



TIME TRIES ALL!

AN ORIGINAL DRAMA,

IN TWO ACTS.

By JOHN COURTNEY.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

906012

*First Produced at the Royal Olympic Theatre,
September 4th, 1848.*

CHARACTERS.

Mr. Leeson	Mr. A. YOUNGE.
Mathew Bates	Mr. LEIGH MURRAY.
Hon. Augustus Collander Yawn	Mr. F. Vining.
Charles Clinton	Mr. H. BUTLER.
X Tom Tact	Mr. S. COWELL.
John	Mr. SANGER.
Laura Leeson	Mrs. STIRLING.
Fanny Fact	Mrs. TELLET.

A lapse of Three Years is supposed to occur between the Acts.

TIME—PRESENT DAY.

COSTUME.

MATHEW.—Black close coat, buttoned; dark drab trousers.

2nd ACT.—Handsome black frock coat; white waistcoat; light blue trousers; boots and spurs.

MR. LEESON.—Blue, modern, squarely-cut coat; nankeen trousers, gaiters under; and shoes.

2nd ACT.—Dark pepper-and-salt coat; breeches, and gaiters.

YAWN.—Fashionable brown frock coat; handsomely-cut dark trousers.

2nd ACT.—Body coat; dark fawn trousers.

CHARLES CLINTON.—Black coat; fawn-coloured trousers.

TOM TACT.—Plain black coat; white trousers.

2nd ACT.—Broad-cut body coat; long figured waistcoat; broadly-crossed trousers.

LAURA.—Muslin morning dress; riding habit and hat after.

2nd ACT.—Lavender figured silk.

FANNY.—White dress; blue apron.

2nd ACT.—Pink dress; black apron.

Time in Representation, One Hour and Twenty Minutes.

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TIME TRIES ALL.

Act II.

SCENE.—*Handsome Apartment in the House of LEESON and BATES, Merchants—Door in c., with window on each side—Doors l.c. Flat and r. 2 E., Chairs, Tables, Sofa, &c., &c.*

MR. LEESON seated at table, R.H., over his private accounts.
He puts his pen in inkstand, and closes book.

LEE. That account's closed—a clear net profit to our house, Leeson and Bates, of nine thousand pounds for the last year. So that, notwithstanding my little extravagance for music and other masters for my daughter, I am at least a two thousand pounds better than I was twelve months since. 'Gad! this is capital—this is well! (*rises*) I don't know a prouder, happier feeling that can enter the heart of man, than the knowledge that he leaves the being of his very soul—his only child, the image of her he worshipped in his spring of life—free from the chance of chilling poverty. It makes my heart leap for joy when I think of it. Ha! here she comes.

Enter LAURA, D.R. 2 E.

—Laura, my own pet, come to my arms! Oh! bless that face! how it reminds me of your dear mother, now in— But there, we won't be melancholy to-day.

LAURA. Oh! for mercy's sake, no, dear Sir; this house is not too lively at the best of times.

LEE. Well, well—we'll be merry to-day, of all days in the year. But, where's your cousin? Where's my partner, Mathew Bates?—what have you done with him?—where is he?

LAURA. Now, my dear Sir, how should I know where he is? I never appear before you, but your first question is—"Where is Mathew?—what have you done with Mathew Bates?" Is Mathew Bates to be ever at my side? He loves his desk better than he loves society, I can tell you.

LEE. Well, I know he's fond of business; so am I—I always was. (*playfully*) If I had not been fond of business, you little rogue, I should not have had the pleasure of telling you, as I do now—that I have ten thousand pounds for you when you wed, and as much more at my death.

LAURA. Which, my dear father, I trust may not occur for many—many years.

LEE. I hope not, upon my soul. I am very well as I am, and I don't want to change my condition.

Enter MATHEW BATES, L.U.E.; he is very plainly attired, having the appearance of a young man without the fashionable pretension of dress, and his style altogether unpretending—he has a pen in his hand.

MAT. Mr. Leeson, good day. Cousin—(*to LAURA, with respect*)

LEE. Ah, Bates! Mathew, my boy—my son—you are my son. Is he not, Laura?

LAURA. Oh, yes, Sir—certainly—your adopted son.

LEE. Yes, and will be more by-and-bye—eh, Mathew ? (*jokingly, but with confidence*)—eh, eh ? (*LAURA hems, and walks up*)

MAT. (L.H.) Your son, Mr. Leeson, I truly am ; for my father and yourself were cousins, and, at his death, you became my protector. You were relatives in heart as well as kin—friends—fast friends ; which, in kin, is often cast aside.

LEE. True, true, Mathew ! Ah, we were mere boys together, poor boys too, with nothing but our energy to raise us. But we were friends, as you say—fast friends, and we were so to his death. Poor Harry ! We were odd fellows—(*to LAURA, who comes down R.*) —we were, Laura.

LAURA. (L.C.) I don't doubt, Sir, at all. You are odd to this day, and so is Harry's son. (*glancing at MATHEW*)

MAT. In what particular, Laura ?

LAURA. Oh, if you ask for *particularities*, we shall come to *personalities*, and then I shall be scolded—shall I not, pa ?

LEE. Aye, that you will. But, come, I find that we are both richer men ;—a net profit this year of nine thousand pounds to our house.

MAT. Yes, Sir, to that amount.

LEE. Egad, when I think how I toiled to get my first start in the world ! So did your father ! Oh, yes ! for there were two girls, poor as ourselves ; we loved *them*, and *they* loved us. 'Tis something to be loved in this cold world, I can tell you.

MAT. It is, indeed, Sir ! (*with a sigh, glancing at LAURA.*)

LEE. Well, we struggled and we succeeded, prospered, and, in prosperity, we both married the girls who had loved us in adversity. Heaven, after, gave him a son and me a daughter, but took our partners from us ; his first—mine after. Her loss weighed heavy upon his heart, and he shortly followed.—Poor Harry ! I shall never forget his dying hour ! "John," said he, "be a father to my little Mathew !" "I will—I will, Harry," said I, grasping his cold hand, while tears flooded my eye, and grief choked my utterance. "And if the children like each other," placing my hands on your little heads, as you stood almost unconscious of the scene before you, "*your* Mathew shall marry *my* Laura, and be indeed my son !" He raised his eyes to heaven, in reverence, then looked his last kind look upon us, and left us for a better inheritance !

MAT. (*aside, and sighing*) My poor father !

LEE. (*kindly*) Mathew, what's the matter ?

MAT. Nothing, Sir, nothing.

LEE. Come, come, don't be melancholy.

LAURA. La ! how can he be other at this melancholy tale ? You know he is not gay at the best, and you will ever touch upon this subject.

LEE. Because I can't forget it. Never shall ! But come, Mathew, give me your hand—I will not mention it any more. Come, Laura, cheer him up ; talk to him, while I go and talk to the clerks. I shall be back shortly, and we'll have a merry day of it. We have no reason to be other ; we are prosperous, and there's no reason on earth that we should be miserable ; for myself, I'm determined to be merry—nothing shall make me otherwise.

Exit D.L.U.E.

Yes indeed, her education teaches her to be as
from girlhood, schooled in ~~restraint~~ self command
her thoughts, her feelings are secret from
the world: ~~In spite~~ As woman ^{to} the
depths of her own heart conceal the love
she fain would shun, The love which
would create another's happiness, which
when acknowledged is the more appre-
ciated for the suffering it has caused,
bearing silent witness of self mastery,
the greatest of lifes victories

LAURA has taken up a book, and sits R.H. table.

