

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY;

OR, THE

WIDOW AND HER WOOERS.

A NEW AND ORIGINAL DRAMA,

IN THREE ACTS.

*By the Author of "Diogenes and his Lantern," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "The Philosopher's Stone," "Prince Dorus,
&c. &c.*

HAILES LACY,

WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND.

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*First performed at the Royal Olympic Theatre, on Easter Monday,
April 22, 1851.*

CHARACTERS.

Sir Roger de Coverley	Mr. W. FARREN.
Sir Andrew Fairport	Mr. G. COOKE.
Will Honeycombe	Mr. HENRY FARREN.
Dick Grecian	...	(the Templar)	...	Mr. HENRY LEE.
Captain Sentry	Mr. W. FARREN, JUN.
Will Wimble	Mr. COMPTON.
Tom Touchy	Mr. W. SHALDERS.
Mr. Hassock	Mr. MAZZONI.
Ned Biscuit	Mr. C. BENDER.
Bob Martingale	Mr. KINLOCH.
Reuben Cooper (<i>a Gypsey, known as "Black Will"</i>)	Mr. LEIGH MURRAY.
Foxy	Mr. CLIFTON.
Uriah Lee	...	(a Gypsey)	...	Mr. DIDDEAR.
Josh. Lee	...	(his Son)	...	Miss ELLEN TURNER.
Solitaire	Mr. TANNER.
Stephen Drench	Mr. GEOFFREY.
Joshua Botts	Mr. SPINX.
George	Master ABSOLOM.
Bill	Master PHŒBE.
Sir Roger's Footmen	...	Messrs. HARRIS and W. TANNER.		
Lady Bellasis	...	(the Widow)	...	Mrs. STIRLING.
Sylvia	...	(her Daughter)	...	Miss LOUISA HOWARD.
Mrs. Cosey	Miss ISABEL ADAMS.
Susan Holiday	Miss ADAMS.
Jane Laundress	Miss PITT.
Martha	Miss WALTERS.
Honor Lee	...	(a Gypsey)	...	Mrs. B. BARTLETT.
Florentia Lee	Miss E. SHALDERS.
Mahala Stanley (<i>a Gypsey Girl</i>)	Mrs. LEIGH MURRAY.

COSTUMES—Period 1712.

- SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY—Handsome light fawn-coloured old-fashioned suit, trimmed with silver lace; silk stockings, garters, shoes and buckles, ruffles, three-cornered cocked hat, cloak, and court sword, peruke.
- SIR ANDREW FAIRPORT—Muddy brown cloak; hat, and high boots. *2nd Dress.*—Morone old-fashioned coat and vest; black breeches, red stockings, shoes and buckles, peruke.
- WILL HONEYCOMBE—Amber coat and breeches, handsomely trimmed with embroidered lace; peach embroidered waistcoat; silk stockings, shoes and buckles, three-cornered cocked hat, cloak and ruffles, and court sword, peruke.
- DICK GRECIAN—Muddy brown cloak, hat and boots. *2nd Dress.*—Handsome old-fashioned green suit, trimmed with gold; three-cornered cocked hat, shoes and buckles, peruke.
- CAPTAIN SENTRY—Scarlet coat, trimmed with gold; white breeches, high boots, three-cornered cocked hat, belt and sword.
- WILL WIMBLE—A brown figured velvet suit; high boots, round turned-up hat, peruke.
- TOM TOUCHY—Drab coat, figured brown waistcoat, black breeches, plumb-coloured stockings, shoes and buckles, peruke.
- HASSOCK—Black velvet suit, black gown, black stockings, shoes and buckles, bib and tie, three-cornered cocked hat, clerical white wig.
- NED BISCUIT—Black suit, black stockings, shoes and buckles, three-cornered hat.
- BOB MARTINGALE—Red livery coat, velvet cap, high dirty boots. *2nd Dress.*—Blue stockings, shoes and buckles.
- REUBEN COOPER—Green coat, red cuffs and collar, goat-skin waistcoat, slate-coloured breeches, leather gaiters, ankle boots, white felt hat.
- FOXY—Green coat, drab breeches, chintz waistcoat, black hat.
- URIAH LEE—Drab ragged coat, red waistcoat, black breeches, blue stockings, and shoes.
- JOSH. LEE—Blue coat, brown waistcoat and breeches, blue stockings, and shoes.
- SOLITAIRE—Old-fashioned embroidered suit, shoes and buckles.
- STEPHEN DRENCH—Green coat, trimmed with red, red breeches and vest, white stockings, shoes and buckles.
- JOSHUA BOTTS—Blue coat, chintz waistcoat, black hat, drab breeches, shoes and stockings.
- SERVANTS—Similar to DRENCH.
- RUSTICS—Similar to BOTTS.
- BOYS—Old-fashioned suits.
- LADY BELLASIE—Dark blue riding-dress, trimmed with gold; hat and feathers. *2nd Dress.*—Embroidered silk dress, yellow satin petticoat, black lace cloak. *3rd Dress.*—Handsome light blue embroidered evening dress.
- SYLVIA—Dark blue riding dress, trimmed with gold; hat and feathers. *2nd Dress.*—White muslin dress, trimmed with scarlet ribbon.
- MRS. COSEY—Figured dress, white apron and cap, lace collar.
- HONOR LEE—Dark figured dress, plaid cloak, handkerchief on head, shoes and buckles.
- FLORENTIA LEE—Chintz dress and red cloak.
- MAHALA STANLEY—Red and black dress, brown cloak, round black hat, handkerchief tied over it, ankle boots.
- SERVANTS—Chintz dresses, straw hats.
- LADIES—Evening dresses.
- GYPSIES—Dark figured dresses, red cloaks, handkerchiefs, hats, &c.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

A C T T H E F I R S T.

SCENE.—*The lawn in front of Coverley Manor, with the entrance and facade of the house, and bridge over the moat.—A clump of beeches, with a barrel of ale on tressles, R.—An old oak, with a seat round it, L.—A group of rustics gathered near the beer barrel.—GIRLS are making garland s.—Old men are seated round the oak.—A Boy is perched on the lower branches of one of trees, R.*

Mr. BISCUIT, FOXY, STEPHEN DRENCH, JOSHUA BOTTS, Mrs. COSEY, SUSAN, JANE, Male and Female SERVANTS, and Male and Female RUSTICS discovered.

Bis. (c., giving orders) Now, steady, my boys! Stephen Drench, don't tilt thy end of the barrel, or thou'l have the October as muddy as thine own brains. So!

Foxy. (R.) The fiddler's bench o' this side, Master Biscuit? (*carrying a short bench.*)

Bis. Nay! not so near the beer barrel. If the malt gets into the music, or the music into the malt, the dancers will have to halt for it. Here! (*Foxy places bench L.*)

Mrs. Cosey. (L., to MAIDS) And mind no giggling and gossiping, girls! I can't understand, for my part, how the wenches do so run after the fellows.

Foxy. (L., aside) I dare say not, old lady, with your sixty years on your back.

Bis. And no guzzling, mind, boys! I can't understand, for my part, how you lads can so run after the drink.

Foxy. (aside) I dare say not, old gentleman, with your cellar keys in your pocket.

Bis. Especially as Sir Roger has given you leave to hold the wake here on the lawn, in honour of his return, bless his kind heart!

All. Long life to his Honour!

Foxy. (L., going with a mug to the barrel, BISCUIT stops him) What! not to drink his Honour's health! Well, well, Mr. Biscuit, I'd a thought you'd a respected my feelings for the family I've caught rats in since I could handle a terrier. But it's all one (*hiccups*), drunk or dry; here's long life to Sir Roger, when we get the liquor to pledge it in.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

BOY. (*in tree, R., looking out, L.*) Huzza! I see a red coat against the chalk pit, galloping like mad. It's Brown Sorrel and Bob Martingale.

BIS. His Honour's body groom! Then the coach can't be far behind. Now lads! Now Mrs. Cosey! His Honour's a-coming. Joshua Botts, run and take Bob's mare to the stable.

Exit JOSHUA BOTTES, L.

—On with thy coat, Stephen Drench. Where's John Gardener?

BOY. (*scrambling down the tree*) Here's Bob!

Enter BOB MARTINGALE, L. 1 E., his cap in his hand, wiping the perspiration from his face; all crowd round him.

BOB. (c.) Welcome, lads; glad to see you again. Your servant, Mr. Biscuit—Mrs. Cosey, ma'am, your obedient; Susan—(*SUSAN, L., turns away coquettishly.*) Whew! sixty miles since yesterday morning, Mr. Biscuit—'tis warm work.

BIS. (R.) Take a cup of ale, Robert (*gives him one*)—and his honour?

BOB. Well and hearty. He pushed on to be in time for the wake. I left the coach at the long down. They'll be here in a score o' minutes.

BIS. 'Odso! Now, boys, away with you. You that aren't of the family, meet his Honour at the park-gate.

Exit RUSTICS, Male and Female; BOY, &c., L. 1 E.
—You that are, on with your state liveries.

SERVANTS. Ay, ay!

Exit c.

BIS. You girls, clear away the garlands. Stephen Drench, run over to the Warren and tell Captain Sentry his Honour's at hand.

Exit DRENCH, L 1 E.R.

—His Honour is like to be thirsty after his journey, so I'll look to the claret cup.

Exit BISCUIT, c., into house.

