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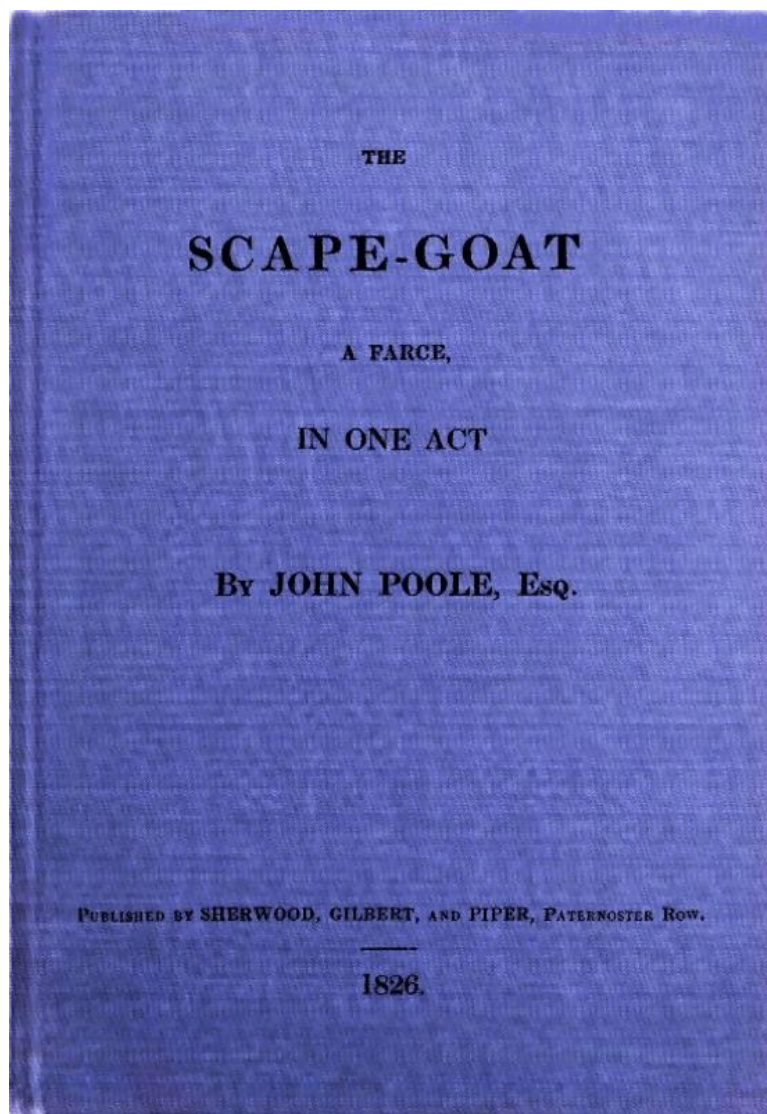
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SCAPE-GOAT: A FARCE IN ONE ACT ***



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The Scape-Goat
A Farce in One Act
THE
SCAPE-GOAT;

A FARCE,
IN ONE ACT,

PERFORMED, FOR THE FIRST TIME, ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1825,

AT THE
THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

BY JOHN POOLE, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "PAUL PRY," "TRIBULATION," "MARRIED AND SINGLE,"
"SIMPSON AND Co." &c. &c.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY SHERWOOD, GILBERT, AND PIPER, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1826.

Price Eighteen-Pence.

✻ A French Piece, called "*Le Precepteur dans l'embarras*,"
furnished the ground-work of the following Farce.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

<i>Old Eustace</i>	MR. BLANCHARD.
<i>Charles, (his son)</i>	MR. COOPER.
<i>Ignatius Polyglot</i>	MR. W. FARREN.
<i>Robin</i>	MR. MEADOWS.
<i>Master Frederick</i>	
<i>Harriet</i>	MISS A. JONES.
<i>Molly Maggs</i>	MISS JONES.

SCENE—*Polyglot's study. A door on each side, conducting to other apartments. An opening to the garden, at the back of the stage. Another door leading to the interior of the house. Globes, books, maps, &c. are scattered about.*

ROBIN *discovered, turning a globe.*

Robin. 'Tis an extraordinary thing, that, do what I will, I can't make myself sensible. I turn the world topsy-turvy for hours together, as I see my young master, Mr. Charles, do; like Mr. Ignatius Polyglot, his tutor, I sometimes look into a book full of Greek or Latin; but all to no purpose. Ah! Mr. Polyglot must be in the right: he can't bear the sight of a woman in the house, for fear Mr. Charles should fall in love, and neglect his studies; and, for my part, I'm sure that, if all the Greek I have got in my pocket (*shewing a book*) were cramm'd into my head, one thought of my sweet little Somersetshire lass, Molly Maggs, would drive it out again.

Enter MOLLY MAGGS, from the Garden.

Molly. Hist! hist! Robin!

Robin. What! my dear Molly! You may come in.

Molly. I'm afeard, Robin.

Robin. There's nothing to be afraid of just now.

Molly. Where's Mr. Ignoramus, the tutorer, then?

Robin. Mr. Ignatius you mean. He's out, taking his evening's walk.

Molly. Be he? I hope he be gone down towards the little bridge.

Robin. Why?

Molly. The last time he went that way, he were so busy at what he called soldering a problem, that he stumbled over into the brook. If I had been in your place, Robin, before I pulled him out again I'd ha' made him promise to consent to our marriage, or I'd ha' let him bide there till doomsday.

Robin. Molly, Molly, you don't like Mr. Polyglot.

Molly. Why don't he like me then?

