—It was with an L indeed, my Lord.—Because in your part of the world I have heard that Loyd and Floyd were synonymous, the very same names.—Very often indeed, my lord.—But you always spell your's with an L?—Always.—That, Mr. Loyd, is a little unlucky; for you must know I am now paying my debts alphabetically, and in four or five years you might have come in with an F; but I am afraid I can give you no hopes for your L.—Ha, ha, ha!

Enter a SERVANT.

SERVANT.

There was no overtaking the servant.

Sir LUKE.

That is unlucky: tell my Lord I'll attend him.—I'll call on Sir Gregory myself.

SERJEANT.

Why, you won't leave us, Sir Luke?

Sir LUKE.

Pardon, dear Serjeant and Charlotta; have a thousand things to do for half a million of people positively; promised to procure a husband for Lady Cicely Sulky, and match a coach-horse for Brigadier Whip; after that, must run into the city to borrow a thousand for young At-all at Almack's; send a Cheshire cheese by the stage to Sir Timothy Tankard in Suffolk; and get at

the Herald's Office a coat of arms to clap on the coach of Billy Bengal, a nabob newly arriv'd: so you see I have not a moment to lose.

SERJEANT.

True, true.

Sir LUKE.

At your toilet to-morrow at ten you may—

Enter a SERVANT abruptly, and runs against Sir LUKE.

Can't you see where you are running you, rascal!

SERVANT.

Sir, his grace the Duke of—

Sir LUKE.

Grace!—Where is he?—Where—

SERVANT.

In his coach at the door.—If you an't better engaged would be glad of your company to go into the city, and take a dinner at Dolly's.

Sir LUKE.

In his own coach did you say?

SERVANT.

Yes, Sir.

Sir LUKE.

With the coronets—or—

SERVANT.

I believe so.

Sir LUKE.

There's no resisting of that.—Bid Joe run to Sir Gregory Goose's.

SERVANT.

He is already gone to alderman Inkle's.

Sir LUKE.

Then do you step to the Knight—hey!—no—you must go to my Lord's—hold, hold, no—I have it—Step first to Sir Greg's, then pop in at Lord Brentford's just as the company are going to dinner.

SERVANT.

What shall I say to Sir Gregory?

Sir LUKE.

Any thing—what I told you before.

SERVANT.

And what to my Lord?

Sir LUKE.

What!—Why tell him that my uncle from Epsom—no—that won't do, for he knows I don't care a farthing for him—hey!—Why tell him—hold I have it—Tell him, that as I was going into my chair to obey his commands, I was arrested by a couple of bailiffs, forced into a hackney coach, and carried to the Py'd Bull in the Borough; I beg ten thousand pardons for making his grace wait, but his grace knows my misfor—

[*Exit Sir Luke.*]

CHARLOT.

Well, Sir, what dy'e think of the proofs? I flatter myself I have pretty well established my case.

SERJEANT.

Why, hussy, you have hit upon points; but then they are but trifling flaws, they don't vitiate the title, that stands unimpeach'd; and—But, madam, your mother.

Enter Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

What have you done with the Knight?—Why you have not let him depart?

CHARLOT.

It was not in my power to keep him.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

I don't wonder at that; but what took him away?

CHARLOT.

What will at any time take him away—a Duke at the door.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Are you certain of that?

SERJEANT.

Why truly, chuck, his retreat was rather precipitate for a man that is just going to be marry'd.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

The prospect of marriage does not always prove the strongest attachment.

SERJEANT.

Pardon me, lovee; the law allows no higher consideration than marriage.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Pshaw!

SERJEANT.

Insomuch, that if duke A was to intermarry with chambermaid B, difference of condition would prove no bar to the settlement.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Indeed!

SERJEANT.

Ay; and this was held to be law by Chief-baron Bind'em, on the famous case of the Marquis of Cully, and Fanny Flip-flap the French dancer.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

The greater blockhead the Baron: but don't pester me with your odious law cases.—Did not you tell me you was to go to Kingston to day to try the crown causes?

SERJEANT.

I was begg'd to attend for fear his Lordship should not be able to sit; but if it proves inconvenient to you—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

To me! Oh, by no means in the world; I am too good a subject to desire the least delay in the law's execution: and when d'ye set out?

SERJEANT.

Between one and two; I shall only just give a law lecture to Jack.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Lord! I wonder Mr. Circuit you would breed that boy up to the bar.

SERJEANT.

Why not, chuck? He has fine steady parts, and for his time moots a point

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Steady! stupid you mean: nothing sure cou'd add to his heaviness but the being loaded with law. Why don't you put him into the army?

SERJEANT.

Nay, chuck, if you choose it, I believe I have interest to get Jack a commission.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Why, Mr. Circuit, you know he is no son of mine; perhaps a cockade may animate the lad with some fire.

SERJEANT.

True, lovee; and a knowledge of the law mayn't be amiss to restrain his fire a little.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

I believe there is very little danger of his exceeding that way.

SERJEANT.

Charlot, send hither your brother.

[Exit Charlot.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

I'll not interrupt you.

SERJEANT.

Far from it, lovee; I should be glad to have you a witness of Jacky's improvement.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Of that I am no judge; besides, I am full of business to day—There is to be a ballot at one for the *Ladies' Club* lately established, and lady Bab Basto has proposed me for a member.—Pray, my dear, when will you let me have that money to pay my Lord Loo?

SERJEANT.

The three hundred you mean?

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

And besides, there is my debt to Kitty Cribbidge; I protest I almost blush whenever I meet them.

SERJEANT.

Why really, lovee, 'tis a large sum of money.—Now, were I worthy to throw in a little advice, we might make a pretty good hand of this business.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

I don't understand you.

SERJEANT.

Bring an action against them on the statute, in the name of my clerk; and so not only rescue the *debt* from their hands, but recover likewise considerable *damages*.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

A pretty conceit, Mr. Serjeant! but does it not occur to your wisdom, that as I have (by the help of Captain Cog) been oftener a winner than loser, the tables may be turned upon *us*?

SERJEANT.

No, no, chuck, that did not escape me; I have provided for that.—Do you know, by the law, both parties are equally culpable; so that, lovee, we shall be able to fleece your friends not only of what they have *won* of poor deeree, but likewise for what they have *lost*.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Why, what a paltry, pettifogging puppy art thou!—And could you suppose that I would submit to the scandalous office?

SERJEANT.

Scandalous! I don't understand this strange perversion of words. The scandal lies in *breaking* the *laws*, not in bringing the offenders to *justice*.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Mean-spirited wretch!—What, do you suppose that those laws could be levell'd against people of their high rank and condition? Can it be thought that any set of men would submit to lay legal restraints on *themselves*?—Absurd and preposterous!

SERJEANT.

Why, by their public practice, my love, one would suspect that they

thought themselves excepted by a particular clause.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Oh! to be sure; not the least doubt can be made.

SERJEANT.

True, chuck—But then your great friends should never complain of highwaymen stopping their coaches, or thieves breaking into their houses.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Why, what has that to do with the business?

SERJEANT.

Oh! the natural consequence, lovee; for whilst the superiors are throwing away their fortunes, and consequently their independence *above*—you can't think but their domestics are following their examples *below*.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Well, and what then?