FOXY. (R.) And I'll look to the beer barrel. (*draws himself a mug of beer.*)

BOB. You are to get the guest-rooms ready, Mrs. Cosey, for his Honour brings company—one gentleman in the coach with him. The others come down by the flying stage that left London three days ago.

MRS. COSEY. (R.) Oh, Goody! then they may all of them be here this afternoon. Drat the flying stages with their thirty miles a day, that bring down a house full of company before you can look round. (*crosses to L.*) Jane Laundress, set the sheets out in the linen room.

Exit JANE, c.

Susan, follow me to the still room. Lord, Lord, how little

these gentry think of any but themselves. I sha'n't have time to look up my pinners and my flowered tabinet.

Exit Mrs. COSEY and Female SERVANTS into house, C.

BOB. (R., *awkwardly*) I say, Susan!

SUSAN. (L., *stopping*) Well, Mr. Martingale?

BOB. Here's my belt buckle got a twist somehow; won't you help me with it?

SUSAN. (*tossing her head*) Belt buckle, indeed! pretty work for a girl's fingers! Well, let me see it.

As she is busied with it, enter BLACK WILL, R., 3 E., whistling and shaping a hunting pole; as he enters, MARTINGALE snatches a kiss of SUSAN.

SUSAN. (L., *gives an affected scream*) Oh!

REU. (*looks up from his work at the sound of her voice, then comes fiercely forward between them*) Stand back, you! (*he raises his hunting pole.*)

BOB. (R.) Why, Will! (*offering his hand.*)

REU. (C.) Bob Martingale! (*not taking it, but looking at SUSAN.*)

SUSAN. Well, Sir, is that your manners to welcome a fellow servant, with a big voice, and a big stick, and a "stand back, you." (*imitating his manner*) And you, Mr. Martingale, I dont know which is the worst of you. (*SUSAN retires up L.*)

REU. Perhaps he'd like to try which is the best of us.

BOB. Look ye, Will, I'm hot and stiffish with my ride, but give me time to souse my head in a bucket, and swallow a cup o' drink and a mouthful o' victuals, and have with you at the wake to-day for a bout at cudgelling or a fair back fall, and the best man shall wear Susan's top-knot, for a favour in his button hole.

SUSAN. (*coming down C.*) Marry come up! Susan Holiday's favours ain't like a fat pig at a fair—to be won by cudgelling for them.

REU. Nay, nor for serving for them neither—nor doing a good man's turn for 'em, any way, I know that; Susan Holiday likes a smooth cheek, and a soft tongue, and a sparkish shoulder-knot, better than a kind heart and a rough hand. So Bob Martingale may rumple Susan Holiday's cap, and welcome, for all I care. (*he tosses his pole and sings*)

"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky
Proclaim it a hunting morning."

SUSAN. (*half crying.*) You're a scurvy, saucy knave, and I don't know how you dare talk to me so—you that—

REU. Nay, go on—never stint in the story. I, the gypsey, tatterdermalion, the son of felon parents, taken out of gaol by Sir Roger's kindness, and fed by his charity. Twit me with my dark blood, and my tramp's breeding, do; but if I was born under a tent, I've slept under a roof for these six years, and I've learnt one thing of the house dwellers, that

whether it's broken hearts or broken heads—giving's better than getting. So I'll look out for my heart, Susan, and let Master Martingale, there, look out for his head—for as sure as there's virtue in an ashen sapling, I'll crack it to day, till all your ribands sha'n't tie it up again. (*SUSAN retires up the stage, crying.*)

BOB. (*following her.*) Don't cry, Susan. (*turning back.*) Cudgels, if you like, or quarter staff—Susan, dear—you black muzzled vagabond—don't take on, Sue—or the best of three falls, you gypsey mongrel, and if I don't rattle your ribs, my fine fellow—Susan, dear Susan. (*follows SUSAN off into house, c.*)

REU. (*shaking his pole in his hand.*) Ash! keep my hands off iron! The shallow, simpering, light o'love that she is; and that fat-witted smooth face—I could brain him like a fumart.

FOXY. (*coming from behind beer barrel, R.*) Compar ng a footman and a fumart? I say, Will, have some respect for the varmin. Come, dip thy hot head into a pot of stingo, I warrant 'twill set the drink a boiling as a hissing horse shoe doth the cooling trough. (*offers him a cup of ale.*)

REU. (*fiercely*) Stand off me, you rat-catching rascal, or I'll knock the tankard about thine ears. *Exit, 1 E.L.*

FOXY. Now, that's a young man whose temper will stand in the way of his comfort. He's like my terrier, Tiny, that's so savage after the rats, for every bite she gives she gets two (*looks off, R.*) and talking of tempers, here's a brace of queer-uns—Master Tom Touchy, that's for taking law of every man he meets, and Squire Wimble, that's for giving law to every hare he courses.

WIM. (*outside, giving a view halloo*) Ta-a-llly ho!

FOXY. The first is as hot as the other's cool, so I've christened 'em mustard and cress. Ecod though, I'd better get out of Master Touchy's way; he threatened to take the law of me last week, for setting my mole traps in one of his fields. He won't even be rid of his vermin, unless it's all according to law. (*takes his traps, and exits, 1 E.L.*)

Enter WILL WIMBLE and TOM TOUCHY, 1 E.R., in vehement conversation, followed by a Boy carrying a large pike—WIMBLE has some hazel rods in his hand, and two or three whip lashes hang out of his pockets.

TOM. (*R.*) 'Tis so in the books, Mr. Wimble.

WIM. If it's so in the books, all I can say is, they're not good books, Master Touchy. But here we are at the Hall; take the jack in, boy, with Mr. Wimble's duty. Ask what time they expect Sir Roger, (*Boy goes towards house*) and say he should have a pudding in his belly—that is, the pike, not Sir Roger.

Exit Boy, with fish.

—Though for the matter of that, Master Touchy, I hope he

may always have both beef and pudding in his belly—that is, Sir Roger, not the pike. But, 'twas a fair fish, Master Touchy, as ever took minnow in the Broadmere.

TOM. The Broadmere? angle in the Broadmere! Lord, Lord, that a man should put himself in danger of the law for a pike.

WIM. (*not attending*) If you had but seen how the old rogue eyed it, and sailed round it, and opened his rat-trap of a mouth, and then—

TOM. (*not attending*) As a lawyer would say—

WIM. He'd snap at it, and er'e I could strike him—

TOM. He'd have you in court, under the Statute of Westminster, 3rd Edward the First.

WIM. Pshaw! Master Touchy, that a sensible man like you should have no thought but for law, and such pettifogging stuff.

TOM. Pettifogging! nay, rather, Mr. Wimble, that a gentleman of your discretion should think of nought but hunting and shooting, and such brutalizing sports.

WIM. Brutalizing! (*aside*) poor benighted creature. Think of the music of a well matched pack, just opening on their fox!

TOM. What's that to the eloquence of a councillor just opening on his brief?

WIM. Then, the doubles of the fox—

TOM. The dodging of the witnesses—

WIM. The triumph of bearing home the brush from a strong field—

TOM. The glory of carrying off your verdict from an obstinate jury.

WIM. (*rubbing his hands*) Oh, there's nothing like it in life.

TOM. (*in the same tone*) Nothing!

WIM. Do you know, Master Touchy, I begin to think we're not so different after all; we're both fond of the same sport—only for huntsman, fox-hounds, and fox, you put a judge, a lot of lawyers, and a fool.

TOM. How, Master Wimble?

WIM. And whether it be fox that's hunted, or a fool that goes to law, they both are pretty sure to come to the dogs at last. But enough of this matter, Master Touchy; if you must lay down the law, lay it down where it won't annoy people, as they do other kinds o' rubbish.

TOM. Nay, a sportsman should know these points, Mr. Wimble. I've a pretty collection of the penal statutes in the matters of hunting, shooting, fishing, and hawking, at your service. I warrant they'll shew you there's scarce a day you follow your sports but you might have the law taken of you a dozen times over.

WIM. You are very kind. 'Twould doubtless be mighty

pleasant reading; but once for all, do you stick to your law cases, and leave me to my angle rods.

TOM. There again! Why, there's a writ of *devastavit*, or *quare clausum fregit*, in every one of those hazel twigs, if you did but know it. I've taken the law of a man for less than cutting a hazel twig before now, Master Wimble, simple as I stand here, and got my damages, too, for the matter o'that.

WIM. Most people who go to law *do* get damages, and I've no doubt you made out of every rod a rod for your own back. They do say, Master Touchy, that you've a reason for taking the law of everything.

TOM. What may that be, Master Wimble?

WIM. That the law's taken everything of you; so it's only returning the compliment after all. But here's Mr. Biscuit.

Enter BISCUIT, SERVANT, and BOY. c.

WIM. (c.) Good day Mr. Biscuit.

BIS. (L., bowing.) Your Servant, Mr. Wimble—Servant Mr. Touchy—

WIM. Oho! Mr. Biscuit, all in your best I see, in honour of Sir Roger's return—When do you expect him?

BIS. In some ten minutes, Mr. Wimble.

WIM. Odso! then my pike was just in time. Let's see, I had a business, (*reflects*) 'tis well I remembered. Here boy (*crosses to R.*) run down to her ladyship's with this box of shuttlecocks. (*giving them to boy, R.*)

TOM. (*aside, shrugging his shoulders*) Shuttlecocks! fiddlesticks.