Robin. It is not you alone, but he would dislike any other young maiden about the house the same.

Molly. And what for? there's no reason in that. Am I to blame? I'm sure 'tis no fault of mine, Robin, that I'm a young maiden. Ha! ha! ha! A pretty to-do there'd be if he should catch me here—in his own apartments too!

Robin. So there would. I tremble to think of it; and so, Molly, you'd better—

Molly. I don't care: if he says any thing to me, I'll give him his own. Besides, our master, old Master Eustace, will be home in a few days, and we'll ask his leave to be married, in spite of old tutorer.

Robin. No, no, we must not displease him; he's steward as well as tutorer, and—

Molly. He'll discharge us? let him. I'm not afeard of wanting a service. I have relations who are up in the world. I'm first cousin to Sally Maggs, who is head chambermaid at the Bell, at Winchester—Chattering Sally, as they call her, and well they may, for she is chatter, chatter, chatter—

Robin. In that respect, Molly, you don't disgrace the relationship.

Molly. Discharge us, indeed! the sooner the better; we may then get married when we please. What does the foolish old chap mean by not liking folks to marry? I wish his father had been of the same mind, and then Mr. Ignoramus would not have been here to torment us.

Robin. Well, well, though he is a little crabbed and sour, he's a good old soul at bottom. He'd go through fire and water to serve young Master Charles.

Molly. With a vengeance! Poor young gentleman! he's grown as melancholy as a willow tree: and no wonder: at four-and-twenty to be kept in leading-strings like a baby! But no good will come of it, see if there do; and I wish that Master Charles would give him the slip one of these days, on purpose to plague him. O, if I could but catch the old one doing any thing amiss—

Robin. Think kindlier of him, Molly; we'll wait till we find him in a good humour, and then perhaps

Molly. If we wait till then, Robin, you need be in no hurry to buy the wedding ring. Well, I'll go.

Robin. Do; for after all 'twould do no good to anger him. And, Lord! if he were to see us here together!—Well, good bye, my dear Molly.

Molly. Good bye, Robin! (*loitering*) Good bye, Robin!

Robin. (*Kisses her*) Bless your little heart!

*Enter, from the garden, IGNATIUS POLYGLOT,
with a book. ROBIN runs off.*

Molly. O, crimini!

Poly. What do I behold! Under my nose! my very nose! here too! in my study, the sanctuary of science and of learning!

Molly. Well, if nothing worse was ever learnt here, Mr. Ignoramus—

Poly. Ignatius.—But what atonement can you make for this?

Molly. Atonement! I've done nothing to atone for.

Poly. Nothing! Do you call that nothing? Did I not see? Did I not hear? Nothing! *O tem*—but you don't understand Latin.

Molly. Latin, indeed! no, nor Greek neither; and I'm sure 'tis all Greek you are talking to me. What did you see? what did you hear? You heard Robin say good bye, that was all.

Poly. Peace! I'm a linguist, and in none of the seventeen languages I'm acquainted with, does that mean good bye.

Molly. Then I wouldn't give seventeen figs to be as learned as you are, and your seventeen languages are not worth talking.

Poly. To what is the poor youth exposed! Mischief! Serpent! Woman! I pity, and tremble for, the unfortunate lad.

Molly. 'Tis a misfortune not likely to happen to you.

Poly. But 'tis I alone who am to blame. I ought not to have allowed one of the deluding sex to approach those innocent and unsuspecting youths. Had my pupil, Charles, beheld this, it might have put things into his head, which—But there will yet be time to save them. To-morrow, at day-break, you will quit this house.

Molly. Nay, and you wouldn't be so cruel, Mr. Poll-parrot.

Poly. Polyglot.—I have said it; reply not.

Molly. I have not done any harm, and I'm sure I did not think any harm. 'Tis no fault of mine if Robin is in love with me: he fell in love of his own accord, indeed he did.

Poly. Love! (*looks fearfully about.*) Silence!—If Charles should hear that dangerous word—Retire—Withdraw—begone.

Molly. (*Bursting into tears.*) O deeree me! Pray, good, kind Mr. Ignoramus, forgive me this once. Would you have it upon your conscience to turn a poor lass out of her service, and send her upon the wide world without a friend to protect her? Would'ee now, Mr. Ignoramus, would'ee?

Poly. Go away, my dear, and—No, I will not give way to the weakness of our common nature, but prove myself, in the discharge of my duty, inflexible as the first Brutus!

Molly. And well you may call him so, if he was as stony-hearted as you are. Will you forgive me?

Poly. No!

Molly. You won't? Nay, then, I'll tell you a bit of my mind; I'll do that, an' I die for it. For all your grave looks, I'll be sworn you are no better than your neighbours; I know you arn't. I'll pass my days in watching you, I will; and if ever I catch you saying "good bye," as I know I shall, then, when you are in trouble, and in need of indulgence, you shall find me as pityless as yourself. There; carry that bundle upon your shoulders, and now—I'll go and pack up mine.

[*Exit.*]

Poly. The little serpent! Her tears, her imploring looks, had well nigh—But I must be firm: I see the danger, and must protect my pupil against the snares of these pernicious creatures. Poor lad! he is innocent, and knows not the seductive power of love. My example and instructions have so fortified his mind, so hardened his heart against all silly, soft impressions, that, thanks to me, he may hope to pass through life as becomes a philosopher—in a happy indifference to all its joys, its pleasures, and its cares. He comes!—My dear disciple!

Enter CHARLES, in violent agitation.

Charles. My dear sir, I'm glad you are returned.