MAT. (*looks at her*) She speaks not. What is this tremor I feel ever in her presence? Why is she thus distant to me? Is it woman's caution, pride, or real dislike? I cannot fathom it; it was not so once. (*approaches with a timid but respectful feeling*) You are reading, Laura, I suppose?

LAURA. (*looks carelessly*) Now that is a very clever supposition certainly. You see me with a book in my hand; you suppose I'm reading. What else could you suppose, cousin?

MAT. We sometimes hold the book unconscious of the page; as we sometimes sit, unconscious of the presence of those by whom we are surrounded.

LAURA. True; what we take no interest in, we seldom think much of.

MAT. By such rule, I might be in your presence and you unconscious.

LAURA. Aye, that you might.

MAT. Indeed!

LAURA. Indeed! Ha, ha, ha! Why that strange look? do you think yourself so handsome, or so full of grace, that I must have you ever in my thoughts? (*pettishly*) What vanity!

MAT. (*with pride*) Vanity, Laura, I am bound to say is my last foible! I hold that vanity in man is not to be pardoned or excused.

LAURA. How in woman?

MAT. We test not woman so strictly—vanity in her is scarcely vanity.

LAURA. (*sits*) Ha, ha, ha!—what a paradox!

MAT. (*by her chair*) Woman is a paradox.

LAURA. Indeed!

MAT. Yes, indeed! by education taught to be so,—schooled in restraint, her thoughts, her feelings even as a girl, are pent up from the world: her own heart is the sanctum in after life, even of that love she pines to own, another may be dying but to know; but when known, he loves her more for the suffering she has caused—for he feels that she is master of herself—the greatest mastery achieved on earth.

LAURA. (*Forgets that*) master of herself—she may be his master too.

MAT. Woman, however she conceal her power, is ever so; for by submission, and by complacent kindness—that ever winning grace, by which woman rules instead of serves—she may win the roughest temper, and the rudest mind, to follow and to worship.

LAURA. Oh, really, cousin—(*acknowledges*) but when I rule, it will be by right—I shall steal no march under false colours, upon the heart of lordly man, believe me.

MAT. (*quickly*) Then you do not love?

LAURA. Whom should I love?—you?

MAT. (*confused*) Me?—I never said so.

LAURA. There now—don't let us talk over such nonsense any more. You understand debtor and creditor better than Cupid and Hymen, depend upon it. Go to your desk. (*goes to table, R.H.*)

MAT. You wish my absence?

LAURA. I don't desire your presence.

MAT. Then, Laura, you shall be no longer troubled with it. (*bows, and is going; turns and looks towards her, she turns and sees him*)

LAURA. Well?

MAT. I have not, I hope, offended?

LAURA. No—no, Mr. Sanctity.

MAT. Will you give me your hand in assurance?

LAURA. (*slaps his hand*) Don't be foolish! You are quite teasing, I declare.

MAT. I'll be so no longer.

Bows and exit R.H.D.

LAURA. (*sits R.H. to work*) Ha, ha, ha! I have got rid of him at last. He talk of love, with his business face and his plain careless habit? Ridiculous! he has no life, fire, or boldness, for a lover. I like him very well as my cousin, with a pen stuck behind his ear, and seated at his desk. I know my father, and he too, expect me to become his wife, and that I shall love him; as if love were entered and booked per order. Not with me, I can tell them! What is love without romance, danger, and difficulty—without prayers, tears, and entreaties? That's the love for me; a lover my father scorns and I adore, who has not a penny in his purse—that's the man for me. But to marry cousin Mathew Bates! Make love by rule of three; father, daughter, lover; have the settlement drawn out like a bill of exchange; marry; and ever after settle down into quiet Mrs. Bates. What a name!—Bates!—Mrs. Bates! Were it Danvers, Craven, Courtland—but Bates! It might as well be Daw or Caw, Cook or Rook, or anything. No, no! My cousin certainly has good eyes—if he knew how to use them; fine teeth—if he knew how to show them; and his hair is good—but the style—oh, horrid!

Enter JOHN, C.D.

JOHN. Young Mr. Clinton, Miss, requests to see you. (*gives card*)

LAURA. Clinton? ha! now we shall have some life. This is delightful. Shew him here—

Exit JOHN

—Dear me, how my heart palpitates, to be sure! I haven't seen him since his return from Paris.

Enter CHARLES CLINTON and the HONOURABLE AUGUSTUS COLLANDER YAWN, C.D.

CLIN. (c.) Miss Leeson, permit me. (*kisses her hand*) Delighted to see you, really. 'Pon my honour, the daily development of your beauty is most incomprehensible—it is really. I never saw improvement so improved in my existence as I find it in you. I must bow in admiration, 'pon my honour!

LAURA. (r.) Oh, Mr. Clinton! (*curtsies*)

CLIN. By-the-bye, I plead pardon for the liberty, but I have ventured to bring a particular friend of mine; trust I shall be excused. Permit me to introduce to you the Honourable George Augustus Collander Yawn; a Parisian friend, a young gentleman of the highest expectations and connections, I assure you; of profound wit and astonishing knowledge. (*introduces YAWN*)

LAURA. Sir, I am delighted at the introduction.

YAWN. (R.) Madam, I really—too much honor—I really—(*yawns*)

LAURA. I hope you enjoyed your Paris trip, Mr. Clinton.

CLIN. Oh, delighted! Never was happier in my life—never! 'Pon my honor, do you know, when I arrived in town here, it had such an effect upon my nervous system. Everything was so dull—so flat—everybody looked so stupid—the atmosphere so heavy, that I fell fast asleep upon the sofa, as soon as I sat down, and they couldn't wake me for two days. I was in a perfect state of coma. Wasn't I, George?

YAWN. Ye-es—dreadful place, England—I wonder the people keep their eyes open at all, really—(*yawns*)

CLIN. And yet they continue to see as far as their neighbours, I believe, Sir.

YAWN. It's a mystery to me, I'm sure. I never could conceive anything—(*yawns*)

LAURA. What did you see in Paris, Mr. Clinton? Come, give me some account of the wonders.

CLIN. Oh, I saw the—George, what did we see?

YAWN. Oh, we saw the—the—ah!—the—(*yawns*) we saw everything.

Enter MR. LEESON and MATHEW, L.D.F.—MATHEW has his hat and cane.

LEE. Come, Mathew, I insist upon it. Oh, here she is, with Mr. Clinton. I heard he was here. Ah! Mr. Charles, how do you do? (*to CLINTON*) Rejoiced to see you.

CLIN. Thank you, Mr. Leeson. Ah, Mr. Bates! how do you do? (*carelessly*. MATHEW L.H. bows)

LEE. (C.) Well, Laura, has Mr. Clinton been amusing you with an account of the various wonders he has seen in the gay city?

LAURA. I was just enquiring, Pa, as you came in, and I find him somewhat mercantile in his answers. He gives them in a *sum total*—he says he saw *everything*.

LEE. Ha! ha! ha! (*sees YAWN*) A friend? (*to CLINTON*)

CLIN. My most intimate friend. I have taken the liberty of an introduction. Permit me, Mr. Leeson—the Hon. George Augustus Collander Yawn.

LEE. Proud to see you, Sir.

YAWN. Sir, I'm grateful—really I—(*yawns*)

LEE. I saw your horses at the door, and I proposed to my partner, Mr. Bates, (*they bow*) that he should take my daughter a ride before dinner. Perhaps you'd accompany them, and join us at table?