WIM. Carry them tenderly, there's a good lad—give them to Miss Sylvia, and say they came with Mr. Wimble's compliments, and hopes they will fly well—mark that now, and here's a penny for thee, (*rummages in his pocket, and finds nothing*) or, stay, a bit of infallible ground-bait instead.

Exit boy, looking rather blank, L.E.R.

Enter from house, c., Mr. HASOCK, Mrs. COSEY, followed by SUSAN and MAIDS, BOB MARTINGALE follows them.

WIM. (c.) My humble duty to your Reverence. (*Mr. HASOCK passes to R.*) Good day, Mrs. Cosey. Eh! Susan? I say, (*aside to her*) Susan, that pair of garters of my own knitting, I gave you, Eh? they wear well I hope, Susan? (*waggishly*).

SUSAN. (*bashfully*) Oh! Mr. Wimble—

(*A distant cheer is heard, L.*)

BIS. (R.C.) Hark—there's his Honour! Now, boys and girls, to your places. You stand opposite me, Mrs. Cosey—so. (*the SERVANTS range themselves—TOUCHY and WIMBLE stand R., Mrs. COSEY L.C.*) Now, mind when I wave my hat!

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

11

WIM. (R.) And mind, lads—before you open, wait till Mr. Biscuit gives tongue.

Enter Sir Roger de Coverley, with Will Honeycombe U.E.L., followed by Solitaire, Honeycombe's Valet, Foxy, and Rustics—as Sir Roger appears, Biscuit waves his hat, and a general and hearty cheer is given.

Sir Rog. (c.) Ha, honest Dick Biscuit! Mrs. Cosey, as blooming as ever. (*she curtseys*) What, my little Susan! Ha, sturdy Roger—thou seest the old horses have brought back the old master. Why, Stephen Drench, how are the old folks? Eh! hearty still? That's well! What, Foxy! how many rats hast thou planted since I've been away? (*they crowd round him and rid him of his hat, stick, &c.—Solitaire performs the same office for Will Honeycombe with great gravity*) Nay, nay—you see, Mr. Honeycombe, the rogues would strip me at my own door. And where's Black Will? (*Wimble and Touchy come forward*) Ha, Will Wimble and Master Touchy! (*gives them his hand*)—honest friends of mine, both, Will, that desire to be better known to you. (*they bow mutually—the Chaplain comes forward*) Ha, Hassock! Honeycombe, my Chaplain—an example to the cloth—preaches Barrow and South—never insults me with Latin and Greek at my own table, and knows something of backgammon.

Hes. (R., bows.) Sir Roger does me more than justice.

WIM. Oh, Sir Roger, welcome home again, Sir Roger. Ecod! I've such a budget for you. There's the grey mare hath dropped a spanking foal, and my liver spaniel hath a rare litter; and that cast of young hawks is mewed—and we're all so glad to see you—and I'm so glad, I could almost (*wipes his eyes*)—drat the east wind.

TOM. (*crosses, and shaking hands warmly*) I've a word or two for your private ear, Sir Roger, touching that suit with the widow. (*re-crosses back to R.*)

Sir Rog. (*starting*) "Suit with the widow!" But where's my nephew? Where's Jack Sentry?

Bis. (*coming forward with a silver tankard R.E.*) I sent a man over for the Captain as soon as we heard of your Honour's being at hand. The Captain's at her Ladyship's, but he'll be here anon.

Sir Rog. Jack at the widow's, too! Humph! (*aside*)

Bis. But won't your Honour like a draught after your journey?

Mrs. COSEY. (L) There's a venison pasty and dowsetts set ready in the great parlour, if your Honour would like to eat before dinner.

Sir Rog. (c.) Thank you, thank you, Mrs. Cosey—always attentive. Your health, all, gentlemen. Here's her Majesty's (*drinks*)—Honeycombe? (*offering the tankard*.)

WILL. Zounds! nothing stronger than capillaire before dinner, Sir Roger? (*gets up L.*)

WIM. (*aside, and regarding WILL HONEYCOMBE*) Capillaire! I thought so, by the look of his legs. They'd made rare cleaning rods for my duck-gun. (*Sir Roger passes the cup to him.*) Her Majesty!—and next to her, here's Sir Roger's health, God bless him (*drinks*)—

ALL. God bless Sir Roger!—Huzza!—

SIR R. (*looking round*)—Eh?—What?—preparing for the wake, Ned Biscuit? That's well. You see, Mr. Honeycombe I like to time my returns by my people's happy days and holidays. It was my father's way before me (*lifts his hat.*) and I wish to be as pleasantly remembered after I'm gone as he was.

BIS. (R.) Dont now, Sir Roger, dont talk of going. (*half crying.*)

SIR ROG. (c.) Now there's an old fool. (*sees MRS. COSEY also affected*) There's a couple of old fools. (*looking round*) Hang me if you're not all fools together. Hark ye, lads and lasses, we'll have the wrestling and the cudgel play here, after the running and the dancing are over at the green, and then hey for the October! So let the lads get their pumps and their Sunday coats, and the lasses their scarlet ribbons and furbelows, and we'll see if the Old Squire has forgotten to foot it with the youngest of you.

ALL. Long life to Sir Roger!—huzza!—huzza!

Exit MRS. COSEY, RUSTICS, &c. U.E.L bidding good bye to Sir ROGER.

WIM. (*as RUSTICS are going*) Where's Joshua Botts?—
(*aside*) Dost thou grin to day for the prize, Joshua Botts?

BOTTs. (L.) E'es Sir.

WIM. Thou'rt an honest fellow Joshua, so step aside with me and I'll show thee a grin I bethought me of, as I was angling to day. Nay, Mr. Honeycombe, I'm a rare hand at a grin—in private Mr. Honeycombe—I love a broad grin dearly—come Joshua.

Exit WILL WIMBLE with JOSHUA, U.E.L. SOLITAIRE remains standing.

WILL. (L.) Well sir, why dont you go?—

SOL. (L.) Ou ça, Monsieur?—

WILL. Anywhere.

SOL. Mais, mon Dieu—que faire, Monsieur?

WILL. Anything—or nothing.

SIR R. Biscuit, shew Mr. Honeycomb's servant to his Master's room.

Exit BISCUIT and SOLITAIRE, c. into house

SIR R. Honest souls!—honest souls, believe me, Honeycombe, and of the right way of thinking—Church and Queen men all—I love them.

CAPT. (R.H.) (*outside*) Arrived?—where is he?
 Sir Rog. (c.) (*eagerly*) Jack!—Jack Sentry!—

Enter Captain SENTRY hastily, R.H. 1, E.

CAPT. (R.C.) My dear Uncle! (*they embrace*) Ha!
 (*crosses to WILL H.*) Will Honeycombe, welcome to Coverley
 Manor. Good day. (*crosses to HASOCK and TOUCHY*)
 How well you are looking, Sir! (*shakes him by both hands*)
 I was at the Widow's when I heard of your approach, and
 we mounted at the news.

Sir Rog. We, Jack?

CAPT. Yes, Sir, the widow declared she must be the first
 to welcome you home, and so she and Miss Sylvia and I
 started together. But I took the short cut by the common,
 and, egad, I believe the gray mare was as anxious to see you
 as I was, for she broke into a gallop without a touch of the
 whip, and brought me here in a quarter of an hour.

Sir Rog. (*delighted*) And so she was eager to see me?

CAPT. (R.) The mare, Sir?

Sir Rog. No, no, Jack—Sylvia—the widow—that is her
 ladyship, eh?

CAPT. Indeed she was, Sir. We have been continually
 talking of you, and I don't know which was warmest in your
 praises.

Sir Rog. Then you've been a good deal with her, Jack?
 (*uneasily*)

CAPT. (*laughing*) I'm afraid Sir, if I must tell you truth,
 I've spent more of my time at the Warren than at Coverley
 Manor.

TOM. I'll be sworn on the book, Sir Roger, and by the
 proper officer, that if nothing else comes of the Captain's
 visits to the Warren, there's matter in them for an action of
 breach, and so I've advised the widow.

Sir Rog. (*still more uneasily, and half aside to WILL HONEYCOMBE*) Eh?

WILL. (L.) (*in the same manner*) Suspicious, certainly—

CAPT. But where are the rest of the club, Sir? Your letter
 led me to expect the whole of our society, Sir Andrew, and
 the Templar, and all?

Sir Rog. They'll be here anon, I warrant me—They come
 by the Flying Stage. (*aside to WILL HONEYCOMBE*) Pump
 him about the widow, Will. Jack, shew Will Honeycombe
 over the demesne—and then, hey for the wake. (*aside to*
HONEYCOMBE) I must know how he stands with the widow.
 Come Master Touchy!

Exit, Sir ROGER, TOUCHY, and CHAPLAIN, U. E. L.

CAPT. (L.) And now, where shall we begin? Shall I shew
 you the stables or the decoy, the herony or the fish ponds?
 Will you visit Sir Roger's alm's-houses or the dog-kennel?
 See a hawk flown or a greyhound puppy slipped? What
 shall it be?

WILL. (R.) La, la, la, Captain ! Stables and kennels, hawks and greyhound puppies ! Why, marry, dost thou think Will Honeycombe would have left the Mall and Spring Gardens, the bona robas at the New Exchange, and the wits at Will's for all the hounds that were ever holloaed to, or the most plethoric pike that ever bolted a minnow ? No, Jack, for a decoy commend me to Spring Gardens—the only game I follow is a petticoat.