SERJEANT.

Then! the same distress that throws the master and mistress into the power of any who are willing to purchase them, by a regular gradation, reduces the servants to actions, though more *criminal*, perhaps not more *atrocious*.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Pshaw! stuff!—I have no head to examine your dirty distinctions—Don't teize me with your jargon.—I have told you the sums I shall want, so take care they are ready at your returning from Kingston.—Nay, don't hesitate; recollect your own state of the case, and remember, my honour is in pawn, and must, some way or other, be redeem'd by the end of the week.

[*Exit.*

SERJEANT *solus*.

My honour is in pawn!—Good Lord! how a century will alter the meaning of words!—Formerly, *chastity* was the honour of women, and *good faith* and *integrity* the honour of men: but *now*, a lady who ruins her family by punctually paying her losses at play, and a gentleman who kills his best friend in some trifling frivolous quarrel, are your only tip-top people of *honour*. Well, let them go on, it brings grist to our mill: for whilst both the sexes stick firm to their *honour*, we shall never want business, either at Doctor's Commons, or the Old Bailey.

[*Exit.*

ACT II.

Enter SERJEANT CIRCUIT *and* JACK.

SERJEANT.

Jack, let Will bring the chaise to the door.

JACK.

Mr. Fairplay, Sir, the attorney, begs to speak a few words.

SERJEANT.

How often have I told you, that I will see none of these sort of folks but at chambers; you know how angry your mother is at their rapping, and littering the house.

JACK.

He says, Sir, he will not detain you five minutes.

SERJEANT.

Well, bid him walk in.

Enter FAIRPLAY.

Well, Mr. Fairplay, what's your will?

FAIRPLAY.

I just call'd, Mr. Serjeant, to know your opinion upon the case of young Woodford, and if you like the proposal of being concern'd.

SERJEANT.

If it turns out as you state it, and that the father of the lad was really a minor, the Essex estate may without doubt be recover'd; and so may the lands in the North.

FAIRPLAY.

We have full proofs to that fact.

SERJEANT.

May be so; but really Mr. Fairplay, you know the length of time that these kind of suits—

FAIRPLAY.

True Sir, but then your experience will shorten I appreh—

SERJEANT.

That's more than I know: and then not only my fees lying dormant, but, perhaps, an expectation of money advanc'd.

FAIRPLAY.

The property, Sir, is of very great value, and, upon the recovery, any acknowledgment shall be readily made.

SERJEANT.

There again, *any!* do you know that in law, that word *any* has no meaning at all? besides, when people are in distress, they are lavish enough of their offers; but when their business is done, then we have nothing but grumbling and grudging.

FAIRPLAY.

You have only to dictate your terms.

SERJEANT.

Does the lad live in town?

FAIRPLAY.

He has been under my care since the death of his father; I have given him as good an education as my narrow fortune would let me; he is now studying the law in the Temple, in hopes that should he fail of other assistance, he may be able one day to do *himself* justice.

SERJEANT.

In the Temple?

FAIRPLAY.

Yes, Sir, in those little chambers just over your head—I fancy the young gentleman knows him.

JACK.

Who? Mr. Woodford! Lord as well as myself, he is a sweet sober youth, and will one day make a vast figure, I am sure.

SERJEANT.

Indeed!

JACK.

I am positive, Sir, if you were to hear him speak at the Robinhood in the Butcher-row, you would say so yourself: why he is now reckon'd the third; except the breeches-maker from Barbican, and Sawny Sinclair the snuffman, there is not a mortal can touch him.

SERJEANT.

Peace, puppy; well Mr. Fairplay, leave the papers a little longer with me and—pray who is employ'd against you?

FAIRPLAY.

A city attorney, one Sheepskin.

SERJEANT.

A cunning fellow, I know him; well, Sir, if you will call at Pump-court in a week.

FAIRPLAY.

I shall attend you.

SERJEANT.

Jack, open the door for Mr.—[*Exeunt Fairplay and Jack.*] Something may be made of this matter: I'll see this Sheepskin myself. So much in future for carrying on the suit, or so much in hand to make it miscarry: a wise man should well weigh which party to take for.

Enter Jack.

So, Jack, any body at chambers to day?

JACK.

Fieri Facias from Fetter lane, about the bill to be filed by Kit Crape against Will Vizard, this term.

SERJEANT.

Praying for an equal partition of plunder?

JACK.

Yes, Sir.

SERJEANT.

Strange world we live in, that even highwaymen can't be true to each other! [*half aside to himself.*] but we shall make master Vizard refund, we'll shew him what long hands the law has.

JACK.

Facias says, that in all the books he can't hit on a precedent.

SERJEANT.

Then I'll make one myself; *aut inveniam, aut faciam*, has been always my motto. The charge must be made for partnership-profit, by bartering lead and gunpowder, against money, watches, and rings, on Epping-forest, Hounslow-heath, and other parts of the kingdom.

JACK.

He says, if the court should get scent of the scheme, the parties would all stand committed.

SERJEANT.

Cowardly rascal! but however, the caution mayn't prove amiss. [*Aside.*] I'll not put my own name to the bill.

JACK.

The declaration too is deliver'd in the cause of Roger Rapp'em against Sir Solomon Simple.

SERJEANT.

What, the affair of the note?

JACK.

Yes.

SERJEANT.

Why he is clear that his client never gave such a note.

JACK.

Defendant never saw plaintiff since the hour he was born; but, notwithstanding, they have three witnesses to prove a consideration, and signing the note.

SERJEANT.

They have?

JACK.

He is puzzled what plea to put in.

SERJEANT.

Three witnesses ready, you say?

JACK.

Yes.

SERJEANT.

Tell him Simple must acknowledge the note, [Jack *starts*] and bid him, against the trial comes on, to procure *four* persons at least to prove the payment, at the Crown and Anchor, the 10th of December.

JACK.

But then how comes the note to remain in plaintiff's possession?

SERJEANT.

Well put, Jack; but we have a *salvo* for that; plaintiff happen'd not to have the note in his pocket, but promis'd to deliver it up, when call'd thereunto by defendant.

JACK.

That will do rarely.

SERJEANT.

Let the defence be a secret, for I see we have able people to deal with. But come, child, not to lose time, have you carefully conn'd those instructions I gave you?

JACK.

Yes, Sir.

SERJEANT.

Well, that we shall see. How many points are the great object of practice?

JACK.

Two.

SERJEANT.

Which are they?

JACK.

The first is to put a man into possession of what is his right.

SERJEANT.

The second?

JACK.

Either to deprive a man of what is *really* his right, or to keep him as long as possible *out* of possession.

SERJEANT.

Good boy! To gain the last end, what are the best means to be us'd?

JACK.

Various and many are the legal modes of delay.

SERJEANT.

Name them.

JACK.

Injunctions, demurrers, sham-pleas, writs of error, rejoinders, sur-

rejoinders, rebutters, sur-rebutters, replications, exceptions, essoigns, and imparlance.

SERJEANT.