CLIN. With great pleasure. (*looks at YAWN*)

YAWN. Ye-es, certainly—anything for a little excitement. (*yawns*)

LEE. Laura, what say you?

LAURA. (R.H.) That you are inflicting a heavy task upon my cousin, for he owns he is but a poor horseman.

MAT. (L.H.) Not a skilful one, certainly; but, you know, if I can contribute to your happiness—

LAURA. You'll risk your neck in the attempt—how chivalrous!

LEE. Aye, that he would—would you not, Mathew?

LAURA. Not another word—I'll go and prepare.

Exit D.R.

LEE. That's right—'Gad, I am delighted to see you, Clinton ! and you, Sir. (*to AUGUSTUS, who as he approaches yawns*) I beg your pardon, the gentleman's name ?

CLIN. Yawn.

LEE. (*aside*) Yawn ! Rather an à propos cognomen. But, come, gentlemen, will you take a glass of wine before you start on your canter ?

CLIN. With pleasure—should be delighted—what say you? (*to YAWN*)

YAWN. Ye-es—anything—certainly. (*yawns*)

LEE. Will you walk into the drawing-room ? Mathew, you can wait for your cousin, if you like. (*MATHEW bows in acknowledgment*) This way, gentlemen.

Exit, c.d.

CLIN. (*to AUGUSTUS*) Capital old fellow this, and beautiful daughter.

Exit, d.c.

YAWN. Splendid—very. (*yawns*)

Exit, d.c.

MAT. Mr. Leeson has urged me to speak boldly to Laura this day, to entreat her hand ; I have promised to do so for his happiness and my own. But there's something here. (*places his hand on his breast*) It is not pride—it is not fear. Yet I pause upon the act—and why ? Because I feel that should rejection come it must tear me hence. Situated as I am—uncertain of my fate—I could linger near her 'till life's end, yet still love on—but rejected, I must quit all or die. It has grown with me from childhood ; to watch her varying temper was to me a joy ; to tend her lightest wish, my happiness. As time fulfilled its promise in her growing form, so stronger grew my love ; but in her there seemed a cold reserve, a freezing check to all my kindness ; and now—she comes.

Enter LAURA, R.H.D. She is attired in a riding habit, and has a whip in her hand.

LAURA. Now for our ride. (*she looks round*) Where are they all ? (*sees MATHEW*) You are here, of course. Where is Mr. Clinton and his friend ?

MAT. They are with your father in the drawing-room.

LAURA. And why are you not with them ?

MAT. I waited to attend you, Laura.

LAURA. Waited to attend me ! You are ever waiting to attend me—'tis the strangest thing to me, cousin ; I never turn round to look for this or for that, but I see you ever at my side—ever waiting to attend me ; 'tis really vexing.

MAT. Well, Laura, (*much hurt*) if I am not welcome—

LAURA. How can any one be welcome, who, uninvited, comes at all times—allow this—permit that—suffer me to hand you here !—to lead you there ! I have no patience ! (*going up*)

MAT. You go, then, alone ?

LAURA. (*turns round*) Why not ?

MAT. Your father desired—

LAURA. (*imitates him*) Your father desired. Ha, ha, ha ! Upon

my word, cousin, what with my father's desires, and your doleful looks, *I have a pretty life.* (*laughs at him as she stands at door*) But, come, (*softening*) since it must be, there's my hand, or I suppose you'll break your heart.

MATHEW quickly takes her hand, and leads her off, C.D.

Enter TOM TACT, D.L.C.

TACT. I want to see the governor. It's quite impossible I can carry on any longer at the rate I go, on seventy-five pounds a year : and I don't see why I should remain a junior clerk till I'm a senior in years. This is a strange world—they say it's round ; it certainly is not a square one, if I may judge by *my domus* and *this*. Here's luxury ! Ah ! well—one man's born rich, another poor ; I shouldn't have found so much fault with the world if I had been born rich ; but, to be poor is the very deuce. A man can do nothing when he's poor !—he can't be witty—for no one will laugh at his jokes, however good they may be—he can't—yes, he can do one thing—he can make love, which generally makes him poorer still.

Enter FANNY FACT, R.H.D.

—Ah, Miss Fact, good day !

FAN. (R.C.) Good day, Mr. Tact ; pleasant weather this.

TACT. (L.C.) Yes, very, for those who can enjoy it.

FAN. Ah ! enjoyment, Mr. Fact, is only for those who can pay for it.

TACT. The very thing I was saying to myself as you came in. Singular reciprocity of feeling, isn't it ?

FAN. (*glancing at him*) Very singular. (*aside*) I always thought him a nice little fellow.

TACT. You have a snug situation here, I suppose, Miss Fact ?

FAN. Pretty well, Mr. Tact.

TACT. Fact and Tact—very odd—singular coincidence—though odd—perquisites, of course ?

FAN. Yes.

TACT. Tolerable wages ?

FAN. Yes.

TACT. That's right!—give you joy, Miss Fact, of so comfortable a position in life.

FAN. I don't know about comfort, Mr. Tact ; there are other things than those you have named, to make up comfort.

TACT. You are right, Miss Fact !—I know—home—your own home—fire-side—snug corner—Mr. Tact—Mrs. Tact—the little Tacts—one's own master !

FAN. Exactly, Mr. Tact—there's no knowing what we servants have to put up with.

TACT. (*aside*) Junior clerks particularly ; I have to put up with seventy-five pounds a-year.

FAN. I have a great deal, I can assure you.

TACT. (*aside*) And I have very little. (*looking at her*) I dare say you have. (*aside*) She's indubitably pretty. (*aloud*) You have a holiday, now and then, Miss Fact, I suppose ?

FAN. Oh yes ! I have one on Monday next. (*glancing at him*)

TACT. That's very odd ! I've one on Monday next. You'll take a trip, of course ?

FAN. Where am I trip to, and with whom ? (*glancing*)

TACT. (*aside*) 'Gad ! I'll take her out. She has saved a little, I dare say. I'll sound her. (*aloud*) You'd like a trip, of course.

FAN. Ah, that I should ! Do you often take a trip, Mr. Tact ?

TACT. Oh yes, very often ! (*aside*) Too often, on seventy-five pounds a-year. (*aloud*) What sort of trip would you like, Miss Fact ?

FAN. Oh ! suppose we say to Hampton Court by rail—dine—walk—then tea—back to Town—the theatre—home,—that's not much.

TACT. (*aside—takes out a long narrow entry-book*) To Hampton per rail, 5s. ; dinner for two, 10s. ; tea, 5s.—one pound ; rail home, 5s. ; theatre, 5s. ;—just the money—seventy-five pounds a-year—thirty shillings a-week,—one week's salary gone in one day. Accounts closed. (*shuts book*) Good morning, Miss Fact !

Exit suddenly, L.D.F.

FAN. Well, I'm sure ! Good day, Mr. Tact ! A calculating gentleman,—nothing speculative about him but his eyes—has all the inclination for the enjoyments of life, but lacks the enterprise : one eye on matrimony—the other on the savings-bank.

Enter LEESON, L.D.F.

LEE. (*aside*) I'm quite impatient to know if Mathew will speak his mind to Laura. (*aloud*) Ha ! Miss Fact, what are you ruminating upon ?—a husband, or a new dress ?

FAN. (R.) If I must confess the truth, Sir, within this last half-hour I've been thinking of both.

LEE. (L.C.) Have you ? Well, the dress I can manage—there ! (*gives money*)

FAN. Thank you, Sir !