CAPT. (L.) Then what in the name of fashion brings thee to Worcestershire?

WILL. (R.) And what in the name of folly keeps thee in Worcestershire ?

CAPT. What, if I refuse to answer thee, Will ?

WILL. Why then, Jack, may I perish if I dont answer for thee.

CAPT. Well ?

WILL. A woman—and her name is Sylvia!

CAPT. 'Sdeath ! why? how?—

WILL. Pooh—pooh, Captain ! Will Honeycomb hath not carried a pair of colours in Cupid's regiment so long without knowing how to push a reconnaissane. But thou must e'en beat a retreat, Jack, the widow is not for thee.

CAPT. The widow ! (*whistles.*)

WILL. For there comes in Will Honeycombe, thy senior officer, Jack, to invest the fortress of her heart in form, summon a parley, and the widow capitulates with all the honours of war.

CAPT. You woo the widow !

WILL. Hark ye, Jack, I love thee, so I'll e'en tell thee all—I dont come a wooing for myself—no, no, since that affair of poor Lady Wildfire's—ah, that was in the time of the long farthingales—Well, since then Will Honeycomb may have had his little *affaires de cœur*—though, upon my honour, there was nothing between me and the Countess, whatever the rogues may say at the Cocoa-Tree. But my wooings on my own account are over—I am only a proxy here.

CAPT. And thy principal is ?—

WILL. Sir Roger, himself.

CAPT. My uncle ?

WILL. Yes, Sir Roger has long loved the widow—she has used him like a dog. But that's all one—ah, Jack, I've been used like a dog too. But let that pass. Thou knowest how bashful a creature Sir Roger is with the sex—let the widow look to her weeds—Will Honeycombe takes the field—Like Cæsar, 'tis "veni, vidi, vici." I'm sorry for thee, Jack, (*crosses to L.*)—for Sir Roger paints his widow *en belle*.

CAPT. (R.) But, my uncle to think of marrying at his age ! Why, he's past sixty !

WILL. (L.) Methinks his sixty years would match better with her forty, than thy six and twenty, Jack.

CAPT. My six and twenty ! Ha, ha, ha ! Why, Will 'tis not the widow that I follow, but Sylvia, her daughter, an angel of eighteen. O Will, could'st thou but see her ! Why, man, I've passed a summer in Elysium. I've walked with Sylvia, rode with Sylvia—thought of her—rhymed of her, dreamed of her—in short, I love her and she loves me—and if thou wilt but stand my friend with her mother, I can answer for thy making one woman happy, as some set off for the many thou hast made miserable.

WILL. No more of that, Jack, as thou lovest me. Egad, I give thee joy—I am glad I shall not have to cut thee out. But, not a word of what I've told thee to thy uncle, Jack—timid as he is with the sex, he's as proud as Lucifer, and if he thought I'd betrayed his secret!—But he knew whom he trusted, when he chose Will Honeycombe—yes, whatever else I may have to repent of, the dear creatures always allowed I'd a vast deal of discretion. There was poor Mrs. Giddy—she that brought in the feather-heads, thou knowest Jack—she trusted me with a sadly-cracked reputation, yet I carried it for two seasons without breaking it. But now, Jack, as thou knowest the fortress give me a plan of it. What style of woman is the widow? Your description Captain, your description?

CAPT. Will Honeycombe to ask a description of a woman, and a widow too! Why, she is as changeable in her moods as in her muslins, puts on a new nature with a new head-dress, rides a-hunting to-day like an amazon, languishes to-morrow like a fine lady, blusters you down one while like a bona roba, and anon blushes and bridles like a nun. In short, Will, she's a coquette, and her forty years have brought her more in attractiveness and womanly arts, than they have taken from her in freshness and beauty. But, to spare me more words, here she comes, and my charming Sylvia.

HONEY. Gadso!—a fine woman, and looks sprightly. Let me see, methinks I'll be pleasant with her, pleasant and humorous. And let me perish if thy Sylvia is not a pretty thing too.

CAPT. A pretty thing! Zounds! my Sylvia a pretty thing!

Enter WIDOW and SYLVIA, R. I E.

Lady BEL. (c.) So, Captain, you are a gallant cavalier truly. (*sees HONEYCOMBE, and curtseys with much dignity.*)

CAPT. (l.c.) Let me present to the Lady Bellasis Mr. Honeycombe, an old and trusty friend of Sir Roger's, Madam, (*WILL bows*)—just arrived with my Uncle from town.

Lady BEL. (r.c.) You are very welcome, Mr. Honeycomb. (*crosses to c.*) So, our old friend has come at last, I long to see him.

WILL. Strike me stupid, Madam, but he returns the compliment (*the Widow gives him a look*)—

CAPT. (c.) But, what is the matter?—you look pale—and Sylvia—

Lady BEL. Ah! 'tis no fault of your's, Captain Sentry, that we are not both of us broken to pieces, instead of being only a little shaken, and a good deal frightened—(*calling off R. 1 E.*)—Here child,

Enter MAHALA, R. 1 E.

is a crown piece for thy pains. Go up to the house, and get some cold meat and ale.

MAH. (R.) (*taking the money*) The white money's always welcome, my lady, and there's luck in a white hand too. But Mahala is no monger for the house-dweller's scraps, (*she retires up.*) There may be a fortune to tell, or a stray spoon to chore about the great house (*aside*)—(*sits down under the trees (R.) and begins making a net, looking sharply about her from time to time. HONEYCOMBE regards her with curiosity.*)

Lady BEL. Pray don't suppose, Mr. Honeywill—

WILL. Honeycombe, Madam?

Lady BELL. Honeycombe! I beg your pardon—that I always travel, like Cleopatra, with an Egyptian body guard, but the Captain here forgot his duty as a squire in his devotion as a nephew.

WILL. (L.) Let me perish, if he does not deserve to be shot for a deserter.

Lady BEL. (L. *aside*) A Beau, I see!—He left us to gallop over the common to his uncle. We jogged on like a couple of country wives on their way to market; when, in the Beech Lane, we came on a gypsy encampment, with its accompaniment of bright fires and yelping curs. What became of Sylvia, I had no time to learn; my mare bolted—I was riding in a snaffle, Captain, and you know what a mouth Meg has—I pulled and so did the mare; 'twas one female will against another, Mr. Honeycombe; but the mare had the best of it, and broke down the lane at a slapping gallop. I insisted on boring her into the hedge, she insisted on taking me over it; never touched a twig, Captain, I give you my honour. It wasn't till after a burst across a half mile of stubbles that I felt her mouth again, turned her round, lifted her cleverly back over the quick into the lane, and found poor Sylvy as white as ashes, her pony shaking like a leaf, and our tawny friend there whispering mysterious consolation into his ear.

SYL. Yes, if it hadn't been for her, I'm sure I should have been thrown right into the middle of such a horrid prickly holly bush. But she quieted Beau with a whisper—My pony's name is Beau, Sir, (*to Mr. HONEYCOMBE.*)

Lady BEL. And a vicious brute he is!

SYL. Yes, but so handsome, Mama—And led him out of the lane hither as quiet as a lamb—

CAPT. My Sylvia in danger—and through my thoughtlessness!

Lady BELL. (*c. tapping him with her whip*) Headstrong creature. But pr'ythee don't torment yourself, the danger's all over now, and you must find me a pleasanter occupation than thinking of it.

WILL. (*L., gallantly*) Ah! had I but been by! —

Lady BEL. You would certainly have been knocked into the ditch. (*SYLVIA and SENTRY go up R., and come down, L.*)

WILL. (*Confused, but recovering himself*) And sink me Madam, if I had—

Lady BEL. Your peach-blossom coat would never have recovered it. Ha! ha! Excuse my laughing, Mr. Honeycombe, but you've conjured up the funniest picture.

WILL. (*L., aside to Sentry*) You see she likes my humour. And this pleasant picture, Madam—?

Lady BEL. Is of your blush-coloured stockings sticking out of the duckweed, like a pair of sippets in a dish of spinach, (*SYLVIA and SENTRY laugh*).

WILL. (*L.C.*) Zounds, Madam! (*turns up, and gets round to R.*)

CAPT. (*L.*) You see she likes your humour. (*aside to HONEYCOMBE*.)

Lady BEL. Come, Sylvia: in our enjoyment of Mr. Honeycombe's pleasantries, we must not forget to welcome our dear old Sir Roger. You will attend us, Mr. Honeypot?

WILL. (*R.*) —combe, Madam.

Lady BEL. —combe! Excuse me, I have such a sad head for names—Combe—Coxcomb—Honeycombe—we shall be glad to see you at the Warren, Mr. Honeycombe; but pray be cautious in passing the ditch. Ha, ha, ha!

Exit Widow and SYLVIA to the house, escorted by SENTRY.

WILL. Stap my vitals! I have not been so put down since Lady Sparkle tweaked my nose in the Mall, for boasting she had met me in a mask at the Mulberry Garden. Zounds! I must do something to make a scandal, and retrieve my character for a fine gentleman with the widow. I must compromise the first reputation that falls in my way, if it be that of a dairy-wench. So-ho! here comes a petticoat! (*crosses to L.*)

Enter SUSAN HOLIDAY c, with a mug and a plate—she goes to MAHALA.