[*To himself.*] Fine instruments in the hands of a man, who knows how to use them.—But now, Jack, we come to the point: if an able advocate has his choice in a cause, (which if he is in reputation he may readily have,) which side should he choose, the right, or the wrong?

JACK.

A great lawyer's business, is always to make choice of the wrong.

SERJEANT.

And prythee why so?

JACK.

Because a good cause can speak for itself, whilst a bad one demands an able counsellor to give it a colour.

SERJEANT.

Very well. But in what respects will this answer to the lawyer himself?

JACK.

In a two-fold way; firstly, his fees will be large in proportion to the dirty work he is to do.

SERJEANT.

Secondly?—

JACK.

His reputation will rise, by obtaining the victory in a desperate cause.

SERJEANT.

Right, boy.—Are you ready in the case of the cow?

JACK.

Pretty well, I believe.

SERJEANT.

Give it then.

JACK.

First of April, anno seventeen hundred and blank, John a Nokes was indicted by blank, before blank, in the county of blank, for stealing a cow, contra pacem etcet.—and against the statute in that case provided and made, to prevent stealing of cattle.

SERJEANT.

Go on.

JACK.

Said Nokes was convicted upon the said statute.

SERJEANT.

What follow'd upon?—

JACK.

Motion in arrest of judgment, made by counsellor Puzzle. First, Because the field from whence the cow was convey'd is laid in the indictment as *round*, but turn'd out upon proof to be *square*.

SERJEANT.

That's well: a valid objection.

JACK.

Secondly, Because in said indictment the colour of the cow is called red, there being no such things in rerum natura as red cows, no more than black lions, spread eagles, flying griffins, or blue boars.

SERJEANT.

Well put.

JACK.

Thirdly, said Nokes has not offended against form of the statute; because stealing of *cattle* is there provided against: whereas we are only convicted of stealing a *cow*. Now, though cattle may be cows, yet it does by no means follow that cows must be cattle.

SERJEANT.

Bravo, bravo! buss me, you rogue, you are your father's own son! go on, and prosper.—I am sorry, dear Jack, I must leave thee. If Providence but sends thee life and health, I prophesy, thou wilt wrest as much land from the owners, and save as many thieves from the gallows, as any practitioner since the days of king Alfred.

JACK.

I'll do my endeavour. [*Exit Serjeant.*] So!—father is set off. Now if I can but lay eyes on our Charlot, just to deliver this letter, before madam comes home. There she is.—Hist, sister Charlot!

Enter CHARLOT.

CHARLOT.

What have you got there, Jack?

JACK.

Something for you, sister.

CHARLOT.

For me! Prythee what is it?

JACK.

A thing.

CHARLOT.

What thing?

JACK.

A thing that will please you I'm sure.

CHARLOT.

Come, don't be a boy, let me have it. [Jack *gives the letter.*] How's this! a letter! from whom?

JACK.

Can't you guess?

CHARLOT.

Not I; I don't know the hand.

JACK.

May be not; but you know the inditer.

CHARLOT.

Then tell me his name.

JACK.

Break open the seal, and you'll find it.

CHARLOT.

[*Opening the letter*] "Charles Woodford!"—I am sure I know nothing of him.

JACK.

Ay, but sister you do.

CHARLOT.

How! when, and where?

JACK.

Don't you remember about three weeks ago, when you drank tea at our chambers, there was a young gentleman in a blue sattin waist-coat, who wore his own head of hair?

CHARLOT.

Well?

JACK.

That letter's from he.

CHARLOT.

What can be his business with me?

JACK.

Read that, and you'll know.

CHARLOT *reads.*

"Want words to apologize—hum, hum—very first moment I saw you—hum, hum—smother'd long in my breast—hum, hum—happiest, or else the most wretched of men."—So, Sir, you have undertaken a pretty commission! and what do you think my father will—

JACK.

Why, I hope you won't go for to tell him.

CHARLOT.

Indeed, Sir, but I shall.

JACK.

No, sister, I'm sure you won't be so cross. Besides, what could I do? The poor young lad begg'd so hard; and there for this fortnight he has gone about sighing, and musing, and moping: I am satisfied it would melt you to see him. Do, sister, let me bring him this evening, now father is out.

CHARLOT.

Upon my word!—The young man has made no bad choice of an agent; you are for pushing matters at once.—But harkee, Sir, who is this spark you are so anxious about? And how long have you known him?

JACK.

Oh! a prodigious long while: above a month I am certain. Don't you think him mighty genteel? I assure you he is vastly lik'd by the ladies.

CHARLOT.

He is.

JACK.

Yes, indeed. Mrs. Congo, at the Grecian coffee-house, says, he's the soberest youth that comes to the house; and all Mrs. Mittens's 'prentices throw down their work, and run to the window every time he goes by.

CHARLOT.

Upon my word!

JACK.

And moreover, besides that, he has several great estates in the country; but only for the present, he is kept out of 'em all by the owners.

CHARLOT.

Ah, Jack! that's the worst part of the story.

JACK.

Pshaw! that's nothing at all. His guardian, Mr. Fairplay, has been with father to-day, and says, he is certain that he can set all to rights in a trice.

CHARLOT.

Well, Jack, when that point is determin'd, it will be time enough to—

JACK.

Then! Lord of mercy! why, sister Charlot, it is my private opinion that if you don't give him some crumbs of comfort, he won't live till Midsummer term.

CHARLOT.

I warrant you. Either Cupid's darts were always but poetical engines, or they have been lately depriv'd of their points. Love holds no place in the modern bills of mortality. However, Jack, you may tell your friend, that I have observ'd his frequent walks in our street.

JACK.

Walks! Why one should think he was appointed to relieve the old watchman; for no sooner one is *off*, but the other comes *on*.

CHARLOT.

And that from his eyes being constantly fixed on my window (for the information of which, I presume he is indebted to you.)—

JACK.

He! he! he!

CHARLOT.

I had a pretty shrewd guess at his business; but tell him that unless my fa—Hush! our tyrant is return'd. Don't leave the house till I see you.

Enter Mrs. CIRCUIT and BETTY.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

So, Sir, what makes you loitering from chambers? I thought I told you, you should never be here but at meals? [*Exit Jack.*] One spy is enough in a family.—Miss, you may go to your room; and d'ye hear—I shall have company, so you need not come down. [*Exit Charlot.*]—Betty, no message or letter?

BETTY.

None, Madam.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

That is amazing!—You know I expect Colonel Secret and Mrs. Simper every instant.

BETTY.

Yes, Madam.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Put the fruit and the wine on the table in the next room.

BETTY.

Very well, Madam.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

And, Betty, order the fellow to let nobody in but Sir Luke.

BETTY.

Madam, I shall take care.

[*Exit.*

Mrs. CIRCUIT sits down.

The ballot must be over by this time. Sure there is nothing so dreadful as a state of suspence: but should they black ball me!—No, there's no danger of that; miss Mattadore has insur'd me success.—Well, this is certainly one of the most useful institutions; it positively supplies the only point of time one does not know how to employ. From twelve, the hour of one's rising, to dinner, is a most horrible chasm; for though teizing the mercers and milliners by tumbling their wares, is now and then an entertaining amusement, yet upon repetition it palls.—But every morning to be sure of a party, and then again at night after a rout, to have a place to retire to; to be quite freed from all pain of providing; not to be pester'd at table with the odious company of clients, and country cousins; for I am determin'd to dine,

and sup at the club, every day. I can tell 'em, they'll have but very few forfeits from me.