LEE. The husband, of course, you must manage yourself.

FAN. Ah, Sir ! (*sighs*) husbands are scarce commodities ; and I'm afraid, like many rarities, more in contemplation than possession.

LEE. Nonsense, girl ; there's plenty of fish in the sea.

FAN. Yes, Sir, but husbands are not fish—you can't catch them half so easily.

LEE. Stuff !—you don't cast your net properly.

FAN. (*aside*) I cast my eyes pretty well. (*aloud*) I think some, Sir, are doomed to fulfil the order of single blessedness.

LEE. Single blessedness ?—there never was such a thing !

FAN. Oh, yes ! pardon me, Sir ; I'm single.

LEE. And do you consider yourself blessed ?

FAN. I must be blessed—with a happy disposition to put up with it.

LEE. Egad ! that's an open confession—and it's true. No one can be happy without a partner. Did you ever contemplate a bachelor, Fanny ?

FAN. A good many, Sir. I've contemplated them a long time. There's a sort of I'm-by-myself—I about him. He goes out for a day's enjoyment, and on arriving at the first corner, leans against his brother—the post—uncertain which way the wind may carry him. He has no guiding principle—as they say—or impulsive power. He wants to find out which way will lead him to his point, forgetting all

the while that he has no point. He starts off: the hours move heavily—so does he—till he finds himself out of town and out of sorts;—enters a tavern—dines—drinks—smokes his cigar—looks out of the window—sees happy faces, lads and lasses, fond couples and rosy children, pass by,—sighs—puffs—gets the fidgets—starts forth—returns towards home,—meets another lordly freeman, as blessed as himself—they join—they drink—get happy for the night, to wake more miserable in the morning.

LEE. Ha, ha, ha!—excellent! Now, tell me, have you ever heard my daughter talk of matrimony?

FAN. Ah, Sir! she makes a jest of it. I often think she'll suffer for it in the end.

LEE. Does she ever speak of her cousin?

FAN. I don't think she loves him, Sir.

LEE. Dear me! I was in hopes—in fact, I had made up my mind that she did.

FAN. That's it, Sir! Once let a young lady know that her father has a particular husband for her, she is sure to have a particular objection to him,—it's a sort of general rule amongst the fair.

LEE. Dear me!—you surprise me!—you astonish me!—you—Hark!—they are at the door—I hear their horses.

FAN. I must go and attend her, Sir. Never you depend upon a woman's doing exactly what you want her,—it isn't natural to her, at all.

Exit R.H.D.

LEE. Bless my soul! Phoo! I'm all in a twitter! Well, it will be a blow to poor Mathew; but we must let the matter work its own cure. I suppose time tries all.

Exit L.H.D.

Enter LAURA, c. from L., as in ill temper.

LAURA. I am vexed—annoyed—to be teased thus! I'll not bear it! I'll suffer it no longer! My cousin never quitted my side,—Mr. Clinton, or his friend, could not even speak to me. There was my dull cavalier—jog, jog, jog, by my side—sitting his horse so ungracefully—mumbling compliments without elegance—sentiment without expression! I will not bear it—I am resolved! My father, this morning, hinted at his promise that we should wed—seemed to expect it! But I'll not wed my cousin!—no, never—never!

Enter MATHEW, c. from L.

MAT. My dear Laura!

LAURA. (L.C.) Here again! Well, Mathew? (*the point of her whip, or the chain, becomes entangled with one of the buttons of her riding-habit; she tries to disentangle it*) Hang the whip!

MAT. Permit me.

LAURA. No, I can do it myself. (*tries*) Deuce take the thing!

MAT. Allow me, cousin. (*he disentangles it*)

LAURA. Thank you, Mathew. (*he bows*) (*aside*) How he blushes! —silly fool!

MAT. (*aside*) I'll be this dolt no longer. I'll brave all—hem!—and know the worst. (*aloud*) Laura?

LAURA. (*coldly, playing with whip*) Well, what is it?

MAT. (*aside*) What is this fear—this trembling? Shame, Mathew! Are you a man?

LAURA. (*aside*) I'll speak my thoughts at once, and end this—that I will! (*aloud*) Cousin, you know that George Gordon the other day made me an offer of his hand, and that I refused him, through my father?

MAT. (*trembling*) I do, cousin.

LAURA. Shall I tell you why?

MAT. (*aside*) How I dread the word! (*aloud*) Yes, if you please.

LAURA. Because I see no charm in marriage—because I do not feel that I can ever love sufficiently to confer happiness on any one.

MAT. (*affected, starts*) Oh, Laura, say not so!

LAURA. I say so—feel so, Mathew. My choice, if my heart would lead me to it, would be to fulfil my father's wish, and (you willing) to become your wife,—but that can never be!

grows
MAT. Never, Laura? (*scarcely able to utter the words*) Then, had I, from infancy till now, looked on you with love—if, as time brought manhood, that love had fullled to adoration—that I had hoped to win you—to bind myself nearer to you—to your father: to become, indeed, his son,—that hope—that passion—

LAURA. Would be hopeless—vain! If such has been your hope, dismiss it from your heart—your mind. I can look for no other happiness than in the affection I bear my father, and a sisterly regard for you. If you have, then, treasured other thoughts, discard them, Mathew; and, as a sister only, take my hand. (*with cold pride*)

MAT. (*with a struggle, and much emotion*) 'Tis over! (*placing his hand to his eyes—looks at her—takes her hand, kisses it respectfully, and hurries up*)

Exit L.H.D.

LAURA. He's gone! The truth is told! Will he to my father?—and will he force this bargained match? If he attempt it, I'll quit the house—wander penniless rather than wed! I cannot, and I will not, marry him!

Enter LEESON, L.H.D.

LEE. Well, Laura, have you enjoyed your ride, eh?

LAURA. (*with contempt*) Oh, yes—much!

LEE. And Mathew, your cousin, how did he behave?

LAURA. (*with passion*) Father! talk not to me of my cousin! 'Tis ever thus—cousin! cousin! cousin! (*walks about*)

LEE. Bless my soul! is the girl out of her senses? Come, come, no more of this! Go and dress for dinner, for you know Charles Clinton and his friend join us. 'Gad! we'll have such a happy evening!

Enter CLINTON and YAWN, c. from L.

CLIN. Here we are, you see—perfectly prepared for an evening's enjoyment,—are we not, Augustus?

YAWN. Ye-es, perfectly. (*yawns*)

LEE. And we'll have one, gentlemen. (*to LAURA*) Come, go and prepare—that's a dear. (*as she is going,*)

Enter JOHN, L.H.D.

JOHN. A letter for Miss Laura.

LAURA. (*starts*) Ha!—from whom?

JOHN. Mr. Bates.

LEE. (*surprised*) From Mathew?

JOHN. Yes, Sir.

Exit.

LEE. Read, read, Laura! (*to CLINTON*) Will you excuse?

CLIN. Oh, certainly! (*he and YAWN retire to table R.H.*)

LAURA. (*aside, as she opens the letter, and very firmly*) He shall not move me!

LEE. Read, girl, read!

LAURA. (*reads*) "I thank you, Laura, for sparing me the torture of open rejection; yet, the suffering is still the same—the wound as fatal. I madly—wildly worshipped you;—'tis over—my sentence by your lips pronounced. Your wish shall be obeyed; and, until I can regard you as a sister, you shall never feel pain by your cousin—and now wretched—Mathew Bates."

LEE. You, then, have rejected him?

LAURA. (*with pride*) I have!