SUSAN. Here, Gypsey girl—the lady bade me bring you something to eat and drink.

MAH. (*R.*) She is good, and you have a kind face of your own, my pretty lady, and a wicked one, I'll warrant me—and so thinks the fine gentleman, all covered with diamonds, that's watching you yonder.

SUSAN. (*pleased, but with an affectation of indifference*) Marry quep!—finish your drink and give me the tankard, for I'm looked for in the house.

WILL. (L.) Fore Gad, a likely lass. (*going up c.*)

MAH. (*seizing her hand*) Ha! these are no palms for a serving-man's fingering.

SUSAN. Give me the tankard, I say. (*she takes it from MAHALA, and is about to return to the porch.*)

WILL. One word, my little Hebe! (*stopping her.*)

SUSAN. Hebe!—and who may *she* be, please you, Sir? My name's Susan, Sir.

WILL. Then one word, chasteſt of Susannahs.

SUSAN. Nay, I'm none of your Susannahs, though your Honour looks woundy like one of the Elders. By your leave, Sir, I would pass into the house.

WILL. Then, by my leave thou shalt not, till thou pay'st toll.

SUSAN. Sir, you're strange to these parts, or you would not dare talk so to me.

WILL. My child, I am strange to these parts. I come, like Ovid among the Goths, to inoculate the barbarians with my art of love. So, buss me!

SUSAN. Oh, Sir, if you are a gentleman—and before that girl, too!

WILL. Gadso!

MAH. Ha, ha! The Rommany chai neither meddles nor makes with the house-dweller.

SUSAN. Let me pass, you saucy gentleman, or I'll raise the house. (*HONEYCOMBE seizes her round the waist, and tries to kiss her.*)

Enter REUBEN with game—He throws it down, seizes WILL HONEYCOMBE by the collar, and flings him on one side, L.—SUSAN clings to REUBEN.

REU. (C.) Go in, Susan, leave me to deal with him.

SUSAN. (R.) No, no, Will, 'tis a fine gentleman.

REU. (C., contemptuously) That he is!

SUSAN. (R.) And a friend of Sir Roger's.

REU. That he's not, a lantern-jawed Jack-a-dandy. (*preparing to spring on him—WILL HONEYCOMBE draws his sword.*)

SUSAN. Oh, Will, Will, he'll kill thee.

REU. Never fear, Susan, I'd defend thee against a score of such popinjays.

WILL. (L.) Stand off, barbarian, or I must pink thee.

REU. That for your poking iron, (*springs on him, wrests the sword from him, and flings it over the wall of the moat.*)

WILL. 'Sdeath! there goes a gold hilt, and a French knot.

REU. Is it so? then I'll help you into the moat to look after them. (*seizes round the waist.*)

SUSAN. He'll smother him! he'll smother him! (*rushes into the house screaming*) Help! help! help!

MAH. (*who has watched the struggle with eager gestures*) Cushgar! Cushgar!* well done the Calo!† (*clapping her hands*) But nab his diamond buckles first, Calo!—

WILL. The brute's as strong as a horse! Help! help! help!
Enter from the house, Sir Roger, Will Wimble, Touchy,
and the Widow.

Sir Rog. Hold! hold! Sirrah!—Why Will Honeycombe, what's this?—

Lady BELL. (R.) I vow and declare he has a natural inclination for a ditch! (*WILL lets HONEYCOMBE go.*)

TOM. (L.) Assault and battery, and before witnesses—you may have your action of him, Mr. Honeycombe!—

Sir Rog. What the devil is to do here, Sirrah?

WILL. (L. C.) Nothing, Sir Roger, nothing, a wrestling bout between me and my friend here—curse his horse play.

WIM. (R.) A wrestling bout? Ha! I dearly love a wrestling bout, (*crosses and takes hold of him*) I have a sleight I could shew you, Mr. Honeycombe.

WILL. No, prythee (*WIMBLE retires up, and crosses back to R.*)

Lady BELL. Nay, Mr. Wimble, Mr Honeycombe hath had slights enough, already.

Sir Rog. (*severely to REUBEN*) But how comes this, Sirrah, that I find thee flinging one of my friends into my own moat?

TOM. (L.) By instigation of the devil, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lady the Queen, so the indictment runs.

REU. (R., *sulkily.*) Let him keep his hands to himself then—an he use his town tongue on Susan Holiday, or his town sword on me, if there's dirty water within a score yards, in he goes, though he were ten time's your Honour's friend, and I love your Honour dearly.

WIM. Well said, lad, well said (*Sir Rog. checks him by a look.*) But very ill done lad, very ill done—

Sir Rog. (*severely to REUBEN*) Sirrah, when you forget your respect for my friends, you forget your duty to me (*REUBEN strives to speak.*) Not a word sir, begone!—

REUBEN *retires and Exit R.*—MAHALA *steals out after him.*
And now, Mr. Honeycomb, perhaps you will explain how I find you engaged in a tussle with one of my servants—

WILL. The old sin, Sir Roger, the sin of Jupiter!—galantry. Nay, I confess it Madam, we young dogs must be doing. Hot blood will out.

Lady BELL. (R. C.) Or rather, hot blood will in—to the horse-pond!—(*all laugh*)—Ha, ha!

* Good.

† Black, or dark man.

WILL. Fore Gad, Madam (*crosses to widow*), you are pitiless, (*aside to Sir Rog.*) a trick to put her in desperate conceit of me. But who is this strong fellow? This Drawcansir?

WIM. Nay, his name is Black Will, not Drawcansir—an honest lad, and the prettiest fellow, believe me, at finding a hare, tickling a pike, or breaking a puppy.

TOM. (L.) A rank poacher, and follows game on any man's land that is not quick to take the law of him.

Sir Rog. (C.) Ah, kind will out.

WIM. True, knight, true, dogs or men, dogs or men.—

Sir Rog. It must be the gypsey blood—yet I thought service would have tamed him—(*MAHALA, concealed behind the trees, has been listening, and testifies interest.*)

MAHA. (*aside*) Tame a Rommany! Ha, ha!

TOM. You are right served, Sir Roger, I said what it would come to when you took him out of the hands of the law, that mercifully sentenced his parents—let's see, Cooper was the name—to the plantations for life, instead of hanging them under the Statute in that case made and provided. (*during this speech MAHALA is much agitated.*)

MAHA. (*clasps her hands, aside*) My pal, my pal,* my own Reuben!

Lady BELL. And what was their crime?

TOM. They had cut a crown's worth of Sir John's sallows for their basket making. You remember it, Mr. Wimble.

WIM. Yes, 'twas a bad case (*shakes his head.*)

Lady BELL. Monstrous! mercy is a mischievous thing, Mr. Touchy.

Sir Rog. (*crosses to widow tenderly.*) And therefore you shew none, cruel fair! (*aside to Wimble.*) Didst thou mark that, Will? Was that well said?

WILL. Well meant, knight, but somewhat of the stalest.

The bells are heard to strike up at a distance, L.

WIM. Hark, the wake's begun! There go the triple-bob-majors! Knight, if you're not there to bestow the prizes, and her ladyship to give a smile and a pleasant word to the winners, I'd as lief 'twere no wake at all.

Lady BEL. Come then, who will give me his hand? (*they all press forward, but yield to Sir Roger, who offers his hand timidly—WILL HONEYCOMBE retires up, and drops down R.*)

Sir Rog. (*squeezing her hand*) Ah, madam.

WILL. But what if Sir Andrew and the Templar arrive?

Sir Rog. Odso! I had forgot—they are long a coming. The stage should have passed an hour ago.

WIM. Never mind them, if we don't start at once the grinning will be over, and I would you should see Joshua Botts grin, for he doth it rarely, though I say so that

* Brother.

shouldn't, for I taught him. (*distant music of the wake is heard*).

Enter Foxy, L.U.E.

Foxy. Saving your presence, Sir Roger, and this noble company, I am come to bid you to the wake; the horse collars are set for the grinning, and the cudgels cut and measured for the head breaking, and the pigs' tails soaped for the jingling, and we only wait for the ladies, and your Honour, and the company.

Sir Rog. Say we come anon, Foxy.

Foxy. And please your Honour, there's the flying stage has stuck fast in the quaking bog, with some friends of your Honour's inside it.

WILL. (R.) Sir Andrew and the Templar bogged—ha, ha, ha! I'll be sworn Dick Grecian was driving.

Sir Rog. Oddsfish! Here Foxy, Will Wimble, Biscuit, Stephen, Joshua Botts, run and heave up the coach, and pluck out our good friends.

WILL. That city paunch of Sir Andrew's will scarce pass through the coach window, methinks.

Foxy. They were sore beset to haul a stout gentleman out as I came by, your Honour, and here he comes in a pretty pickle.

Enter Sir ANDREW FAIRPORT, and DICK GRECIAN, their clothes covered with mud, U.E.L. SERVANTS carrying trunks &c. muddy, which they take into the house.

Sir Rog. (*going forward and welcoming them*) My good friend, Sir Andrew—Dick Grecian, I'm sorry to see you—that is, glad.

Sir AND. (L.) Nay prythee, no apologies, knight.

DICK (L.) Though they might have made the coach window a little wider.

Sir Rog. But you're not hurt. 'Twas a soft place. In with you, in with you, and change your habits. Here, Ned Biscuit, Ned Biscuit.