Poly. Your impatience pleases me. Come, is it to be Sophocles this evening?

Charles. No:—it is not that, sir,—but—

Poly. Well, well; we must sometimes relax,—make holiday; so, instead of Sophocles, we'll amuse ourselves with a problem in Euclid.

Charles. Confound Euclid! as he has often confounded me. No, sir; I—in short, you see me in the greatest distress.

Poly. In distress! You alarm me! My dear boy, my dear child, what is the matter?

Charles. My father is returning; he is now galloping up the avenue, and I see no refuge from my difficulties but in death.

Poly. Mercy on me! what do you mean? No refuge but in—and in his father's absence too! Consider, that for all that concerns you, I am responsible. Wait, at least, till he arrives, and—

Charles. No, I am resolved; the matter is pressing, and there's no time for deliberation.

Poly. And he has not half finished his studies! (*Rushes into his arms*) Charles—my dear boy—be composed—look at me—who am I? have I not been your guide, your protector, your friend, since the hour you were born. You know I love you; that there is nothing on earth I would not do to see you happy; tell me, then, what it is afflicts you.

Charles. You will betray me to my father, and I dread his displeasure worse than death.

Poly. Betray you! Never; be it what it may.

Charles. Swear!

Poly. I never swear.

Charles. Swear, or this instant will I—

Poly. Hold! your danger inspires me with the devotion of an antique Roman: I swear, (*raising his hand*) *Per Jovem!* By Jupiter! I swear.

Charles. Enough! I will trust you. (*Aside*) And yet I dare not tell him the whole.—I—I am in love.

Poly. O, horror! In love! 'Tis epidemic—'tis running through the house! Robin, Molly, and now—How, sir! and at your age, only just turned of four-and-twenty; the thing is incredible, and—

Charles. Do but hear me, sir.

Poly. In love! it cannot be: why, he has Greek, Latin, algebra, and mathematics at his finger's ends. And is this the termination of my hopes? You, whom I destined for a philosopher; you, whose name I fondly hoped to see placed side by side with the glorious names of Archimedes and Aristotle! Did love find out the square of the hypothenuse? Did love—

Charles. O, sir, if the bare avowal of my affection so displease you, what will you say when I confess to you that—but here comes my father. (*Aside.*) Where shall I conceal my dear Harriet?

Poly. Be composed; he must not observe our agitation.

Charles. Remember your promise, or I'll keep mine. Pop!

Poly. My dear boy I'll not betray you, I—Oh!

Enter OLD EUSTACE, followed by ROBIN, to whom he gives his great-coat, hat and whip.

Eustace. Charles, my boy, I'm glad to see you. Mr. Polyglot, my worthy friend, your hand. You did not expect to see me so soon.

Poly. No, sir, we—we didn't expect you till last week.

Eustace. Till next week, you mean. The truth is, I was willing to take you by surprise, and see how things had been managed during my absence; but I might have spared myself the trouble. You, Mr. Polyglot, have the superintendance of my servants, and are accountable for their conduct;—

Robin. Don't tell about Molly and me, sir. (*Aside to Polyglot.*)

Eustace. My son is under your especial care and observance;—

Charles. Remember! (*Aside to Polyglot.*)

Eustace. And so perfect is my reliance on your attention, prudence, and wisdom, that I am persuaded you have nothing to relate of what has passed in the house that will not receive my fullest approbation.

Poly. Yes—no—certainly.

Eustace. Well, Charles, my arrival must not interrupt your studies; retire to your own room till supper is ready. Mr. Polyglot, I have something of importance to communicate to you. Robin, desire the cook to be expeditious; my ride has given me an appetite: and do you put lights into my study: after supper, I shall be occupied there for an hour or two.

Charles. (*Stops Robin as he is going off.*) What, sir! the pavilion at the end of the garden?

Eustace. Ay, I have no other.

Charles. You had better not go there to-night, sir; 'tis damp, and—

Eustace. Damp? nonsense! Robin, do as I desire.

Charles. (*Aside.*) 'Tis there I have concealed her. There is not a moment to be lost.

[*Exit.*]

Robin. (*Whispers to Polyglot.*) Be kind to poor Molly, and forgive her, sir.

Poly. (*Lost in thought.*) No, Molly—yes, Robin, yes.

Robin. Thankye, sir; it shall never happen again.

[*Exit.*]

Eustace. Why, what is the meaning of all this? Tell me, Mr. Polyglot, what is the matter here? This confusion, and whispering!—Surely my sudden arrival cannot have occasioned any inconvenience. I expected to see you all delighted, and you receive me with faces as long as my arm.

Poly. Uncommonly long! uncommonly long!

Eustace. (*Aside.*) I perceive: the philosopher is in one of his fits of abstraction.—But there is an air of restraint about Charles, for which I am at a loss to account. Has he done any thing to provoke your displeasure?

Poly. (*Aside.*) I dare not inform him.—No, no—a trifle.

Eustace. You are right to be severe with him: he is now arrived at an age when the strictest watchfulness over his conduct is necessary. Ah! Mr. Polyglot, your example has made him what he is; your vigilance must keep him so.

Poly. I—you flatter me.

Eustace. I will now, in few words, confide to you the object of the journey from which I have just returned: it was to make arrangements for the marriage of my son.

Poly. His marriage!

Eustace. I anticipate your objection, and will answer it.

Poly. I have no objection to offer. (*Aside.*) Then it turns out as it should be. Charles is already in love; so the marriage comes opportunely.

Eustace. No objection! Why, till now, you have always held that no man ought to marry till he's sixty; that is to say, till he has finished his education, and seen a little of the world.