LEE. And he! Where is he? (*rings bell*) John, John!

Enter JOHN, c.

LEE. Mr. Bates—where is he?

JOHN. I know not, Sir. When he gave me that letter, a coach had been sent for; he stepped into it, and drove away.

LEESON. (*looks at LAURA*)

LAURA. (*looks at him firmly, and with pride; LEESON is checked by her look*) Well!

LEE. (*L.H.*) Daughter! (*sinks into a chair*) Mathew, my poor lost boy! Gone—gone!

LAURA. (*c.*) I have triumphed, and now—I am free!

CLINTON and YAWN at table R.H.—*As she speaks, the drop descends rapidly.*

A Lapse of Three Years is supposed to occur between the Two Acts.

Act III.

SCENE.—*Same as First Act.*

LAURA is discovered reading, and FANNY FACT attending.

LAURA. (*looking at books one after the other*) I told you to bring books to amuse me, Fanny, not books like these.

FAN. La, Miss! I declare I don't know how to please you; I brought a catalogue with a list of every book the man had in his shop, and you couldn't choose yourself; how was I to know what you wished to read?

LAURA. (*impatiently*) I wished to read something that would interest me.

FAN. Well, I asked for something interesting, something about love and trouble, ending with a happy marriage.

LAURA. Love—marriage! What is there interesting in such trash?

FAN. (*aside*) Dear me, what profanation! (*aloud*) Really, Miss, I can't think how you can talk so. A love tale, to me, is the most delicious reading.

LAURA. To you, perhaps; but to me 'tis folly—madness.

FAN. Ah, Miss Laura, you may depend upon it there's something wrong in your mind, something that you don't comprehend yourself, or you would never talk as you do. If love is madness, it is the most agreeable madness I know of; and as for matrimony, that always brings people to their senses, they say.

LAURA. (*angrily*) Go—leave me—go!

FAN. Certainly, Miss.

Exit c.

LAURA. Three years since, Mathew left us, to superintend our foreign house at Lyons. Three years! I thought myself then free—free as the bird that skims the air in its wild and happy flight—free to fix my choice if the object came without restraint or control; and suitors have come—have offered for my hand, yet all have I rejected—and why? Because my beau ideal of a lover was but a dream! I looked for outward grace, and not for inward worth, that solid base on which our choice should fix. Charles Clinton! a fashion's fool. Strange! since cousin Mathew left us, without to *me* even an adieu, he has been ever with me; as each week, month, year, has passed, he has come nearer to my fancy's image. Time has told its tale upon my heart, thoughts, and feelings; and I who drove him hence, would give the world to draw him back to me—but pride says no. In my dreams he is with me, in my waking hours ever in my mind. Remembrance of the pain I caused him strikes the chords of self-reproach, till I am unfit for converse or society.

Enter Mr. LEESON, with letter, L.H.D.

LEE. Here she is. News, daughter, news—a letter from Mathew!

LAURA. (R.C.) Ha!

LEE. (L.C.) Capital returns from our Lyons house—more large profits—more—

LAURA. Tell me, is Mathew well?

LEE. Well? to be sure he is—in robust health, if we may judge by his letter—here, read—here's something about you. (*gives it*)

LAURA. (*eagerly*) Me?

LEE. (*points to the portion of letter*) Yes, there it is. 'Gad, I'm so happy to hear from the young dog.

LAURA. (*reads*) "To my cousin Laura, kindly remember me. I trust my absence has improved her temper and her spirits. You surprise me by the intelligence that she has not yet found a partner to her choice. I had hoped to greet her as a wife on my return, having myself fulfilled her last desire to me, to look upon her only as a sister." (*she drops the letter and appears to be sinking*)

LEE. What's the matter? Dear me, you are fainting—where's your salts?—here, Fanny! (*about to ring*)

LAURA. (*recovering*) 'Tis nothing—nothing!

LEE. (*suspiciously*) Nothing! It looked very like something; you are not sorry, I suppose, that Mathew has been wise enough to obey your commands—you wouldn't have him fool enough to love you still?

LAURA. (*unable to restrain her emotion*) Love me!—he never loved me.

LEE. Come, come, don't wrong him; you should have seen him before he left us, as I did—he loved you too well, my girl.

LAURA. Well, I am grateful for his kindness in *forgetting* me. It was my gratitude for that, caused my tremor. (*with a struggle*) I'm sure I thank him for his heroism, and were he here I would thank him. (*aside*) He shall not see that I am suffering.

LEE. He will be here shortly.

LAURA. Ha—here!

LEE. Yes, here. He tells me he shall shortly surprise us with a visit.

LAURA. And to remain with us?

LEE. Oh, no—he says he's too happy where he is; the country is so pleasant, the society so inviting, everything so gay, his friends so numerous, that he prefers Lyons to England.

LAURA. (*chafed*) He does, indeed! (*aside*) Fool that I have been to think of him, to remember him!

LEE. I have more pleasant news than that for you, for in a letter I have from his confidential clerk, he tells me (though I was to keep it a secret) that he—ha, ha, ha!—that Mathew was—(*smothers a laugh*)

LAURA. (*eagerly, as if in apprehension*) Well?

LEE. Was about to be married—ha, ha, ha!

LAURA. (*starts*) Married?

LEE. Yes, to a beautiful English lady he met there, and who is now in England, and that that was the secret of his being about to visit us; ha, ha, ha! 'Gad! he's a sly dog—well, I hope he'll be happy.

Enter JOHN, c.

JOHN. A card, Sir—the gentleman waits.

LEE. I'll come to him; don't go away, Laura, I'll not be long; I want to talk to you—where is the gentleman?

Exit with JOHN, c.

LAURA. (*sinks into chair*) The blow has come—the blow I merit, courted, for it fulfils my wish. Oh, I am well repaid for all my cruelty to one who loved me, whom I love; my petted childhood, his constant worship, took reason from me—knowledge of myself—even this has come from his desire for my happiness; but the shaft I dealt with cruel aim on him, has returned upon myself. (*weeping*) I'll not feel thus, I'll have some pride—some firmness. Did he not leave me, coldly leave me, without a word? He did not even press me, as a woman should be—expects. No, I'll be gay, I will, in spite of him and all. I will—I will! (*with determined pettishness*) I'll wed the first man that offers. (*crossing to L.H.*)

Enter JOHN, c.

JOHN. The Honourable Mr. Yawn.

LAURA. Ha! 'tis well. Shew him in,

Exit JOHN, c.

—Now will I show my father how much I care for Mathew.

JOHN *shews in YAWN, c., and exits c.*

LAURA. Mr. Yawn, I'm delighted to see you.

YAWN. I bow. (*they sit, he in an easy stuffed chair, R. of table, LAURA L.H.*) Really you're too kind.

LAURA. Dear me, what a stranger you have been to us! Why, 'tis six month's since you were with us, Mr. Yawn.

YAWN. Ye-es—I dare say—Charles and I have been down to Melton for the excitement of the steeplechase, for some time; (*yawns*) for we got dreadfully stupid in town.

LAURA. I have read of the sport, but never witnessed it.

YAWN. Then you have lost one of the greatest treats in existence, Miss Leeson—really.

LAURA. 'Tis a most dangerous sport, is it not?

YAWN. That's the charm! Can you imagine a more gratifying and lively sensation than being in danger of breaking your neck, for a whole half-hour together?

LAURA. It must be very exciting indeed!

YAWN. You can't conceive—really—(*yawns*)

LAURA. You rode, of course.