Enter BISCUIT, and two SERVANTS C.

Sir Rog. Shew my good friends to their chambers. We shall be back here for the cudgel-playing ere you are scrubbed (*going towards L.*) and suited. But hold, hold, I must present you to her ladyship.

Lady BELL. (L., laughing) Nay, nay, Sir Roger, let the gentlemen take their masks off first. I shall not know them else when we meet again.

Exeunt Sir ROGER, WIDOW, W. WIMBLE, and W. HONEY-COMBE, U.E.L.

BIS. This way, gentlemen.

DICK. (R.) A pleasant introduction to our fine lady, Sir Andrew?

Sir AND. (L.) Mighty pleasant, Master Templar.

Tom. (coming between them) One word, gentlemen—the parish is bound to repair the highway—

Exit BISCUIT, conducting Sir ANDREW, c.

— You may have your action of the parish.

DICK. Thank you, Sir, but I never go to law.

Tom. Never go to law!

DICK. No, Sir, I am a lawyer.

Exit c.

Tom. Never goes to law! Never goes to church neither, I'll be bound—the rakehell rascal.*

Exit U.E.L.—Music L.

Enter REUBEN moodily, followed by MAHALA unobserved, R.R.

REU. There they go to the wake. I had half a mind to have knelt to Sir Roger, and ask pardon for lifting my hand on a friend of his. But why should I? The spindle-shanked old mountebank was rightly served. (*bells heard in the distance, L.*) There they are, ranging for the foot-race; and there's Bob Martingale in the front, and Susan looking on. Curse my hot head, I should be there—but I'm in disgrace. He ordered me off, as I'd chide a puppy for false hunting. But what then—I'm no slave. I serve him for love, not for wages—and if he don't give me a man's treatment—(*MAHALA comes forward R.*)

MAH. You'll e'en shew him a clear pair of heels—back to the wood fire and brown tent—and hey for the free life of the roving Rommany!—Cushgar rokkered, my calo pal!*

REU. (L., starting) The Rommany rokkeren!† (*restraining himself, and coldly*) Harkye, my girl. We don't love your complexion hereabouts, and I'd advise you to give the butler a wide berth, or you may chance to find yourself in the stocks (*a shout heard, L.*) Confusion! the race is over—and Martingale is the winner.

MAH. (*laying her hand on his arm*) The stocks? He wears the Gorjo's‡ livery—he takes the Gorjo's dirty wages and hard words, and threatens the Rommanychai|| with the stocks! What would old Reuben Cooper say to all this, my pal?

REU. (*much agitated, and aside*) Reuben Cooper!—my father!

MAH. His eye twinkles! There's a true beat in his heart still—(*tenderly*) Reuben!

REU. Who are you, girl, that call me by that name?

MAH. What, have you forgotton your ticknee palla§—your little Mahala Stanley, that was handfasted with you, by

* "Well said, my dark brother." † "The Gypsey tongue."

‡ Lit. "man," but used only of persons not of Gypsey blood.

|| Gypsey girl.

§ "Little sister."

Pershore Wood Side, when you was fourteen and I was ten—now eight years gone by?

REU. You Mahala Stanley? And how came you here? Our tribe has shunned this countryside, since the corromon-gros* sent my father and mother across the big waters. The mulo Beng† seize them for it!

MAH. Ha! He can still curse in the true tongue. He hasn't forgot the sweet Rommany rokkerpen that his mother taught him by the tent fire, when the men were away in the plantations and the girls singing in the moonlight.

REU. Pshaw! I wish I could forget it. But how came you here—where's grandfather?

MAH. (*points to the ground*) In Pershore Church-yard, Will—I'm with uncle Uriah and my aunt—Wild Honor, you know. We're camped down the green lane, by the marl pits. Come to us Reuben, and leave the Gorjos, and—(*hesitatingly*)—I'm a stout lass now, Reuben, and can keep my husband without his doing a hand's turn, as a Roma‡ should. So you may claim your troth plight and take Mahala when you will, Reuben. (*she crosses her hands on her bosom*.)

REU. Nay, nay, girl, my Rommany days are over, I'm a Keiringro,|| now, Mahala—a house-dweller, for good and all—

MAH. Curse the Keiringros, I say. The white poison to their sheep, and the red fire to their barns. (*she spits*.)

REU. And I mnst look for a house-dweller to wife, Mahala, and not a Rommany chai.

MAH. (*uttering a shrill cry*) Ai-mé? Ai-mé?

REU. Hold thy catter-wauling, wench. Not a word to uncle or aunt that I am here. (*music L.H.—looking off L.*) Ha! They come this way for the wrestling, and Susan walks arm in arm with Martingale, and she smiles on him. (*fiercely*) Curse him, let him look to that empty pate of his.

MAH. (*passionately*) Reuben—Reuben.

WILL. (*savagely*) Hark ye, Mahala, see you claim no kith or kin with me, or it will be worse for thee. I tell thee girl, my lot is here, with the house-dwellers—I have neither heart nor hand for the Rommany chai. (*music*) (MAHALA crosses to L. *crouches at the foot of one of the trees, L., rocking herself to and fro and hiding her face*.)

Enter Sir Roger leading the Widow, followed by Captain Sentry, Sylvia, Will Honeycombe, Will Wimble, Tom Touchy, and Martingale, with Susan on his arm. Foxy, Lads and Lasses, as from the wake. U.E.L. Servants place seats on which Sir Roger, Widow, and Sylvia sit R., the rest group themselves, Wimble being particularly busy.

WIM. Now, the wrestling first, my masters. Here, who stands up for the credit of Worcestershire?

* Officers of justice.

† The Fiend: lit. The Dead Devil.

‡ "Wife."

|| A house-dweller.

BOB. (*stepping forward and throwing down his hat*) Here, Mr. Wimble! for the honor of the old county and Coverley Manor.

Sir Rog. Well said Bob; an thou acquit thyself as well at wrestling as at running, thou'l have earned that breast-knot of Susan Holiday's, and a buss into the bargain.

WIM. (R.) Now lads, who grips with Bob Martingale?

BLACK WILL steps rapidly into the centre and throws down his cap.

REU. Here!

Sir Rog. (*sternly*) Oh! 'tis thou, Sirrah. Well.

WIM. (L.C.) (*crosses to HONEYCOMBE*) I'll hold you a tobacco stopper of my own turning to a crown on Bob Martingale, Mr. Honeycombe.

WILL. (L.) I thank you Mr. Wimble, I do not smoke. (BLACK WILL and MARTINGALE wrestle—MARTINGALE is thrown.)

ALL. Hurrah!

WIM. The best of three falls—'tis the rule.

They wrestle again and WILL is thrown.

ALL. Hurrah!

WIM. A clean ankle trip—art hurt, Will?

REU. Again, again, (*they wrestle again and WILL is thrown*)

WIM. A fair cross buttock!

ALL. Huzza! huzza! Bob Martingale for ever.

Sir Rog. Here is the prize, Martingale. (*taking it from BISCUIT*) This watch and seals—(*gives it to him*) keep, always, as true time as it doth—

Lady BELL. And, if I were Susan, I should be proud to see the nimblest and stoutest lad in the village wearing my colours—give him thy favor girl.

(SUSAN coquettishly unpins her breast knot, and pins it on BOB's coat. BLACK WILL can scarcely restrain himself.—MAHALA watches him and SUSAN)

WIM. Come, the cudgels—the cudgels!

WIM. (*with a bundle of basket hilted cudgels under his arm*) Who stands up? What, Bob and Will again? Best breathe yourselves—best breathe yourselves.

REU. Nay, nay.—I'm ready.

Bob. (R.) I feel as fresh as a colt, and as strong as a dray-horse. (*takes a cudgel*)

REU. Here (*snatches one*.) Now, look out for thy skull, man, for I mean to hit hard.

WIM. Now, for the honour of Coverley and my teaching, remember thy leg-feint, Bob—and thy wrist well down.

Bob. Nay, your Honcur, I won't promise to break his head, but I'll e'en do my best (*cudgel-play between BOB and WILL, in which the crowd shew strong interest, by cries and gestures—MAHALA and SUSAN testify their interest in WILL*)

and Bob respectively—WILL is beaten down, but springs up again furiously, and flies at Bob's throat.)

WIM. (coming between them) Foul—foul—he'll throttle him! Ecod, 'tis a very wild cat! (they are separated with difficulty.)

Sir Rog. (rises) Quit my service, sirrah. He who forgets the laws of honour and loses the power of self-restraint in a fair fight, is no servant for Sir Roger de Coverley. (WILL stands confounded—MAHALA watches him with passionate interest—MARTINGALE and SUSAN shake hands and receive the congratulations of their friends.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Withdrawing-room at the Warren—Window, R.C. in flat—Side Door, 2. E.L.—Table, c.—Three Chairs, Old Fashioned Tambour Frame, L.—WIDOW seated L. of Table working—SYLVIA R. of Table with Guitar.*

Lady BEL. Sylvia, child.

SYL. Yes, mama.

Lady BEL. Prythee, reach me the pocket mirror. (SYLVIA rises, and taking pocket mirror from table gives it to WIDOW, who looks at herself for some moments.) And now turn to the light, child, and let me look at thee. (SYLVIA obeys, the WIDOW takes a long look at her.) Heigh ho! I fear, my dear, thy pretty face is the least agreeable mirror of the two. In my glass I see myself as I am; in thee, I see myself as I was. I was thine image at thy years, child.