Enter BETTY, in haste, with a Letter.

BETTY.

By a chairman, Madam, from the Thatch'd House.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Give it me, Betty, this instant;—ay—this is Mattadore's hand. [*opens and reads the letter.*] "My dear Circuit—it is with the utmost concern, and confusion, I find myself oblig'd to acquaint you, that notwithstanding all the pains I have taken, the club have thought fit to reject."—Oh! [*She faints.*]

BETTY.

Bless my soul! my lady is gone!—John! Will! Kitty! run hither this instant.

Enter two MAIDS and a Man SERVANT.

ALL.

What, what's the matter?

BETTY.

Quick! quick! some hartshorn and water [*pats her hand.*] Madam! madam

SERVANT.

Here! here! here! [*bringing water.*]

BETTY.

John, go for the *potter-carrier* this instant—I *believes* to my soul she is dead—Kitty, fetch some feathers to burn under her nose;—there, stand further off, and give her some air—

Enter Sir LUKE.

Sir LUKE.

Hey day! what the deuce is the matter? what's the meaning of all this, Mrs. Betty?

BETTY.

Oh! Sir, is it you—my poor lady! [*cries*] clap the bottle hard to her nose.

Sir LUKE.

But how came it about?

BETTY.

Some of the *continents* of that curs'd letter, she has there in her hand.

Sir LUKE.

Here, here, take some of my eau de luce. [*offering a bottle.*]

BETTY.

There! she recovers a little—some water—I believe it is nothing but a *satirical* fit, I have had them myself—now she opens her eyes—so, so—bend her forward a little.

Sir LUKE.

My sweet Mrs. Circuit.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Who is that?

BETTY.

Nobody at all madam, but only Sir Luke.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Oh! Sir Luke, such a stroke, so fatal, so sudden, it is not in nature I should ever survive it.

Sir LUKE.

Marry heaven forbid! but what cause—what could—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Leave the room. [*To the servants, who go out.*] Only, look over that letter.

Sir LUKE.

Hum, hum,—[*reads*] "fit to reject you—this—"

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

There! there! there!

Sir LUKE.

I own this is the utmost malice of fortune—but let me finish the letter. —"This calamity, dear Circuit, is of such a nature as baffles all advice, or interposition of friends, I shall therefore leave you to time, and your own good understanding." [*pretty and sensible.*]—"yours," &c.—But let us see, what says the postscript—[*reads.*] "Perhaps it may give you some comfort to know that you had sixteen almonds, and but two raisins against you."

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

But two!

Sir LUKE.

No more.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

This must be Kitty Cribbage's doing, she has been tattling about the paltry trifle I owe her.

Sir LUKE.

Not unlikely: but come, bear up, my dear madam, and consider that *two* —

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Is as bad as two thousand.

Sir LUKE.

Granted; but perhaps it mayn't be too late to repair.—Gadso! I have thought of a scheme—I'll be elected myself, and then I warrant we manage

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

You, Sir Luke? that never can be.

Sir LUKE.

No, Madam, and why not?—why you don't suppose that they would venture to—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

It would not only be against the spirit, but the very letter of their constitution to chuse you a member.

Sir LUKE.

Ay, Madam, how so?

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Their statutes are selected from all the codes that ever existed from the days of Lycurgus to the present Czarina.

Sir LUKE.

Well.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

The law that relates to your case they have borrow'd from the Roman religion.

Sir LUKE.

As how?

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

As no man can be admitted a monk, who has the least corporal spot, or defect; so, no candidate can be receiv'd as a member who is depriv'd of the use of any one of his limbs.

Sir LUKE.

Nay, then indeed I am clearly cut out; that incapacity can never be got over.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Indeed, the Serjeant says, if the club could be induc'd to *resolve* in your favour, then the *original law* would signify nothing.

Sir LUKE.

Well, well, we'll see what can be done. [*A loud knocking.*] But hush! the company's come; collect yourself, sweet Mrs. Circuit; don't give your enemies the malicious pleasure of seeing how this disappointment affects you.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Never fear; I know a little too much of the world not to turn this defeat to my credit.

Enter Colonel SECRET and Mrs. SIMPER.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Your servant, Sir Luke; my dear Circuit, I am frighten'd to death—your people tell me, you are but just recover'd from a—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Oh! nothing at all! a faintness, a kind of swimming—but those people are ever swelling that mole hills to mountains.

Mrs. SIMPER.

I protest I was afraid that you had suffer'd your late disappointment to lay hold of your spirits.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

What disappointment, my dear?

COLONEL.

Mrs. Simper hints at the little mistake made this morning at the Thatch'd House.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

That! ridiculous! I could have told you that a fortnight ago, child—all my own doing.

Mrs. SIMPER.

How!

Sir LUKE.

Entirely.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Oh! I always detested the thoughts of the thing;—they would put me up, let me say what I would, so I was reduc'd to the necessity of prevailing upon two of my friends to *black ball* me.

Mrs. SIMPER.

That, indeed, alters the case.

COLONEL.

I am vastly happy to hear it: your old acquaintance were afraid they should lose you.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

It is a sign they know but little of me—but come, my good folks, I have prepared a small collation in the next room, will you—

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter JACK and WOODFORD.

JACK.

I'll watch sister, to see that nobody comes; now Woodford make good use of your time. [*Exit Woodford.*] There, I have left 'em together; if I had staid, I don't believe they would have open'd their mouths for a month: I never

saw such an alteration in a lad since the day I was born.—Why, if I had not known him before, I should not have thought he had a word to throw to a dog; but I remember the old proverb:

True lovers are shy,
When people are by.

I'll take a peep to see how they go on:—there they are, just in the same posture I left them; she folding her fingers, and he twirling his hat; why they don't even look at each other: was there ever such a couple of—stay, stay, now he opens his mouth—pshaw!—lord! there he shuts it again—hush! I hear somebody coming—no—nothing at all:—mother is safe I am sure,—there is no danger from her—now let us take t'other—[*peeps at the door.*] hum!—gadso, matters are mightily mended—there! there! very well—there he lays down the law—now he claps his hand on his heart—vastly pretty, I vow—there he swops with both his knees on the ground—charming!—and squeezes his hat with both hands, like one of the actors—delightful! she wants him to rise, and he won't—prodigious moving indeed!

Enter BETTY.

BETTY.

So Sir, what are you doing there?

JACK.

There! where?

BETTY.

With your eyes glew'd close to the keyhole.

JACK.

I wanted to speak a word to my sister.

BETTY.

Then why don't you open her door?

JACK.

I did not know but she might be saying her prayers.

BETTY.

Prayers! a likely story! Who says their prayers, at this time of the day?—No, no, that won't pass upon me.—Let me look—very pretty! So, so, I see there's somebody else at his prayers too—fine doings!—As soon as the company goes, I shall take care to inform Madam your mother.

JACK.