Poly. You make a slight mistake; I always said, at least I meant to say, four-and-twenty.

Eustace. Well, I'm glad it is so; for, to say the truth, although I am of your opinion, that it is not prudent to marry whilst a mere baby, yet I always thought sixty somewhat of the latest.

Poly. Ay, ay, for a young man it is, but—(*Aside*) What a relief is this to my mind! How happy this will make my dear boy!

Eustace. I'm delighted to find you are of my opinion. Next week I'll take Charles to town with me;

he shall see the young lady; I do not mean to control his choice; but if he like her, and she like him, they shall marry instantly.

Poly. Like her! my dear sir, I'm happy to tell you that he is already in—(*Aside.*) My oath—*per Jovem!*

Eustace. Come, Mr. Polyglot, follow me to the supper room; we'll talk further of this. I can never repay you, my good friend, for your care of my son. As I said before, your example has made him what he is: for his virtues he is indebted to you; and, were it possible he could be guilty of any crime or folly, so completely is he under your guidance, that I should hold you more to blame than him.

[*Exit.*]

Poly. What a fortunate turn has this affair taken! Since he is in love, he must naturally be anxious to marry. Yet he did not tell me with whom he is in love. I do not pretend to understand those matters; but I presume that, being in love, he wants a wife, and—Oh! there can't be a doubt of it; so long as he get a wife, surely it can't signify who. He comes; I'll communicate the joyful tidings to him.

Enter CHARLES, in violent agitation.

Charles. I have been anxiously waiting the departure of my father.

Poly. My dear boy, quiet your apprehensions; 'tis all right.

Charles. 'Tis all wrong, and fifty times worse than before.

Poly. What mean you?

Charles. The unexpected arrival of my father has thrown me into a difficulty scarcely surmountable. Alas! you know but half my unhappy story.

Poly. I hope then it is the worst half, for really I have suffered—

Charles. I tremble to avow to you the full extent of my folly, and yet I dare no longer conceal any circumstance of it from you. The urgency of our situation, the danger that awaits us—

Poly. Come, come, courage; tell me all.

Charles. Know then, that having become acquainted with a young lady, the orphan daughter of an officer in the army, I grew enamoured of her, was assiduous in my attentions to her, succeeded in winning her affections, and finally—

Poly. Eh? What!—say no more—Oh! Charles, Charles—

Charles. Do but hear me to the end of my story.

Poly. I have heard too much already. And are these the fruits of my instructions? Is it by such wickedness you repay my anxious care of you?

Charles. You mistake me, sir; if you would but listen—

Poly. Never expect from me either pardon or indulgence. Had you indeed formed such a bond of union as might without a blush have been acknowledged, it is possible I might—

Charles. What, sir! would you have sanctioned our marriage? Obtained for us my father's pardon, his approbation?

Poly. In that case, perhaps, I would have interfered in your behalf; for marriage is a sacred contract, and must be respected: but, as it is—

Charles. (*Joyfully.*) Then my worthy Mentor, my best of friends, be comforted: I *am* married.

Poly. (*Struck with astonishment.*) Married!

Charles. I am, I am. Marriage, as you say, is a sacred contract; and, by your own shewing, you are bound to assist us.

Poly. Married! So vigilant as I have been, yet has he contrived to—I must at once reveal this to your father. (*Going.*)

Charles. And your oath!

Poly. Oh!

Charles. Betray me, and my life, my dear wife's too, may become a sacrifice. But no, you will not; for your own sake, you dare not. Upon you alone will fall the blame.—Under whose especial care have I been placed? Yours. Whose duty was it to watch over my conduct? Yours. Whose vigilance was at fault when I could contrive a secret marriage? Yours. My father has made you responsible for my actions: *ergo*: it is against you alone that my father will manifest his displeasure at my misconduct.

Poly. (*His countenance gradually betraying his satisfaction.*) The dear boy! He is indebted to me for his logic. Aristotle himself would have been proud of such a pupil. That's something like conducting an argument. I have not a word to reply.

Charles. But there is no time to be lost; you must at once decide. If you consent to protect us, we shall for ever consider you our friend—our saviour. You shall pass your days with us; we will be a comfort to your age; our children shall thank you; and, as you moulded their father's mind, so shall you give the bent to their's.

Poly. My dear Charles, I will encounter anything for your sake: whatever may befall me, I swear not to betray your interests. This will be a sad disappointment to your father. You must allow me a few days to consider the best mode of breaking the affair to him. But where have you left your—it was only this morning I rapped his knuckles for a false quantity—your wife?

Charles. Left her? She's here!

Poly. What, here! in the house?

Charles. In my father's study, in the garden. Taking advantage of his absence, I have, for many

days, concealed her there; but his sudden return compels me to seek some other retreat for her. Aided by the growing darkness, I have removed her. She is waiting there in the garden. I will confide her to your care.

Poly. Hold, hold! Confide a woman to my care!

Charles. Ay; your apartment is the most secure. No one will suspect that a female is concealed there. (*Runs towards the garden.*) Harriet, Harriet! This way.

Poly. (*In great consternation.*) Stay—what would you do? Should she be discovered here, I'm ruined, undone!—Oh! she's here!

Enter HARRIET.

Charles. Fear nothing, my darling love; this is our best friend.

Harriet. In what terms can we express our gratitude, sir?

Poly. Indeed, miss—mistress—my good lady, I—my head is turning—But, tell me, Charles, how did you contrive, without my knowledge, to—

Charles. My wife will explain all to you. In the mean time I'll keep watch without. Should my father take us by surprise, all will be lost. My good, kind friend, I confide to your care all I value in the world—my own dear Harriet.