YAWN. Oh, ye-es; but I met with a very serious accident on the first day.

LAURA. Indeed!

YAWN. Ye-es. Five of us were neck-and-neck, about a hundred yards from a rasper. Set to it, and went over it gloriously—that is, *they* did. I thought I was following them. However, when the affair was over, I was nowhere to be seen, and, on going in search of me, I was found in a perfect state of insensibility, a few yards from the rasper.

LAURA. Were you hurt?

YAWN. No. (*yawns*)

LAURA. Your horse?

YAWN. No. (*yawns*)

LAURA. Had he thrown you?

YAWN. (*yawning*) Can't possibly say. It was a mystery to me, and everybody else. The medical gentleman said, it must have been a sudden stoppage of the action of the brain; for I was fast asleep, and my horse browsing by my side.

LAURA. Ha, ha, ha! unaccountable indeed.

YAWN. Caused a wonderful sensation in the neighbourhood. Strange instance of an overwrought imagination. (*yawns*) Mr. Leeson tells me that you have not yet made any man happy by consenting to become his.

LAURA. No, Sir, I am still free—still unchained.

YAWN. I—a—(*yawns*) have been induced to make this visit here, to assure you, that your beauty, temper, grace, naïvete, have ever made a lively impression upon my—(*yawns*)

LAURA. Sir?

YAWN. (*looking at her*) Eh?

LAURA. What did you say ?

YAWN. Oh, I was saying that you had made a lively impression upon my heart. (*yawns*)

LAURA. Well, Sir, proceed.

YAWN. I can assure you I should experience the greatest happiness if I could prevail upon you to—(*yawns*)

LAURA. To what, Sir ?

YAWN. To bless me with your consent to become the Honourable—Mrs. George—Gustus—Yaw-a-a-aw ! (*stretches his legs forward, drops his hat, and falls asleep*)

LAURA. (*looks at him, and then exclaims*) Oh, Mathew, Mathew !

Enter MR. LEESON quickly, c.

LEE. Where's Mr. Yawn ?—well, Laura, has Mr. Yawn waked you to a little reason, eh ?

LAURA. (*rising*) Perhaps, Sir, you'll wake him, and he'll tell you.

LEE. Bless my soul !—why, Mr. Yawn—Mr. Yawn !

YAWN. Eh ?—ye-es.

LEE. (*aside*) Have you proposed ?

YAWN. Ye-es.

LEE. (*aside*) What said she ?

YAWN. I don't think she said anything.

LAURA. Father, I would be alone. (*to YAWN*) Sir, you will favour me by retiring.

YAWN. Certainly, with pleasure—I'm going to Brighton for a month—when I return I'll drop in—grateful for this reception, really—adieu ! (*yawns*)

Exit, c.

LEE. (*laughing*) You won't have him, I see.

LAURA. (*quickly*) No !

LEE. Well, I didn't expect you would, so that's soon settled. I want to talk to you very seriously; do you never intend to marry anybody ? for you have rejected every one as yet. 'Gad ! you seem to have an antidote against love.

LAURA. (*coaxingly, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, playfully*) Now, papa, are you so eager to part with me ? and are you tired of me ?

LEE. No, no, you little gipsey, no ; you are my only joy, now Mathew is gone from me.

LAURA. (R.) Then, why wish me to marry ?

LEE. Zounds ! Don't all marry ?

LAURA. Not all.

LEE. Yes ! All who have hearts to feel and eyes to admire. I was but seventeen when I was over head and ears in love with your mother ; and truly I believe, if I hadn't fallen into love, I should never have fallen into luck. It cheered me in my poverty—gave me courage to encounter difficulty, strength to toil, energy to achieve reward for all ; for I met a kind eye to look upon, a heart to feel for me—to guide me through every difficulty. And, more than that, I found that I toiled for other than myself.

LAURA. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Romance, dear papa, romance !

LEE. No, no! Sense—good sense—common sense, which, in spite of all schoolmen and philosophers may say, is the best of sense. Now, only think, when I die—and I must die, I can't help it—I shall leave you alone in the world. *Alone!* Only think of that. Isn't it chilling? Wh-o-o—doesn't it make one freeze—shiver? Oh! my dear Laura, (*with fervour*) do marry somebody—that's a good girl!

LAURA. Don't be silly, father.

LEE. Well, fathers are fools, I suppose; at least, their children think them so. (*sighs*) Ah! I did once hope to see you Mrs. Mathew Bates, but I have long given up that idea—and so must you now, even if you loved him;—he has got another.

LAURA. (*forgetting, and with force*) Another?

LEE. (*starts*) Bless me! Don't look at me in that way—they say he has.

LAURA. They say? They say everything, when nothing is ever said. Men gossips—tattlers—prating fools—idiots!

LEE. (*stares—she walks about*) Well, my dear, I only spoke from report.

LAURA. Report's a common liar, Sir. And if he *has* another, what is that to you, or me, or any one?

LEE. Nothing to you, of course. You would not have him—that's no reason another should not.

LAURA. Father!

LEE. Daughter!

LAURA. Speak not to me of this—of him—or her—or—

Enter FANNY, c., breathless.

FAN. Oh, Sir!—Oh, Miss!

LEE. What?

FAN. (*up stage, c.*) Mr. Mathew Bates!

LEE. Well; I have just received a letter from him.

FAN. Then he must have brought it himself, for he's at the door.

LAURA. Ha!

LEE. At the door!—it must be his ghost.

FAN. Oh! no, Sir; he shook me by the hand—real flesh and blood.

LEE. Phoo! It has quite alarmed me—(*to LAURA, who is nearly sinking*) There, now; don't look so—that's a dear. Don't be alarmed—he has not come to ask your hand—you are quite safe. I'll run and welcome him. (*as he is going*)

FAN. He is here, Sir.

Enter MATHEW BATES, c.

MATHEW bears an altogether different appearance than in the first act—his dress is fashionable and elegant—his hair in a different form—and whole manner distinguishes him.

LEE. Ah! Mathew, my boy!—ten thousand welcomes. (*shakes his hand warmly*)

MAT. (c.) I rejoice to see you, Sir. Ha! Laura! your hand. (*as he extends his hand she runs eagerly, then stops, as recollecting*)

LAURA. (*kindly, R.C.*) Welcome, cousin.

MAT. Nay, Laura, do not shrink from me—do not fear me now! You remember my promise on my departure—never to return till I could regard you as my sister; I can do so now—so, sister your hand.

LAURA. 'Tis yours, Mathew.

LEE. Why, bless me, Mathew—you have grown!

MAT. Grown, Sir? (*laughing*)

LEE. No, I don't mean grown, I mean you have improved. You don't look the same man—your cheeks, your hair, and eyes, shine with their boyish lustre.

MAT. I am a boy *again*, Sir! I return a cured patient. Time, with its electric touch, has put new energy into my heart, and I believe, as you say, new fire into my eyes. Ha, ha, ha! I have frequently laughed at my folly, very frequently, (*LAURA watches him*) and smiled to think how time works the cure of our deepest anguish. (*gaily*) But, come, Laura, you do not speak—welcome me. (*laughs*) Nay, fear me not now, I am out of danger, and so are *you*; tell me, how have you fared? I thought, ere this, though I was not smiled upon, another would have been blessed,

LAURA. Cousin!

LEE. 'Gad, so did I; but there she stands, just as you left her. (*they laugh*)

LAURA. Father! (*going, R.D.*)

MAT. (*runs to her*) Nay, you must not leave us yet; never mind him, he shall say no more about it.