Nay, but Mrs. Betty you won't be so—

BETTY.

Indeed. Mr. John, but I shall—I'll swallow none of your secrets, believe me.

JACK.

What, perhaps your stomach is overloaded already.

BETTY.

No matter for that, I shall be even with Miss for telling Master about and

concerning my drums.

JACK.

Why, Mrs. Betty, surely sister could not—

BETTY.

When she very well knows that I have not sent cards but twice the whole season.

JACK.

Lord! what signi—

BETTY.

What would she say, if she visited the great families I do? For tho' I am as I may say but a commoner, no private gentlewoman's gentlewoman, has a more prettier set of acquaintance.

JACK.

Well but—

BETTY.

My routs indeed!—There is Mrs. Allspice, who lives with lady Cicily Sequence, has six tables every Sunday, besides looers, and braggers; and moreover proposes giving a masquerade, the beginning of June, and I intends being there.

JACK.

Well, but to talk calmly.

BETTY.

And as Miss is so fond of fetching and carrying, you may tell her we are to have a private play among ourselves, as the quality have: the *Distrustful* Mother, 'tis call'd—Pylades, by Mr. Thomas, Lord Catastrophe's butler—Hermione, Mrs. Allspice; and I shall do Andromache myself.

JACK.

A play! lord, Mrs. Betty, will you give me a ticket?

BETTY.

All's one for that—and so you may tell Miss that—[*bell rings*] coming, Madam, this minute—and that, Mr. John, is the long and the short on't. [*Bell rings again.*] Lord, I am coming—

[*Exit.*

Enter WOODFORD *to* JACK.

WOODFORD.

What's the matter?

JACK.

Here, Betty, my mother's fac totum, has just discover'd your haunts; and is gone to lay an information against you—so depend upon it, a search warrant will issue directly.

WOODFORD.

Stay but a moment, till I take leave of your sister.

JACK.

Zooks! I tell you the constables will be here in a trice, so you have not a moment to lose.

WOODFORD.

How unlucky this is!

JACK.

But I hope you have obtain'd a verdict however.

WOODFORD.

No.

JACK.

No!

WOODFORD.

It would not have been decent, to have press'd the judge too soon for a sentence.

JACK.

Soon!—You are a ninny, I tell you so:—here you will suffer judgment to go by default.—You are a pretty practitioner indeed!

WOODFORD.

This, you may know, my dear Jack, is an equity case; I have but just fil'd my bill; one must give the parties time to put in an answer.

JACK.

Time!—How you may come off in court I can't tell, but you will turn out but a poor chamber counsel I fear.—Well, come along, perhaps I may be able to procure another hearing before it is—but lord o'mercy! there is father crossing the hall—should he see us all's over—we have nothing for't but taking shelter with sister.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

Sir LUKE LIMP, Mrs. CIRCUIT, Colonel SECRET, and Mrs. SIMPER, discover'd at a table, with a collation before them.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Oh! by the bye, Sir Luke—take some of these sweetmeats, my dear [*to Mrs. Simper*—did not you promise to introduce to me that little agreeable piece of imperfection that belongs to the opera?—Colonel, won't you taste the champaign?

Sir LUKE.

Who, Signior *Piano*?—Let me assist Mrs. Simper.—Why, Madam, I made an attempt; but at present—shan't I send you a biscuit?—he is in the

possession of a certain lady, who never suffers him out of her sight for a moment.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Oh! the curmudgeon!—I am vastly fond of these custards.

Sir LUKE.

Yes, they have a delicate flavour—but he promis'd, if possible, to escape for an hour—won't you? [*to Mrs. Circuit.*]

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

No, it gives me the heart-burn.—Then let us leave him a cover.

COLONEL.

By all means in the world.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

But there is, likewise, another party, for whom a place ought to be kept.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Another! Who can that be I wonder?

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

A small appendix of mine.

Sir LUKE.

How, Madam!

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

You need not be jealous, Sir Luke—taste that tart Mrs. Simper—it is only my husband the Serjeant.—Ha! ha! ha!—Betty makes them herself.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Oh! you abominable creature! How could such a thought come into your head?

Sir LUKE.

Ma'am—[*Offering sweetmeats to Mrs. Simper.*]

Mrs. SIMPER.

Not a bit more, I thank you.—I swear and vow I mould swoon at the sight.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

And I should receive him with the polite indifference of an absolute stranger.

Sir LUKE.

Well said, my good Lady Intrepid! But, notwithstanding, I would venture a trifle that his appearance would give you such an electrical shock—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

You are vastly deceiv'd.

Sir LUKE.

Dare you come to the proof? Will you give me leave to introduce Mr. Serjeant? He is not far off.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

What, my husband?

Sir LUKE.

Even he! I saw him as I enter'd the hall.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Impossible!

Sir LUKE.

Nay, then I must fetch him. [*Exit* Sir Luke.

COLONEL.

I can't conceive what the knight wou'd be at.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Why he is mad.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Or turn'd fool.

Enter Sir LUKE, with the SERJEANT's *peruke* on a *block*.

Sir LUKE.

Now, Madam, have I reason? Is this your husband or not?

Mrs. SIMPER.

It is he; not the least doubt can be made.

COLONEL.

Yes, yes, it is the Serjeant himself.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

I own it; I acknowledge the lord of my wishes. [*Kisses the block*.]

Mrs. SIMPER.

All his features are there!

COLONEL.

The grave cast of his countenance!

Sir LUKE.

The vacant stare of his eye!

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

The livid hue of his lips!

Mrs. SIMPER.

The rubies with which his cheeks are enrich'd!

COLONEL.

The silent solemnity when he sits on the bench!

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

We must have him at table; but pray good folks let my husband appear like himself.—I'll run for the gown.

[*Exit.*

Mrs. SIMPER.

By all means in the world.

Sir LUKE.

Dispatch, I beseech you.

Mrs. CIRCUIT returns with a gown and band.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Sir Luke, lend your assistance.

COLONEL.

There, place him at the head of the table.

[*They fix the head at the back of a chair, and place it at table; then all sit.*

Mrs. SIMPER.

Madam, you'll take care of your husband.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

I don't want to be put in mind of my duty.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Oh, Madam! I know that very well.

Sir LUKE.

Come, Hob or Nob, Master Circuit—let us try if we can't fuddle the Serjeant.

COLONEL.

O! fye! have a proper respect for the coif.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Don't be too facetious, Sir Luke: it is not quite so safe to sport with the heads of the law; you don't know how soon you may have a little business together.

Sir LUKE.

But come, the Serjeant is sulky.—I have thought of a way to divert him:—You know he is never so happy as when he is hearing a cause; suppose we were to plead one before him; Mrs. Circuit and I to be counsel, the colonel the clerk, and Mrs. Simper the cryer.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

The finest thought in the world! And stay, to conduct the trial with proper solemnity, let's rummage his wardrobe; we shall there be able to equip ourselves with suitable dresses.

Sir LUKE.

Alons, alons!

Mrs. SIMPER.

There is no time to be lost.

[*All rise.*

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

[*Stopping short as they are going out.*] But won't my husband be angry, if we leave him alone? Bye, deeree—we shall soon return to thee again.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter Serj. CIRCUIT, not perceiving the collation.