SYL. Oh, mama, I'm sure you are much, much more beautiful than I am, and everybody thinks so. At the wake yesterday, all crowded round your chair, while I sat all alone, poor little I, by myself, I—and then you so smiled, and talked, and your eyes were so bright. Oh, I was so proud of my pretty mama. (throws her arms round her neck.)

Lady BEL. Silly one.

SYL. And I did so long for the time when I should be able to talk, and jest, and smile, and have all the beaux to myself. (seats herself on a stool at the side of the WIDOW, L.)

Lady BEL. Sylvia, Sylvia, thou art thy mother's own child after all.

SYL. But then I wouldnt remain a widow, you know mama—I'd pick out the handsomest, and bravest, and sprightliest of all the fine gentlemen for a husband.

Lady BEL. And who would be thy choice of all we saw yesterday, child? Come, thou shall pick me out a husband. Mr. Honeycombe?

SYL. If his eyes were as bright as his diamonds, mama, and his legs a little less like his cane, I might perhaps—but

he's a beau, and makes love to all the ladies, he tells me. Now, I would be free to make love to all the beaux, but my husband must make love to nobody but me.

Lady BEL. Right, child, 'tis the first article of woman's Magna Charta. Mr. Grecian?

SYL. Oh, no! He's a wit!

Lady BEL. (R.) A shrewd fault, my dear; your wit makes the dullest husband; his smart things, like state furniture, are never uncovered unless for company. Sir Roger?

SYL. Nay; I should like him too much for a father, to love him for a husband.

Lady BELL. (aside) How the little minx speaks my very mind. Sir Andrew Freeport?

SYL. Why, he's all for trade and politics; as well marry a ledger, or an old news letter.

Lady BEL. So, methinks, we've exhausted our list.

SYL. Nay, mama, there's one still. (*blushing and confused*)

Lady BEL. (with a slight confusion) Prythee, who?

SYL. Captain Sentry, mama!

Lady BEL. And what of him child?

SYL. Oh, mama! He's the man I would choose for you out of a thousand. So handsome, he need not ask the assurance of his looking-glass—

Lady BEL. As true as his own sword—

SYL. As brave as a lion—

Lady BEL. As modest as a maid—

SYL. As gentle as a lamb, and as patient as—

Lady BEL. As all husbands ought to be. Why my dear, how thou runnest on in his honor.

SYL. Do I, mama? (*blushing again*)

Lady BEL. (kissing her) Nay, my love, I could cap praises with thee. But listen to me very seriously, my Sylvia, thou art no longer a child.

SYL. Oh, no! mama.

Lady BEL. We have been as happy here together, Sylvia, as two women could have been. Could'st thou bear an intruder Sylvia?

SYL. An intruder mama? (*scarcely comprehending*.)

Lady BEL. If that intruder were a husband?

SYL. (starting up eagerly) And that husband, mama?

Lady BEL. The man thou hast painted so lovingly, and so truthfully, Sylvia! Captain Sentry.

SYL. (throwing herself into her mother's arms.) Oh, mama.

Lady BEL. I feel this can be no surprise to thee. Thou must have marked his constant visits, his delicate attentions, his respectful, but ardent assiduity.

SYL. Oh yes, mama—I knew it already. He has confessed his love to me. He said he knew that it was wrong—that to you first he should have made the declaration. But he could not conceal his passion, he told me—

Lady BEL. And what saidst thou to the avowal, my Sylvia?

SYL. Mama, forgive me—I told him his passion was returned—was I wrong mama?

LADY BEL. Nay! my child—'twas rash perhaps, but I forgive thee. (*kisses her*) See! here is a letter I have received from him this morning; read it.

SYL. (*reads*) "Dearest Madam,—Will you grant me an interview of a quarter of an hour this morning, between half past twelve and one? It will decide my fate.—Your slave,
JOHN SENTRY."

LADY BEL. There needs no key to that, my love.

SYL. Dear, dear mama. If you knew how happy you have made me—Hark!—hark!—'Tis his horse's hoofs in the avenue (*running to the window and kissing her hand passionately*).

LADY BEL. (*hastily glancing at the pocket mirror*) Methinks I am frightfully pale to day—one touch of rouge. I will but pass into my dressing room; entertain the Captain till I return, my child.

Exit hastily R.

Enter Sentry, L. 2.E.

CAPT. My Sylvia.

SYL. (*R.*) Jack! (*hiding her head in his bosom.*)

CAPT. (*L.*) Why, what a flush thou hast, my Sylvia.

SYL. 'Tis honest joy, Jack, and not unmaidenly, is it?

CAPT. My Sylvia unmaidenly! But the cause?

SYL. Mama has shewn me your letter.

CAPT. And she consents?

SYL. She is as glad—no not so glad as I am, for there can be nobody so glad as I, I believe, Jack.

CAPT. Thank heaven for it, Sylvia. The assurance lifts a weight off my heart.

SYL. What? did you fear she would not consent?

CAPT. Nay! not so, but—

SYL. And dear Sir Roger, doth he know all, Jack?

CAPT. He does; that kind foolish old Honeycombe broke it to him, and he hath given me his blessing, and wished me good speed in my wooing.

SYL. Oh, joy, joy, how I shall love him for an uncle. But here comes mama. *Sylvia Exits hastily, L. flat.*

Widow Enters R.

CAPT. (*comes forward*) My dear Lady Bellasis.

LADY BEL. Ah, Captain. A true soldier, I declare, punctual to a quarter of an hour.

CAPT. My dear Madam, there are things that time must not stay for; a forlorn hope is one—and a hope, anything but forlorn, another.

LADY BEL. (*coquettishly*) And under which head must I class the motive of this visit, heralded by so portentous a cartel? (*holds up the note.*)

CAPT. (*bringing forward a chair*) That rests with you, dear lady. (*they sit—pause.*)

Lady BEL. } together { My dear Captain—
CAPT. } { My dear Widow—

CAPT. Eh?

Lady BEL. Your pardon—pray proceed—(*pause again.*)
CAPT. (*aside*) Egad! I haven't felt like this since the half-hour before the first charge at Malplaquet.

Lady BEL. (*aside*) Ought I not to encourage him?—

CAPT. } together { My dear Madam—

Lady BEL. } { My dear Captain. Nay, you spoke.

CAPT. Hang it, Madam, 'tis no use wasting time in the parallels, I must e'en go roundly to work, soldier-fashion. You have read my note—you must have observed my attentions—you cannot be ignorant of the charm that, day after day the whole summer through, drew me hither from the Manor. (*the Widow makes a kind of assent*). I think I may presume, without impertinence, that my visits have not been unwelcome.

Lady BEL. Most welcome—most welcome—

CAPT. That I may, without incurring your displeasure, ask of you the hand of one, to whom, unworthy of her as I may be in all else, I can offer a plain soldier's heart to cherish, and a true soldier's sword to defend her.

Lady BEL. Nay, really your proposal is so sudden—'tis a surprise.

CAPT. In love and war the most successful attacks are ever surprises.

Lady BEL. But consider the disparity of age—for though, to be sure, it is not very great, there is a disparity.

CAPT. Just enough to enhance married happiness.

Lady BEL. And you will dare the risk.

CAPT. If you will put me to the trial.

Lady BEL. Dear, dear Sentry, 'twere unworthy affectation to palter with such an offer.

CAPT. Then, you consent?

Lady BEL. turns away, hiding her face with fun.

CAPT. Oh, thanks, thanks. I feel how much I ask. I can scarce believe that you make over to me this inestimable jewel.

Lady BEL. Alas! yet, why blush to own the weakness that fails before pleading so eloquent, of the heart? Since you have taken my hand, you may retain it.

CAPT. (*starting up*) Madam!

Lady BEL. (*half turning from him, and holding out her hand*) I am your's! (*SENTRY stands aghast*)

WILL WIMBLE puts his head in at door, L.

WIM. (L.) I beg pardon—but, Captain, if you would try my improved quail-pipe, now's your time!

Lady BEL. (R.) Hang the fellow!

CAPT. (C.) Eh! oh! Madam—your servant, Mr. Wimble.

Lady BEL. (*aside*) In a quarter of an hour, when this simpleton is gone. Here, dear Sentry, (*squeezing his hand tenderly, and going off, R.*)

WIM. And if I might offer your ladyship this set of back-gammon-men—you shall so gammon the Captain.

Lady BEL. (*drawing herself up in stately anger*) Sir!

Exit, R.

WIM. (*a little abashed*) A fine woman, but hath her humours. But now for the quail-pipe, Captain, I have marked a brood in the standing corn, hard by. This is the trick of it. (*CAPTAIN stands lost in reverie—WILL WIMBLE blows on his pipe*) Te whee-whee-weee—"Tis the prettiest music! (*aside*) Eh! he does not mark me! What, Captain, have you no ear, eh? Did you mark that note? (*blows again*) Beautiful! (*clapping him on the shoulder.*)

CAP. Pardon me, Mr. Wimble, but I have business.

WIM. (*L.*) A fig for business. The dogs are uncoupled, the birds lie well, and (*looking out of window*) here come Sir Roger and the Beau, to see our sport. (*calling from window*) Yoicks, Sir Roger, yoicks, Mr. Honeycombe—

CAPT. (*R.*) Nay, nay, (*crosses to L.*) I would not see my uncle just now for worlds.