Poly. Why—why—you would not leave me alone with her?

Charles. (*Not attending to him.*) Be composed, love; all will be well.

[*Exit.*

Poly. Charles, Charles! Don't leave me alone with her.

Harriet. Once more, sir, let me thank you for your kindness.

Poly. (*Avoiding her.*) Thank me, indeed! Oh! if you knew—

Harriet. But why that angry look? Would you abandon us? In your friendship, and my husband's love, is now my only hope.

Poly. What touching accents! I never before—'Twas with tones like these the serpent must have seduced my poor innocent boy. (*Severely.*) It is my duty, miss—my duty, madam, to remind you that the step you have taken is—(*She looks abashed.*)—Not that I would say anything to give you pain, but—tell me who you are, my dear.

Harriet. The daughter of Colonel Mowbray, who, dying five years ago, left me without fortune, without friends, without a protector. I sought an asylum in the neighbouring village, and soon afterwards became acquainted with Mr. Eustace. You know his worth, and can you wonder if—

Poly. Poor thing! Well, don't weep, my dear; your cares will soon be at an end. Not but that so imprudent a step as a clandestine marriage deserves the severest—(*As she appears affected, he relaxes in the severity of his manner.*) Yet you were very young, and that almost excuses you. But how appease his father?

Harriet. I dread to meet him.

Poly. And I too, who must bear the responsibility of all this! But how did my Charles contrive to make your acquaintance? I watched him so closely, that—

Harriet. I believe, sir, he bribed the servants to conceal his absence from home; and whilst you thought he was in his own room, closely engaged in his studies, he used to—

Poly. The mischievous truant! I'll trim him for this. I beg pardon; I forgot I was speaking to you of a husband.—Ah! I can imagine by what arts he won your affections. He has often delighted me. He solved some difficult problem in Euclid for you, perhaps—talked Latin to you, eh? or Greek?

Harriet. Greek, sir! he merely said he loved me.

Poly. Where could he have picked up that! I never taught it him. But I always said the dear boy was blessed with a natural genius. And so you have taken advantage of his father's absence, to get married?

Harriet. No, sir; we have been married these four years.

Poly. Four years!

Harriet. Yet have I often lamented my imprudence. His wife, yet not as such acknowledged, and exposed to the evil opinion of the inhabitants of the village, I was at the point of quitting the place, till Charles could openly avow our union. The departure of his father determined him to afford me a temporary refuge here, but his unexpected return has—(*A bell heard.*)

Poly. The supper bell! To avoid suspicion, I must leave you, and join old Mr. Eustace.

Harriet. Leave me! and Charles not here.

Poly. Possibly he is detained by his father. What is to be done? You must not be seen here, or—(*After some hesitation, and with a profound sigh*) Ah! there is no other resource. Go into this room; it is mine; when the family shall have retired for the night, I'll contrive to let you out of the house, and you may remain concealed in the village till we can obtain the sanction of your—your father-in-law.

Harriet. I will do all you desire, sir.

Poly. There, be quick; should you be discovered there, it would be my ruin. (*He puts her into the room, and as he is speaking to her through the door, which he holds ajar.*)

Enter MOLLY.

So, here, take the key and lock the door inside. Be cautious; do not open the door to any one but me, my little dear; the signal shall be three taps of the hand.

Molly. Oh, oh! his little dear!

Poly. (*Alarmed.*) Who's there?

Molly. (*Looking slyly at him.*) 'Tis I, Mr. Pollypot, and since, for my misbehaviour, you are resolved to send me away, I come to—But what was that I heard you say? Were you saying “good bye” to anybody?

Poly. No—I—I was talking to myself.

Molly. Oh! then you are your own little dear. “Don't open to any one but me, my little dear.”

Poly. (*Aside.*) The little imp has overheard us.

Molly. An't you ashamed of yourself, Mr. Ignoramus? You preach one thing and practise another. You would turn away a couple of poor servants because they love one another honestly, whilst you have a pretty dear concealed in your apartment. But master is come home now, and he shall know of this. (*Calls.*) Master! master! Mr. Eustace!—

Poly. Molly, Molly, 'tis all a mistake—listen to me—

Molly. No; you had no pity for me just now; so as you said, you shall find me as flexible as the worst Plutus.—Master!—

Poly. I supplicate—I implore—you shall stay, Molly, you shall stay.

Molly. I stay in a house where there are such doings! No, no. But I'll have my revenge on you before I go, I will.—Master! Mr. Charles! all the house! come all of you!

Poly. He comes! I am ruined—and poor Charles—

Enter EUSTACE.

Eustace. Why, what is all this noise about? And you, Mr. Polyglot, didn't you hear the supper bell? The fish is getting cold, and—

Molly. He doesn't care about your fish, master; he has fish of his own to fry, the wicked old sinner.

Eustace. What does the girl mean?

Molly. I mean, master, that if one serpent, as he calls me, is to be sent out of your house, to let you know that you have another remaining in it.

Poly. Molly, my dear—

Molly. Don't whisper me; I'm not to be come over with soft words, that I can tell you. Here's Mr. Tutorer, sir, who would turn away a poor lass for having an honest lover of her own, has got a—I don't know what, locked up in his room.

Eustace. Why, how dare you accuse—

Molly. It is true enough, sir; and if it is not a woman, may I never be married! and I would not swear such a dreadful oath to a fib.

Eustace. A woman!