LEE. (L.) Well, I won't, I won't. But Mathew—ha, ha, ha!—I can't help laughing, upon my word I can't, and egad it must out. (*titters*) A little bird has whispered that—now don't be angry—you won't, will you?—promise not.

MAT. (C.) Certainly!

LEE. Well, I have heard that—(*laughs*)—that there's—(*laughs*)—a certain lady, now in England, not unlikely to become Mrs. Mathew Bates. Ha, ha, ha! (*plays with him*) You wicked rascal!

LAURA. (*aside*) Can I bear this?

MAT. (*smiles*) Well, you'd treat her kindly, would you not, Sir?

LEE. Wouldn't I—wouldn't I? I'd treat her as my own child.

LAURA. (*in despair, aside, about to go off, R.D.*) 'Tis over!

MAT. Cousin, pray do not quit us yet.

LAURA. I will return. I will not be long.

He leads her to door, R.H., bows, she exit.

MAT. (*observes her*) What is the matter with my cousin? Not offended with my presence. Surely not now.

LEE. No, no!—to tell you the truth, Mathew, I don't know what to make of her. After your departure, Clinton proposed—no use; Danvers—no use; Young Morland (you know him) was sent packing yesterday.

MAT. I see—no mind to quit you.

LEE. (L.C.) No mind for anything, I'm afraid. But come, we'll have some lunch and a chat. A thousand welcomes, again and again, my boy! But, I say, is this report of the English lady true?

MAT. (R.C.) Do you doubt? Frankly, yes!

LEE. I congratulate you. How I long to see your intended wife!

MAT. You shall shortly do so, and embrace her too.

LEE. Embrace her! I'll hug her—kiss her! You won't be jealous?

MAT. (*laughs*) Jealous! (*laying his hand upon his shoulder*) What, of my father?

LEE. 'Gad, I am your father—will be your father! Shall I not?

MAT. (*holding forth his hand, which LEESON shakes*) You shall!

LEE. Come along!

Exeunt, D.L.

Enter FANNY FACT, quickly, from r. door.

FAN. Well, upon my word! To tell me to quit the room. Her temper is unbearable of late—it gets worse and worse. I merely told her she looked a little pale, when, oh! what a rage she flew into! —told me to quit the room! I'll quit her service, I'm determined! (*TACT is heard to sing a French air*) Here's Mr. Tact; how he and his master have improved, to be sure!

Enter TOM TACT, from c., attired à la Française, beard, &c., singing.

TACT. (*in a Foreign accent, assumed*) Ah! Miss—really I forget your name—Fanny—Fact, I believe.

FAN. That's it, Sir.

TACT. (L.) You still remains here, I find?

FAN. (R.C.) Yes, I have remained here; but how long I shall remain, I can't tell—I'm getting tired, I assure you.

TACT. I suppose so. It must have been very dull while we was away, eh?

FAN. You have had a pleasant time, I suppose, Mr. Tact?

TACT. Oh, delightful! So much fun—so much beaucoup de plaisir—so much life—so much enjoy-mong. (*with a twang*)

FAN. And very cheap, I suppose?

TACT. (*aside*) What does she mean by—Oh! the trip to Hampton Court, that we didn't take!

FAN. Was Mr. Bates very melancholy?

TACT. Not very; a little dull at first; but recovered very soon.

FAN. Do you return with him?

TACT. Oui!

FAN. We?

TACT. No, no—that is, yes, ye-es. Oui is translate French for yes. You must pardon my not speak very good English, I have been so long on the Conti-nong, I have almost forget my tongue.

FAN. You are single still, I suppose, Mr. Tact?

TACT. I am, I am very sorry to say.

FAN. (*aside*) Come, that's promising. (*aloud*) And why sorry?

TACT. Because I don't feel at home wiz myself. I have always got a sort of I-don't-know-what-to-do-wiz-myself sort of feeling. It has struck me, Miss Fanny, very strongly of late, that having no fixed principle is just as bad as having no principle at all, and is the principal cause of our principal errors in life.

FAN. Not a doubt of it, Mr. Tact.

TACT. Well, then, my principles proving wrong, should I be ashamed of imitating my betters to change my principles?

FAN. By no means!

TACT. Miss Fanny, you inspire me wiz hope. Fanny Fact, I am a bachelor! (*sighs*)

FAN. Mr. Tact, I am a spinster! (*sighs*)

TACT. (L.) Fanny Fact, I am a reformed bachelor, my heart is now an open borough, and only wants a liberal candidate. If you are open to conviction, my arms are open to receive you—my heart and my two arms are open to receive you, at the same time. Will you be mine?

FAN. (R.) Oh! Mr. Tact, I really—

TACT. So do I, really, upon my honour. (*bows ridiculously*)

FAN. I never said I loved you.

TACT. You never said you hated me. Will you *pledge* yourself?

FAN. Let me see how you behave; you sha'n't despair.

TACT. Oh, happy Tommy Tact! (*kisses her*)

Enter LAURA, R.D.

LAURA. Hem!

FAN. (c., to TACT, who stands *mumchance*, L. 1 E.) There now!

LAURA. Fanny, go to my father, tell him I must see him instantly.

FAN. Yes, Miss!

Exit D.L.F., kissing her hand to TACT.

TACT. (aside, to her the same) Au re-ser-voir. (then seeing LAURA) I beg your pardon, Miss. (*about to go off c.*)

LAURA. Stay, Mr. Tact. How long do you and your master remain here?

TACT. (very modestly) Upon my word, I can't say, Miss; 'till a certain marriage is settled, I believe.

LAURA. *That* is the purpose of his visit, then?

TACT. So it's reported, Miss.

LAURA. (aside) Report again. (*aloud, impatiently*) Have you seen the lady, Sir?

TACT. No, Miss, not I.

LAURA. And her father—do you know him?

TACT. Haven't the slightest knowledge of him.

LAURA. You may go.

TACT. (*bows*) Je vous re mercie—I beg pardon—Thank you. (*bows*) (aside) I'm very glad of it.

Exit c.

LAURA. This is his triumph—his manly triumph! He is another's—and I—oh! how lone I feel. My father was right. I shall see him leave me in the world alone—lone in heart. And for whom? My cousin Mathew—for I cannot deny it to myself—I love him: I scarce dared look upon him, while his manly eye was fixed and firm. Oh! how I longed for the love glances which, even in his boyhood, he lavished on me. I could have borne all, but the confession that he was another's—that I was nothing to him—his sister—oh, yes, *sister!*—fine term, truly!—and I must see him marry—present his bride to me. Never, never!

Enter LEESON, L.D.

LEE. Now, Laura, what is it?—for Mathew and I—

LAURA. Father, mention not his name to me—I'll not hear it (*in passionate remonstrance*)—own it!

LEE. Bless me, girl!—are you mad?

LAURA. And if I am, who has driven me to madness? You—him!

LEE. By what means?

LAURA. The most cruel! Was I not happy in his absence? Did I complain, enquire for—wish for his return? Why came he, then?

LEE. To see us. To take back a wife, to be sure!

LAURA. Let him do so, but bring her not here—let me not see her!

LEE. Not see her! Why not?

LAURA. He shall not boast his lordly power in my presence—lead her here, that she may smile in cold disdain upon me! Me, the lone, despised, heart-broken Laura! (*bursts into tears*)

LEE. (*kindly*) My dear girl! Heart-broken? What, because the man you have refused is about to marry another?

LAURA. (*with despair*) Father, I love Mathew too well to see him wed another! (*desperately*)

LEE. (*starts*) Love him!