SERJEANT.

So, my lord not being able to sit, there was no occasion for me.—I can't put that girl's nonsense out of my head—My wife is young to be sure, and loves pleasure I own; but as to the *main* article, I have not the least ground to suspect her in that—No, no!—And then Sir Luke! my *prosien ami*, the dearest friend I have in the—Heyday! [*seeing the collation*] What the deuce have we here?—A collation!—So, so—I see madam knows how to divert herself during my absence.—What's this? [*seeing the block*] Oh, ho! ha! ha! ha!—Well, that's pretty enough I protest.—Poor girl, I see she could not be happy without having something at table that resembled me.—How pleas'd she will be to find me here in propriâ personâ.—By your leave, Mrs. Circuit—[*sits down and eats*] Delicate eating, in troth—and the wine [*drinks*]—Champaign as I live—must have t'other glass—They little think how that gentleman there regales himself in their absence—Ha! ha! ha!—quite convenient, I vow—the heat of the weather has made me—Come, brother Coif, here's your health—[*drinks*]—I must pledge myself I believe—[*drinks again*]—devilish strong—pshut!—Somebody's coming—[*gets up and goes towards the wings*]—What do I see? Four lawyers! What the devil can be the meaning of this? I should be glad to get at the bottom of—Hey! By your leave, brother Serjeant—I must crave the use of your robe—[*sits down, and gets under the gown*]—Between ourselves, this is not the first time this gown has cover'd a fraud.

Enter Sir LUKE, Colonel, Mrs. CIRCUIT, and Mrs. SIMPER, dressed as counsellors.

Sir LUKE.

Come, come, gentlemen, dispatch, the court has been waiting some time. Brother Circuit, you have look'd over your brief?

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

What, do you suppose, Sir, that like some of our brethren I defer that till I come into court? No, no.

Sir LUKE.

This cause contains the whole marrow and pith of all modern practice.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

One should think, Sir Luke, you had been bred to the bar.

Sir LUKE.

Child, I was some years in the Temple; but the death of my brother robb'd the robe of my labours.

Mrs. SIMPER.

What a loss to the public!

Sir LUKE.

You are smart, Mrs. Simper. I can tell you, Serjeant Snuffle, whose manner I study'd, pronounc'd me a promising youth.

Mrs. SIMPER.

I don't doubt it.

Sir LUKE.

But let us to business. And first, for the state of the case: The parties you know are Hobson and Nobson; the object of litigation is a small parcel of land, which is to decide the fate of a borough.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

True; call'd Turnbury Mead.

Sir LUKE.

Very well. Then to bring matters to a short issue, it was agreed, that Nobson should on the premises cut down a tree, and Hobson bring his action of damage.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

True, true.

Sir LUKE.

The jury being sworn, and the counsellors feed, the court may proceed.—Take your seats—But hold—I hope no gentleman has been touch'd on both sides.

ALL.

Oh! fye!

Sir LUKE.

Let silence be call'd.

Mrs. SIMPER.

Silence in the court!

Sir LUKE.

But stop. To be regular, and provide for fresh causes, we must take no notice of the borough and lands, the real objects in view, but stick fast to the tree, which is of no importance at all.

ALL.

True, true.

Sir LUKE.

Brother Circuit, you may proceed.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Gentlemen of the Jury.—I am in this cause counsel for Hobson, the plaintiff.—The action is brought against Nebuchadonezer Nobson, That he the said Nobson did cut down a tree, value two-pence, and to his own use said tree did convert.—Nobson justifies, and claims tree as his tree. We will, gentlemen, first state the probable evidence, and then come to the positive: and first as to the probable.—When was this tree here belonging to Hobson, and claim'd by Nobson, cut down? Was it cut down publicly in the day, in the face of the sun, men, women, and children, all the world looking on?—No; it was cut down privately, in the night, in a dark night, nobody *did* see, nobody *could* see.—Hum—And then with respect and regard to this tree, I am instructed to say, gentlemen, it was a beautiful, an ornamental tree to the spot where it grew. Now can it be thought that any man would come for to go in the middle of the night, nobody seeing, nobody *did* see, nobody *could* see, and cut down a tree, which tree was an ornamental tree, if tree had been his tree?—Certainly no.—And again, gentlemen, we moreover insist, that this tree was not only ornamental to the spot where it grew, but it was a useful tree to the owner; it was a plumb-tree, and not only a plum-tree, but I am authored to say the best of plum-trees, it was a damsin plum.—Now can it be thought, that any man wou'd come for to go, in the middle of the night, nobody seeing, nobody *did* see, nobody *could* see, and cut down a tree; which tree was not only an ornamental tree, but a useful tree, and not only a useful tree, but a plum-tree; and not only a plum-tree, but the best of plum-trees, a damsin plum? Most assuredly no.—If so be then, that this be so, and so it most certainly is, I apprehend no doubt will remain with the court, but my client a verdict will have, with full costs of suits, in such a manner and so forth, as may nevertheless appear notwithstanding.

Sir LUKE.

Have you done, Mr. Serjeant?

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

You may proceed.

Sir LUKE.

Gentlemen of the jury—I am in this cause counsel for Hob—Zouns! I think the head moves.

ALL.

Hey!

COLONEL.

No, no, Mrs. Simper, jogg'd the chair with her foot, that was all.

Sir LUKE.

For Hercules Hobson—(I cou'd have sworn it had stir'd)—I sha'nt gentlemen upon this occasion, attempt to move your passions, by flowing periods, and rhetorical flowers, as Mr. Serjeant has done; no, gentlemen, if I get at your hearts, I will make my way thro' your heads, however thick they may be—in order to which, I will pursue the learned gentleman, thro' what he calls his probable proofs: and first, as to this tree's being cut down in the night; in part we will grant him that point, but, under favour, not a dark night, Mr. Serjeant; no, quite the reverse, we can prove that the moon shone bright, with uncommon lustre that night—So that if so be as how people did not see that was none—[Serjeant *sneezes.*] nay, Mrs. Circuit, if you break the thread of my—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Me break!—I said nothing I'm sure.

Sir LUKE.

That's true, but you sneez'd.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Not I.

Sir LUKE.

I am sure somebody did; it could not be the head—consider the least interruption puts one out of one's—None of our faults, they might have look'd on and seen if they would. And then as to this beautiful tree, with which Mr. Serjeant has ornamented his spot—No, gentlemen, no such matter at all; I am instructed to say quite the reverse; a stunted tree, a blighted, blasted tree; a tree not only limbless, and leafless, but very near lifeless; that was the true state of the tree: and then as to its use, we own it was a plum-tree indeed, but not of the kind Mr. Serjeant sets forth, a damsin plum; our proofs say loudly a bull plum; but if so be and it had been a damsin plum, will any man go for to say, that a damsin plum is the best kind of plum; not a whit, I take upon me to say it is not a noun substantive plum—with plenty of sugar it does pretty well indeed in a tart, but to eat it by itself, will Mr. Serjeant go to compare it with the queen mother, the padrigons—

SERJEANT.