Poly. (*Aside.*) I don't know whether I am standing on my head or my heels.

Eustace. Is this true, sir?

Poly. I—you can't believe—you would not suspect—

Molly. There's no need to suspect, master, for it is true. 'Tis his little dear, for I heard him call her so.

Eustace. The girl's earnestness convinces me there is some truth in this. Your consternation now—your confusion at my sudden arrival—

Poly. Of course—my—my indignation at such a charge, my—

Eustace. In a word, sir, who have you concealed there?

Poly. I have no one concealed—I—I was talking to Robin, who is there arranging the—the furniture. (*Aside.*) I scarcely know what I say.

Molly. Robin there, is he?

Poly. Leave the room, girl! Is my word to be doubted?

Molly. No, Sir. (*Calls.*) Robin! Robin!

Enter ROBIN, *from the garden.*

Robin. Did you call me?

Eustace. How is this!

Poly. Ruined and undone!

(*Charles is seen to cross the garden.*)

Eustace. What have you to say to this, Sir?

Poly. (*Makes signs to Robin.*) He went out the other way, I suppose.

Molly. There is no other way out but the window.

Poly. The window is low, and that's the way he got out, and now there is no one else there. (*A noise as of breaking glass is heard in the room.*)

Molly. Dear me! Then the windows are breaking one another!

Poly. I shall faint! pray leave me just now, sir. I feel particularly unwell. I'll explain this to your satisfaction to-morrow.

Eustace. I'll not be trifled with; give me the key.

Poly. Unluckily it is inside, and the door is fastened.

Eustace. No matter; I'll force it open.

Molly. Stop, master; I have a key. (*Gives three taps with her hand.*)

Poly. (*Sinks into a chair.*) The little vixen will be the death of me.

*Enter from the room, CHARLES;
he closes the door hastily after him.*

Eustace. What, Charles!

Poly. (*Aside.*) How came he there?

Eustace. What were you doing there? and why did not you come out at once?

Charles. The fact is, sir, I have been so unfortunate as to displease my tutor. He has kindly promised to conceal my offence from you, till he can hope to obtain your pardon for it. I heard your voice in anger, and dreading the effects of an abrupt disclosure, I—

Eustace. (*To Poly.*) So, that was it, after all?

Poly. Yes—after all.

Eustace. And what is his offence? a serious one, no doubt, to require so much mystery.

Charles. (*To Poly.*) Remember your oath.

Poly. For the present I must conceal it. I am bound by an—by a promise.

Eustace. Well—(*To Molly.*) And how dare you, you little hussy, tell me such a rhodomontade?

Molly. (*Confused.*) Why, master,—I only told you what I thought. (*Aside.*) I'll not give it up yet.

Eustace. Come, Mr. Polyglot, to supper.

Poly. I have no appetite, thank you; and am rather unwell.

Molly. (*Aside.*) Guilty conscience.

Eustace. You look ill. Robin shall bring you something into your own room.

Charles. (*Aside.*) And my wife there!

Eustace. Come with me, Charles. Good night Mr. Polyglot: pardon my suspicion, my worthy friend. (*To Molly.*) Do you go to bed, and let me hear no more of that chattering little tongue of yours to-night. Robin! go lock the outer doors, bring me the keys, and then take some supper to Mr. Polyglot.

Charles. (*Aside.*) Then there will be no escape for her.

Eustace. Come, Charles, come.

Charles. Remember your promise. (*To Poly.*)

[*Exit.*

Molly. He's juggling the old gentleman, I'll lay my life on't. But I'll not sleep till I have found it out.

[*Exeunt all but POLYGLOT.*

Poly. Is this a dream! Let me collect my scattered senses. Surely it cannot be? Married! My pupil who had never, as I thought, even so much as—O Lord! absolutely married! And I, Ignatius Polyglot, who have led the life of a hermit, to be suspected! I must not think; I'll retire to rest. Heaven knows I have need of it. (*Approaches the door, and hastily retires.*) Bless us and save us! I forgot, she is there! And how am I to get her away? Hark! They are locking the outer gate. There is now no hope.

HARRIET opens the door gently, and enters.

Harriet. At length you are alone. Tell me what is now to be done? Counsel me—advise me.

Poly. Yes, I—how shall I advise you? Advise me what I had best—at any rate you must not remain here.

Harriet. Where would you have me go?

Poly. Wherever you please, my good young lady; but it is night, you know—these are my apartments, and after the suspicions that have been excited against me, I—yet how can I get you away? They have closed the doors and—but what ails you?

Harriet. Reach me a chair. My agitation for the last hour has so—I am fainting.

Poly. Don't think of such a thing—I know not how to help you—'tis not at all in my way. (*He leads her to a chair; her bonnet falls off.*) This was wanting to complete the pleasures of the evening. My dear lady—Miss—My kind madam, (*Taps her hand.*) If any one should come! She recovers. Be composed—It occurs to me that I have a key of the little wicket that leads from the garden to the meadow; that way we may reach the village.

Harriet. Conduct me where you will. But I must take my dear Frederick with me.

Poly. Frederick! what's Frederick?

Harriet. Our darling boy.

Poly. (*Stammering.*) And have you a darling boy?

Harriet. He is in the room I have occupied at the end of the garden.

Poly. O Charles! Charles! In love—married—a little boy! Have I any thing more to learn? tell me at once.—So then, I have been tutor to a father of a family!

Harriet. I can easily bring him away. (*Going.*)

Poly. No; you might be observed. There is but one thing to be done—I foresee my fate—Since I must be the scape-goat, I'll fetch him for you.