LAURA. (*in great grief*) Aye, so deeply, that but to look upon the happy one that calls him hers, will kill me, father!

LEE. (*aside*) Zounds! Here's a turn in the state of affairs!

LAURA. (*in despair*) Can nothing be done to save me? for Mathew only can I ever love!

LEE. What *can* be done? You first reject the man, who, for your sake, quits his early happiness. You ridicule him, his very name; and when, cured of the wound you have inflicted upon his heart, about to wed another, you ask, can aught be done to save you? What can be done? Daughter, this is the first unkind word I ever spoke to you—what can he do, but wed her to whom he has given his honour? Can he wrong, break his plight to her—for one, who lightly cast him off, to gratify, as it now appears, a captious and unfeeling tyranny? (*LAURA sinks into a chair, he takes her hand*)

LAURA. I have done wrong, and I now suffer—forgive me!

LEE. I do forgive you—I pity, but cannot aid you. No, I cannot ask the man, whose boyhood I have schooled in honour, to break his word—forget his plight to one who, doubtless, fondly loves him.

Enter MATHEW, quickly, with hat and riding-whip, L.D.

MAT. Now, my dear Sir, I must quit you for a short time,—my sister, I am sure, will excuse me.

LAURA. (*desperately*) (*aside*) It must be done! (*to LEESON*) Father, leave me with Mathew, but for a few moments ere he go—for they will be my last.

LEE. I will. (*beckons MATHEW*) Mathew, Laura wishes a few words with you before you go—have you any objection?

MAT. You know her will was ever my law.

LEE. (*looks at her*) Lord knows what she can say to him.—(*to MATHEW*) I'll go. (*aside*) This *has* astonished me.—What a whirl-about world this is, and woman generally sets the turnabout going.

Exit, L.D.

MAT. (*L.H., looks at her—places his hat and cane on table, L.H.*) She seems in reverie. (*approaches her*) Cousin—sister.

LAURA. (*abstractedly, r.*) Eh?—Your pardon, Mathew!

MAT. (*C.*) I am waiting, Laura. What have you to say to me?

LAURA. (*with effort, and scarcely able to speak*) You are about to—wed, and, for that purpose, visit here.

MAT. True! Could I celebrate so happy an event on any other spot, Laura?—and without the presence of my earliest friends—my father—and my *sister*?

LAURA. (*shrinking*) Is that your only purpose, Mathew?

MAT. Yes! my only purpose.

LAURA. Strange—*very* strange!

MAT. Not so. My first remembrance is here. Your father, my protector; you, my playmate; and, as time shadowed forth all coming hope, you were the ministers, through whom I was to receive fortune, content, and love; and when, as in a dream, (time flew so happily on) I stepped from boy to man, ~~the same feelings strengthened~~, day by day, I saw you pass from girl to woman's stature, loveliness—(*she starts*) Your pardon; for I flatter not. ~~I saw no speck upon its radiance~~ I loved you—Your pardon still, (*with great feeling*) if the tear start to my eye, and recollection choke my utterance. I perceived a growing check to ~~my~~ every kind attention. ~~Oh, the watchful, waking hours that hung upon my pillow!~~ I strove to please, but, as each kind word fell tremulously from my quivering lip, it was met by railing and contempt from yours. At last came the day I was to hear from the being I had worshipped, that, if I had ~~nurtured~~ in my heart one ~~hope that she could ever~~ be mine, I was to cast that feeling from me.

LAURA. And you did so, Mathew, without entreaty, or—

MAT. Oh, what entreaty could equal the devotion, that from boy to man I lavished upon you, Laura? I could not entreat; your words iced my heart, freezing my every vein; I could not ask *that I knew* must be refused. I loved you too well, with too much honour, to beg your hand, not coupled with your heart. Your happiness, not your misery, was my aim; and, rather than inflict one pang on you or yours, I fled a home, which else to me was heaven. (*with great fervour*)

LAURA. (*as if sunk in spirit*) You did, upon the instant—without leave-taking—or word.

MAT. There are moments, Laura, when the bravest man is palled; but be he man, he calls his manhood to his aid, and looks again towards hope; and so with me—wrecked in the love I bore you, I hoped, I struggled, I conquered. 'Twas your wish I should discard you from my thoughts—regard you only as a sister. *Sister*, I have done so. (*proudly, but not with vanity*)

LAURA. 'Tis well! 'Tis bravely done! 'Tis kind—*very* kind, and I must thank you.

Enter JOHN, c.

JOHN. Your horse is ready, Sir.

MAT. Oh, very well.

Exit JOHN, c.

—Have you anything further to say to me—*sister*?

LAURA. (*shudders, aside*) Oh, that stinging reproach. (*aloud*) No, no! go to her you are about to wed. May you be happy! May she love you—

MAT. How?

LAURA. (*checks herself*) As you expected me to do.

MAT. I shall then indeed be blessed. Adieu! (*going up*) You shall shortly see her, sister.

Exit, c.

LAURA. (*sits down L.H. table*) See her! (*with a thrill*) Look upon her—Never! No! I hear his footfall in the distance; each step bearing him from me to her! There is no hope for me now! He can never be mine! Never! (*placing her hand to her forehead*) Oh! Mathew, time has indeed worked your cure—my misery! You loved me, and I rejected you! And now, when my heart yearns towards you—when I love—adore you—I am as nothing to you! (*overcome by her feelings, she reclines on the table, and weeps*)

MATHEW, who has returned for his whip, and overheard the last lines, starts.

MAT. Not so, Laura!

LAURA. (*starts up*) Ha, he's here!

MAT. Here to bring you happiness, I trust, and, if so, joy tenfold to me. I have played the listener (pardon the act); but, can I speak my wild delight to hear your lips confess you love me? Laura, will you be mine?

LAURA. Yours! Can that be?

MAT. It can.

LAURA. Your wife?

MAT. Is here—you, Laura—the other but in fancy—the better to fortify me in my visit here! I thought I had conquered. 'Twas but again to look upon you—again to love you. And, hearing others had been cast aside, I dared to hope, though late, a fond return. Say; am I blessed?

LAURA. (*with rapture*) Oh, Mathew! (*they embrace*)

Enter LEESON, L.D.

LEE. (*starts*) Hallo, hallo! What's all this?

LAURA. (*rushes to him*) Father, embrace your Laura, her folly is atoned—for given.

MAT. I told you, Sir, that you should shortly see my wife (*presenting LAURA*) Behold her!

LEE. What? no—it can't be! You told me you were going to visit your other wife.

MAT. I have no other, Sir, 'twas she I meant; you see her; and in yourself, her father.

LEE. True?

MAT. True, indeed!

LEE. Bless you both. (*with great joy*) Ha, ha, ha! Capital, upon my word! Mathew, you are a clever fellow. 'Gad! I'm brimful of joy! I always prayed for this. (*MATHEW leads LAURA to front*)

LAURA. Be this our moral! Choose from mind and worth;

Love dwelleth not in fashion, form, or birth.

Ladies, a word! Let reason bear the sway;

Choose well—choose wisely—choose, too, "when you may."

Caprice and passion never did, or can,

With justice weigh the attributes of man.

And now, gentlemen, I have a word with you;

Be all like Mathew Bates, (*pointing to him*) as kind and true.

Frivolity and pride—oh! these will ever pall.

The heart, then, be the test—for TIME TRIES ALL!

R.

MATHEW.

LAURA.

LEESON.

L.

Curtain.