[*Appearing suddenly from under the gown.*]
The green gages, or the orlines.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

As I live 'tis my husband!

SERJEANT.

Nay, Sir Luke don't you run away too—give me a buss—since I was born, I never heard a finer reply; I am sorry I did not hear your argument out—but I cou'd not resist.

Sir LUKE.

This I own was a little surprise—had you been long here Mr. Serjeant?

SERJEANT.

But the instant you enter'd.

Sir LUKE.

So, then all is safe. [*Aside.*]

SERJEANT.

But come, won't you refresh you, Sir Luke—you have had hard duty to day.

Sir LUKE.

I drank very freely at table.

SERJEANT.

Nay, for the matter of that, I ha'n't been idle; [*both drink.*] But come, throw off your gown, and let us finish the bottle: I ha'n't had such a mind to be merry I can't tell the day when.

Sir LUKE.

Nay then, Mr. Serjeant, have at you—come, here's long life and health to the law. [*Drinks.*]

SERJEANT.

I'll pledge that toast in a bumper.—[*Drinks.*]—I'll take Charlot's hint, and see if I can't draw the truth out of the Knight by a bottle. [*Aside.*]

Sir LUKE.

I'll try if I can't fuddle the fool, and get rid of him that way. [*Aside.*]

SERJEANT.

I could not have thought it: why where the deuce did you pick up all this? But by the bye, pray who was the cryer?

Sir LUKE.

Did not you know her? Mrs. Simper, your neighbour.

SERJEANT.

A pestilent jade! she's a good one I warrant.

Sir LUKE.

She is thought very pretty; what say you to a glass in her favor?

SERJEANT.

By all means in the world! [*they drink*] and that spark the clerk?

Sir LUKE.

Colonel Secret, a friend to the lady you toasted.

SERJEANT.

A friend! oh, ay—I understand you—come, let us join 'em together.

Sir LUKE.

Alons. [*drink.*] Egad, I shall be caught in my own trap, I begin to feel myself fluster'd already. [*Aside.*]

SERJEANT.

Delicate white wine, indeed! I like it better every glass. [*Sings.*]

Drink and drive care away,
Drink and be merry.

Sir LUKE.

True, my dear Serjeant—this is the searcher of secrets—the only key to the heart.

SERJEANT.

Right boy, in veritas vino.

Sir LUKE.

No deceit in a bumper. [*Sings.*] Drink and be merry.

SERJEANT.

Merry! dammee, what a sweet fellow you are; what would I give, to be half so jolly and gay.

Sir LUKE.

[*Appearing very drunk.*] Would you? and yet do you know, Serjeant, that at this very juncture of time, there is a thing has popp'd into my head, that distresses me very much.

SERJEANT.

Then drive it out with a bumper [*Drink.*] Well, how is it now.

Sir LUKE.

Now!—the matter is not mended at all.

SERJEANT.

What the deuce is the business that so sticks in your stomach.

Sir LUKE.

You know, my dear Serjeant, I am your friend, your real, your affectionate friend.

SERJEANT.

I believe, it Sir Luke.

Sir LUKE.

And yet, for these six months, I have conceal'd a secret, that touches you near, very near—

SERJEANT.

Me near! That was wrong, very wrong; friends should have all things in common.

Sir LUKE.

That's what I said to myself; Sir Luke, says I, open your heart to your friend; but to tell you the truth, what sealed up my lips, was the fear that this secret should make you sulky and sad.

SERJEANT.

Me sulky and sad! ha! ha! how little you know of me.

Sir LUKE.

Swear then that you won't be uneasy.

SERJEANT.

Well, I do.

Sir LUKE.

[*Rising.*] Soft! let us see that all's safe;—well, Mr. Serjeant, do you know that you are—a fine, honest fellow?

SERJEANT.

Is that such a secret?

Sir LUKE.

Be quiet; a damn'd honest fellow—but as to your wife—

SERJEANT.

Well?

Sir LUKE.

She is an infamous strum—

SERJEANT.

How! it is a falshood Sir Luke, my wife is as virtuous a wom—

Sir LUKE.

Oh! if you are angry, your servant—I thought that the news would have pleas'd you—for after all, what is the business to me? What do I get by the bargain?

SERJEANT.

That's true; but then would it not vex any man to hear his wife abus'd in such a—

Sir LUKE.

Not if it's true, you old fool.

SERJEANT.

I say it is false: prove it; give me that satisfaction Sir Luke.

Sir LUKE.

Oh! you shall have that pleasure directly; and to come at once to the point—you remember last New-year's day how severely it froze.

SERJEANT.

I do recollect.

Sir LUKE.

Very well; we are all invited to dine at Alderman Inkle's.

SERJEANT.

Very right.

Sir LUKE.

Well, and I did not go: Mrs. Circuit made me dine here, in this house—was it my fault?

SERJEANT.

No, no, Sir Luke, no.

Sir LUKE.

At table says she—she said, I was the picture of you—was it my fault?

SERJEANT.

Well, and suppose you are; where's the mischief in that?

Sir LUKE.

Be quiet, I tell you;—then throwing her arms round my neck,—it is my husband himself I embrace, it is my little old man that I kiss!—for she has a prodigious affection for you at bottom—was it my fault?

SERJEANT.

But what is there serious in this, dost think I mind such trifles?

Sir LUKE.

Hold your tongue, you fool, for a moment—then throwing her Teresa aside—upon my soul she is prodigious fine every where here—was it my fault?

SERJEANT.

My fault! my fault! I see no fault in all this.

Sir LUKE.

[*Hatching a cry.*] No! why then my dear friend, do you know that I was so unworthy, so profligate, so abandon'd—as to—[*rises*] say no more, the business is done.

SERJEANT.

Ay, indeed!

Sir LUKE.

Oh! fact! there is not the least doubt of the matter; this is no *hear say*, dy'e see, I was by all the while.

SERJEANT.

Very pretty! very fine upon my word.

Sir LUKE.

Was it my fault? what could I do? put yourself in my place; I must have been more, or less, than man to resist.

SERJEANT.

Your fault, Sir Luke, no, no—you did but your duty—but as to my wife—

Sir LUKE.

She's a diabolical fiend, I shall hate her as long as I live.

SERJEANT.

And I too.

Sir LUKE.

Only think of her forcing me, as it were with a sword at my breast, to play such a trick; you, my dear Serjeant, the best, truest friend I have in the world. [*Weeps.*]

SERJEANT.

[*Weeping.*] Dry your tears, dear Sir Luke; I shall ever gratefully acknowledge your confidence in trusting *me* with the secret—[*taking him forward.*] But I think it might be as well kept from the rest of the world.

Sir LUKE.

My dear soul, do you think I would tell it to any mortal but *you*? No, no, not to my brother himself—You are the only man upon earth I wou'd trust.

SERJEANT.

Ten thousand thanks, my dear friend! sure there is no comfort, no balsam in life like a friend—but I shall make Madam Circuit remember—

Sir LUKE.

We neither of us ought to forgive her—were I you, I'd get a divorce.

SERJEANT.

So I will—provided you will promise not to marry her after.

Sir LUKE.