Harriet. My kind friend!

Poly. I'll not be gone an instant. (*Noise of footsteps.*) Ha! here comes Robin. Quick—retire. (*She goes towards the room.*) No, not there. He'll want to go into that room with my supper. There—there. (*He forces her into the room on the opposite side—a lock heard.*)

Enter ROBIN and MOLLY.

Robin. I have brought your supper, sir.

Poly. Leave it, leave it. And you, Mrs. Molly, what do you want here? (*Robin takes the tray into the room.*)

Molly. (*Slyly*) I came to ask whether I should clear away the broken glass yonder. Why, now, if there isn't some conjuration there? You told Master Eustace the key was inside the door, and see if it hasn't opened of itself. (*Aside.*) Then I was right after all.

Poly. Ahem! you may go—you may go.

Molly. I hope, sir, you'll forgive my suspicions. (*Sees the bonnet.*) O, ho!

Poly. Begone I say! and, in future, beware how you accuse an innocent person.

Molly. Yes, sir, if you please; and I repent it the more, seeing, as I do, the proofs of your innocence before me.

Poly. Light my lanthorn. (*To Robin, who returns.*) I am going to walk.

Robin. At this time, sir; and in such weather? Why it is pouring of rain.

Poly. No matter—I—I have a head-ache and want air. Begone! both of you, and woe be to you if I find either of you here at my return! (*They go off.*) There is not an instant to be lost. The poor innocent baby must not become a victim to the old man's displeasure; and if he should reach the pavilion before me—Into what a labyrinth has my affection for my pupil led me!

[*Exit.*

Enter MOLLY, cautiously; ROBIN following.

Molly. Robin, run and tell old Master Eustace to come here immediately.

Robin. Why, what would you be at now?

Molly. She's here; I'm sure of it.

Robin. Who's here?

Molly. Mr. Ignoramus's Miss.

Robin. I'll not go and tell master any such thing. You know you have got into one scrape already this evening by telling a fib.

Molly. But this time I have proof positive. (*Takes up the bonnet.*) Look here.

Robin. Why, that does look rather queer, to be sure. But what does that signify? Depend upon it, she's gone.

Molly. How can that be? Haven't I been watching outside? Besides, the gates are locked.

Robin. Where can she be then?

Molly. There! I hear her move. Run, quick; fetch master.

Robin. And yet I don't like to tell upon old tutorer, neither.

Molly. Wouldn't he have told upon us? But we'll let master see what a sly old fox he has got in his house. Go, I tell you. (*Forces him off.*) Now, Mr. Pollypot, I'll teach you something better than Greek, I will. Ah! here comes Mr. Charles. He'll be delighted at this, for the tutorer leads the poor lad such a life, that he'll be glad enough to get quit of him, I warrant me.

Enter CHARLES, from garden.

Charles. My anxiety is insupportable; and at all risks I must—Why, Molly, what do you want here?

Molly. O, sir, I have such news for you! You are the only one in the house who is kind to me, and now I'll prove my gratitude. I'll soon get the tutorer turned away, and make you your own master.

Charles. What do you mean?

Molly. I have discovered it at last. She is here after all.

Charles. Is the girl out of her senses?

Molly. No, no; here's proof! here's the creature's bonnet; and I've sent Robin to bring your father here.

Charles. Sent for my father! Unhappy girl, what have you done!

Molly. Lord, Mr. Charles, what ails you?

Charles. Alas! you know not the mischief you have effected. 'Tis not he who is to blame; he has interfered but to serve me: the lady, who is here concealed, is my wife.

Molly. (*With mingled astonishment and grief.*) Your wife!

Charles. This precipitate disclosure has rendered abortive our hopes of obtaining pardon from my father. Your malicious curiosity has destroyed the happiness of us all.

Molly. (*Bursting into tears.*) O, Mr. Charles, indeed, indeed, if I had but known—you, who are so good, so kind—. But don't ee grieve, don't ee now. I'll die rather than harm you.—I'll take all the blame upon myself.—There may yet be time; I'll run and stop Robin. (*Going.*)

Robin. (*Without.*) This way, sir, this way.

Molly. O, I am indeed an unhappy girl. But, Mr. Charles, dear Mr. Charles, don't ee be downcast. Leave it to me, I'll get you through, though I lose my place, I will. (*Hastily wipes her eyes, and assumes an air of composure.*)

Enter EUSTACE (in his dressing gown) preceded by ROBIN.

Robin. Yes, sir, Molly says you may now be convinced.

Eustace. So. You here, Charles?

Charles. Yes, sir, I—I heard a noise, and was fearful—

Eustace. 'Tis well; stay where you are: the scene you are about to witness will serve you as a lesson which may last you your life. (To Robin and Molly.) As for you, if you have called me out of my bed by another such a rigmarole as the last,—

Robin. O, no, sir, it is all sure enough this time. (To Molly, who makes signs to him.) I had trouble enough to persuade master, but he is come at last, you see.

Molly. Well, and what for?

Robin. What for! Why, to be sure, you know well enough. The lady, you know.

Molly. What lady? What is the simpleton talking about?

Robin. Why the lady that is concealed here.

Molly. Robin, you have been at the ale-barrel.

Robin. O, the little gipsey! Didn't you tell me,—

Molly. No, it isn't true.

Robin. Well, hang me but— . And I suppose you'll say you didn't send me to bring master.

Molly. To be sure I will, for it's false.

Robin. And that bonnet—

Molly. (Putting it on.) It is mine. Master, there ben't a true word in all he is telling you. (Pinches his arm.) Can't you hold your tongue.

Robin. Oh!—that isn't the way to make me. Master, I say again—

Molly. And I say, Master,—

Eustace. Hold your tongues, both of you. There is some mystery here. The evident alarm of that girl—(To Molly, who is about to speak.) Silence! (Takes a candle, and looks into the room at the left hand.)

Charles. I almost sink with dread.

Molly. (To Robin.) I've a great mind never to marry you for this.

Eustace. (Returns.) No one there. (Goes to the opposite door.) The door is locked. (Gives three taps.)

Harriet. (Within.) Is that my kind protector?

Eustace. (Staggering away.) Her kind protector! 'Tis but too true, then! The old hypocrite! thus to deceive me and dishonour my house! The monster shall instantly quit it, and for ever. Hush! some one approaches! 'tis he: silence, I command. (He extinguishes the lights.)

Enter POLYGLOT, with his dark lanthorn; Master FREDERICK is concealed under his cloak. He goes directly, but cautiously, to the door.

Poly. (In an under tone.) Open—open quickly—'tis I. I have secured our precious charge. Now, quick; let us away, or we may be interrupted by old Argus.

Enter HARRIET.

Eustace. You are right, for old Argus has you.

Harriet. O, heavens! I'm lost! (Robin lights the candles.)

Eustace. No, madam, you are found. And you! Is it thus you repay the confidence I have reposed in you? Are you the man I have selected as a guide, as a monitor to my son? A female concealed in your apartment!

Charles. My dear father, I must no longer allow—

Eustace. Peace! And what is it you are endeavouring to hide there?

Poly. Nothing—a mere trifle.

Eustace. I insist upon knowing. (Draws open his cloak and discovers Master Frederick.) You call this a trifle do you?

Harriet. (Running towards him.) My Frederick! my child!

Eustace. O!—Now what have you to say for yourself?

Poly. That it is a Frederick—a child I mean,—I confess; but suffer me to explain, and—

Eustace. Explanation is needless: your—mere trifle—explains itself. And yet I would hope you are not the monster you appear. Answer me one question: Is the lady your wife?

Poly. No, no; yet if you would only—

Eustace. The unblushing sinner! Then, will you marry her?

Poly. (To Charles.) I have done and suffered much to serve you: I can't do that, you know.

Eustace. Do you hesitate?

Charles. Will you but listen to me, sir?

Eustace. No, I will listen to but one thing only. (To Poly.) When a man has committed an error, is it not his first duty to do what he can to repair it?

Poly. Granted.

Eustace. To restore her respectability to the woman he has betrayed?

Poly. Granted.

Eustace. To protect and bestow his name upon his child.

Poly. Granted. (*To Charles, who is about to interrupt him.*) Further concealment is impossible. (*To Eustace.*) But suppose his family should refuse——

Eustace. Refuse! In such a case, no honest member of it would refuse to sanction the union; if he did, he would share in the guilt of the offender.

Poly. I am quite of your opinion.

Eustace. Then why hesitate?

Poly. The lady is already married; but if you would just have the kindness to repeat to your son all you have said to me——

Eustace. My son!

Charles. Yes, sir; we throw ourselves at your feet, and implore your pardon. This lady is my wife.

Eustace. How! married! without consulting me! Leave me, ungrateful boy!

Charles. Will not the choice I have made procure your forgiveness, sir!

Poly. Let me intercede for them. Remember the lecture you have just delivered to me. Practice what you preach. Besides, you can't unmarry them, you know.

Eustace. And when I had another scheme in view for him?

Poly. It is all as it should be. You wished him to marry—what can it signify?—there he is, without farther ado, ready married to your hands.

Robin. You save the trouble and expense of a wedding.

Harriet. You have a daughter who will love you.

Molly. And a little grandson ready made, master.

Eustace. But the example——

Molly. 'Tis a good one, master; and, if you please, Robin and I will follow it.

Eustace. Well—well—since it is so: but there is a little urchin who, I foresee, will one of these days play us a similar trick.

Poly. Never fear: place him under my care—you know me; and I give him twenty years' notice, that if he too should attempt to elude my vigilance—Ah me! as I have done for the father, so shall I doubtless be induced to do for the son; and I trust to your indulgence for my re-appearance in the character of—SCAPE-GOAT.

THE END.

Transcriber's Notes

Printed	Changed to	Page	
Mr,	Mr.	5	Where's Mr. Ignoramus,
	to	12	<i>Whispers to Polyglot.</i>
Your's	Yours	16	been placed? Yours.
Your's	Yours	16	my conduct? Yours.
Your's	Yours	16	secret marriage? Yours.
mischevous	mischievous	18	<i>Poly.</i> The mischievous truant!
hussey	hussy	22	you little hussy,
expençe	expense	31	expense of a wedding
ajar,	ajar.	19	<i>he holds ajar.</i>
Aside	Aside.	21	<i>(Aside.)</i> I scarcely know
satistion	satisfaction	22	explain this to your satisfaction
your's	yours	23	tongue of yours to-night.
Molly,	Molly.	26	<i>Molly.</i> Mr. Ignoramus's Miss.
positive,	positive.	26	I have proof positive.
Without	Without.	27	<i>Robin. (Without.)</i> This way,
door	door.	28	<i>opposite door.</i>) The door is locked.
Eustace,	Eustace.	30	<i>Eustace.</i> No, I will listen
Eustace	Eustace.	30	<i>Eustace.</i>) But suppose his family

Other Changes:-

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SCAPE-GOAT: A FARCE IN ONE ACT ***

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