Me! I'll sooner be torn to pieces by wild horses—no, my dear friend, we will retire to my house in the country together, and there, in innocence and simplicity, feeding our pigs and pigeons, like Pyramus and Thisbe, we will live the paragons of the age.

SERJEANT.

Agreed; we will be the whole earth to each other; for, as Mr. *Shakespur* says,

"The friend thou hast and his adoption try'd
Clasp to thy soul, and quit the world beside."—

Sir LUKE.

Zouns, here comes Madam Serjeant herself.

Enter Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

So, Gentlemen! a sweet tête a tête you have been holding—but I know it all, not a syllable you have said has been lost.

Sir LUKE.

Then, I hope you have been well entertained Mrs. Circuit?

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

And you, you mean spirited, dastardly wretch, to lend a patient ear to his infamous, improbable tales, equally shameful both to you and me.

SERJEANT.

How Madam! have you the assurance—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Yes, Sir, the assurance that innocence gives; there is not a soul, I thank heaven, that can lay the least soil, the least spot, on my virtue; nor is there a man on earth but yourself would have sat and silently listen'd to the fictions and fables of this intemperate sot.

SERJEANT.

Why to be sure the knight is overtaken a little; very near drunk.

Sir LUKE.

I hope he believes it is a lie. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Do me instant justice on this defamer, this liar, or never more expect to see me in your house.

SERJEANT.

I begin to find out the fraud, this is all a flam of the knight's.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

I'll drive this instant to a friend of mine in the Commons, and see if no satisfaction can be had, for blasting the reputation of a woman like me—and hark you Sir, what inducement, what devil could prompt?—

SERJEANT.

Ay; what devil could prompt—

Sir LUKE.

Heyday!

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

But I guess at your motive; you flatter'd yourself, that by marrying Charlot, and discarding of me you should engross all his affections and—

SERJEANT.

True, true—stop, my life, let me come at him, a little: hark you, Mr. Knight, I begin to discover that you are a very sad dog.

Sir LUKE.

Et tu Brute!

SERJEANT.

Brute!—you'll find I am not the brute you would have made me believe—I have consider'd both sides of the question.

Sir LUKE.

Both sides of the question?

SERJEANT.

Both: if your story is true, you are a scoundrel to debauch the wife of your friend; and if it is false, you are an infamous lyar.

Sir LUKE.

Well argued.

SERJEANT.

So in both cases, get out of my house.

Sir LUKE.

Nay, but Serjeant—

SERJEANT.

Troop I tell you, and never again enter these walls—you have libelled my wife, and I will see you no more.

Sir LUKE.

Was there ever such a—

SERJEANT.

March! and as to my daughter, I would as soon marry her to a forma pauperis client.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Do you consider, Mr. Circuit, where you are pushing the fellow?—That chamber is Charlot's.

Enter Sir LUKE, WOODFORD, CHARLOT, *and* JACK.

Sir LUKE.

Heyday! who the deuce have we here?—Pray walk in, my good folks—your servant Miss Charlot; your servant Mr. What-d'ye-call-um.—Mr. Serjeant, you need not trouble yourself to cater for Miss; your family you see can provide for themselves.

SERJEANT.

Heyday! What the deuce is all this! Who are you Sir, and how came you here? [*To* Woodford.]

JACK.

It was I, father, that brought him.

SERJEANT.

How, sirrah!

Sir LUKE.

Well said my young limb of the law.

JACK.

Come, let us have none o'your—tho' I brought Mr. Woodford, you could not persuade me to do the same office for you—father, never stir if he did not make me the proffer, if I would let him into the house the night you was at Kingston, of a new pair of silk stockings, and to learn me a minuet.

Sir LUKE.

Me! I should never have got you to turn out your toes.

JACK.

Ay, and moreover you made me push out my chest, and do so with my fingers, as if I was taking two pinches of snuff.

Sir LUKE.

You see, Mr. Serjeant, what a fondness, I have for every twig of your family.

SERJEANT.

I shall thank *you* hereafter—but from you, Charlot, I expected other guess—

CHARLOT.

When, Sir, you hear this whole matter explain'd, you will acquit I am sure.

WOODFORD.

Indeed, Sir, *I* am wholly to blame; my being here was as much a surprize upon Miss Charlot as—

SERJEANT.

But now you are here, pray what's your business?

JACK.

O! father, I can acquaint you with that—he wanted me to bring a love letter to Charlot, so I told him he might bring it himself, for that I would not do any such thing for never so much, for fear of offending of you.

SERJEANT.

You mended the matter indeed—but after all, who, and what are you?

JACK.

It's the young gentleman that lives over our heads, to whom Mr. Fairplay is guardian.

SERJEANT.

Who, Woodford?

JACK.

The same.

SERJEANT.

And are you, young man in a situation to think of a wife?

WOODFORD.

I am flattered, Sir, that as *justice* is with me, I shall one day have no contemptible fortune to throw at her feet.

SERJEANT.

Justice is! What signifies justice?—Is the *law* with you, you fool?

WOODFORD.

With your help, Sir, I should hope for their *union*, upon this occasion at least.

SERJEANT.

Well, Sir, I shall re-consider your papers, and, if there are probable grounds, I may be induc'd to hear your proposals.

WOODFORD.

Nay then, Sir, the recovering my paternal possessions makes me anxious indeed.—Could I hope that the young lady's good wish would attend me?

CHARLOT.

I have a father, and can have no will of my own.

Sir LUKE.

So then it seems poor Pil Garlick here is discarded at once.

SERJEANT.

Why, could you have the impudence, after what has happen'd, to hope that—

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

He has given wonderful proofs of his modesty.

Sir LUKE.

Be quiet, Mrs. Circuit.—Come, good folks, I will set all matters to rights in a minute; and first, Mr. Serjeant, it becomes me to tell you, that I never intended to marry your daughter.

SERJEANT.

How! never!

Sir LUKE.

Never. She is a fine girl I allow; but would it now, Mr. Serjeant, have been honest in me, to have robb'd the whole sex of my person, and confin'd my favors to her?

SERJEANT.

How!

Sir LUKE.

No! I was struck with the immorality of the thing; and therefore to make it impossible that you should ever give me your daughter, I invented the story I told you concerning Mrs. Circuit and me.

SERJEANT.

How!

Sir LUKE.

Truth, upon my honour.—Your wife there will tell you the whole was a lye.

SERJEANT.

Nay, then indeed.—But with what face can I look up to my dear? I have injur'd her beyond the hopes of forgiveness.—Wou'd you, lovee, but pass an act of oblivion—

Sir LUKE.

See me here prostrate to implore your clemency in behalf of my friend.

Mrs. CIRCUIT.

Of that I can't determine directly.—But as you seem to have some sense of your guilt, I shall grant you a reprieve for the present, which contrition and amendment may, perhaps, in time swell into a pardon.

But if again offending you are caught,

SERJEANT.

Then let me suffer, dearee, as I ought.

FINIS.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

Contemporary spelling has been retained, even where inconsistent, although a very few obvious typographical errors have been corrected (e.g. identity replaced idenity). Missing punctuation has been added.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE LAME LOVER: A COMEDY IN
THREE ACTS ***

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