WIM. 'Tis too late—he's in the hall by now; he shall unkennel thee, I'll warrant.

CAPT. (*aside*) I dare not explain this wretched blunder to him. He loves her deeply, and in his grief or passion he might—

Enter SIR ROGER, L.D.

SIR ROG. Give thee joy, Jack, give thee joy from my heart, lad—a happy dog, Wimble, is he not?

WIM. Nay, 'twere an unhappy dog that had no better ear for a quail-pipe.

SIR ROG. We met thy little Sylvia, playing at bo-peep in the ante-room. She has told us all, Jack.

CAPT. Dear Sir, (*seizing his hand*)—

WIM. (*bewildered*) Thy Sylvia?—His Sylvia?—Your Sylvia, Captain?

SIR ROG. Ha!—dost thou not know the young rascal hath fallen in love without his uncle's knowledge, and the young kitten hath fallen in love without her mother's leave?

WIM. (*R.*) Sylvy in love with the Captain?

SIR ROG. And I've found it out sirrah, and I consent; and the widow has found it out, and she consents.

CAPT. Heigh-ho!

SIR ROG. Why, how now? She doth consent, Jack?

CAPT. Oh yes, Sir, yes, she consents, but —

SIR ROG. But me no buts, then. (*knocks at L. door*)

Enter SYLVIA bashfully L.D.

SIR ROG. Nay, never blush my lamb. (*he joins their hands*) Bless you both, and may I live to dance your babies on my knee. Come, Wimble, their hearts are full, and they will not raise the sluices while we are by—Come.

Exit Sir Roger l.d. SYLVIA and the CAPTAIN embrace.

WIM. (*aside and in the background*) And Sylvy going to be married! Poor little Sylvy! Well, well, the day has been—(*stops short*) D——n it, I may say, “has been,” a battered old good-for-nothing that I am—half-gentleman, half-gamekeeper—like a gypsy’s lurcher, a cross ‘twixt terrier and greyhound, without the serviceable qualities of the one or the grace of the other!

CAPT. (L.) My Sylvia, give me leave a few moments.

SYL. (*pettishly*) So soon? and to-day of all days!

CAPT. (*kissing her passionately*) I will be with you anon, my darling, but I must exchange a few words with my uncle on business of moment. (*aside*) He shall know all, and I must trust him to explain this unhappy blunder to Lady Bellasis.

Exit Sentry. L.

SYL. (L.) To leave me now, and on business too—I could cry.

WIM. (R.) (*coming forward*) And so could I, almost, Sylvy.

SYL. Ha! Mr. Wimble, not gone a-quailing with Sir Roger and Mr. Honeycombe?

WIM. I have no heart for quailing, Sylvy, my pipe’s put out. Ecod! I feel inclined to go down to the kennel and have a howl with the puppies (*ruefully*).

SYL. What, moping to day, Mr. Wimble? Well, we’ve been play-fellows a long time and you’ve been very kind to me, and you gave me a spaniel and a fishing rod, and a pair of gart—(*stopping short*)

WIM. Gar-garden-chairs.

SYL. Yes, garden chairs—a pair of garden-chairs, and I thought you liked me very much, but now you’re glumpy and frumpy on the day mama has given her consent to my being the happiest of little girls—I don’t believe you like me a bit.

WIM. Ecod! Sylvy, I knew I was an ass, but never before that I was such a selfish one. I give you joy with all my heart, Sylvy; but then thou knowest we shall never go trout-tickling again.

SYL. Shan’t we, Mr. Wimble?

WIM. I fear me a Captain’s Lady may scarce trout-tickle with propriety.

SYL. Oh, yes, with my husband.

WIM. Doubtless, thou may’st go a-tickling with thy husband, but not with me—heigh-ho!

SYL. Oh, what fun it was. Methinks I see the big fish lying at the tail of the long green weeds—

WIM. His back fin just out of the water--

SYL. With no sign of life, but now and awhile a twinkle of the tail—

WIN. Or an idle gape at a fly--

SYL. How we hung over the pool—

WIM. And how I tumbled in, and you screamed, and I

scrambled out, and how pleasant it was to see how concerned you looked—

SYL. But I wasn't, you know, for when I saw your comical face all blue with the cold, and your long hair, clinging like damp rats tail's about your ears, and the water running out of your pockets, and your feet squish-squashing in your shoes, how I did laugh.

WIM. Yes, thou *didst* laugh woundily. Thou always hadst a way of laughing woundily when anything disagreeable happened to me!

SYL. And do you remember the partridge eggs you brought me when the cruel mowers cut the poor mother's head off—

WIM. And how thou *didst* inveigle the white hen into hatching them by false pretences, and how disgusted she was when the young ones would persist in growing up partridges.

SYL. (*clapping her hands*) Oh, yes, and the rabbit's nest you dug out for me, with the blind little ones.

WIM. Don't, Sylvy, don't, or I shall cry. To think that all our enjoyment is over, Sylvy, trout-tickling, and egg-hunting, and warrening, and all! And that thou art going to be married! 'Tis but a sad thought, Sylvy.

SYL. Nay, Mr. Wimble, but I intend still to play the fool as much as ever, and you shall still be my play-fellow as you used to be, for I don't intend to turn grave and dull all of a sudden, now I am going to get married, I can tell you.

Re-enter Sentry, looking perplexed, SYLVIA runs up and takes his hand.

SYL. So don't think so, Mr. Truant, though you do look so serious. I hope you've settled your business with your uncle?

CAPT. (L.) Yes, yes! (*aside*) Would to fortune I had, but he won't approach the subject.

SYL. (C.) But what's the matter? you look pale.

CAPT. Nothing, nothing, my love!

SYL. But, there is something, I'm sure; you shall have some of mama's cordial water! Nay, you shall—

Running off, R.

CAPT. Sylvia! Sylvia! (*aside*) Confusion! If Lady Bal-lasis comes, she will discover all. (*paces up and down*.)

WIM. (*aside, and watches him*) Well! 'tis the oddest air for a thriving wooer. He should have written in his face, "accepted." But methinks, I read there rather, "no effects."

Enter Widow hastily and SYLVIA, R.

LADY BEL. (C.) My dearest Sentry, what is this? art thou ill? (*offering a smelling-bottle*.)

CAPT. (C.) 'Tis nothing, my dear madam, nothing.

SYL. (R.) I believe he repents already, the inconstant fellow.

LADY BEL. (*playfully*) Nay, am I become of a sudden so formidable?

Syl. I flatter myself 'tis me he is afraid of.

Capt. Madam, I implore you——

Lady Bel. Nay, I give you leave to be off!

Syl. But I don't, though!

Lady Bel. Here's a saucy puss, won't let her mother cry double or quits without her leave.

Syl. Mama! (*puzzled.*)

Capt. Sylvia, Lady Bellasis!

Lady Bel. Why, yes, my dear, since eager as the Captain was to win my hand a half hour ago, he does not seem much concerned to keep it, now that he has got it (*playfully.*)

Syl. Mama (*anxiously*). Nay, you must not joke upon that subject, mama, dear.

Lady Bel. Joke, my child? Why, how startled and strange the girl looks.

Syl. Your hand (*to Widow*)? Mama's hand (*to Sentry*)?

Lady Bel. (*laughing*) Why you dear little innocent, did I not read you Captain Sentry's note, and must I tell you in so many words, that the Captain has been rash enough to ask your mama's hand in marriage, and that your mama has been foolish enough to give it to him; why, what's the matter with the girl?

Capt. Confusion!

Syl. Mama! Captain Sen——(*screams and faints*).

Lady Bel. Sylvia, Sylvia—I thought she was prepared for it—the emotion at the sudden tidings of a second marriage hath overcome her. Water, hartshorn! Nay, there are both in my dressing room—quick, while I run—strike her hands! So! loosen her kerchief. *Exit, R.*

Wim. (*R.*) Run, run! there's a cock's hackle in my hat, burn it 'neath her nose. But what the devil's this—hast thou proposed to the mother and daughter, Jack? Gone off in mistake, like a double gun, both barrels at once?

Capt. No, no, 'tis her infernal coquettish vanity. She interpreted my suit for Sylvia's hand into a demand for her own. My Sylvia, see, she revives!—

Re-enter Widow, with hartshorn, R.

—She is better.

Lady Bel. Carry her into my room. How is it with thee, my child?

Syl. Mama, mama! (*bursts into tears—Sentry carries her in, followed by the Widow, R.*)

Wim. (*L.*) Poor little Sylvy! And to think of the old one's opening on a false scent, and when she's been hunted so long too. I see, I must settle this. 'Tis a grave matter, and a nice—but I warrant me, I have not tickled trout for nothing. Thy device, Will, thy device?—I'll e'en take my angle-rod, and try a cast or so in the Black River. I'm but a dull dog at times, methinks; but, ecod, give me my angle-rod in my hand, and devices come to me like may-flies after a thunder shower—so thick I don't know which to rise at.

Takes his fishing rod, and exit by door, L.

SCENE II.—*The Gypsey Camp—The tents are grouped R., running up from 2 E.—A light cart is tilted hard by—Pots, pans, &c., red earthen pitchers, a pack-saddle, and a large basket or two—some dead fowls and ducks, vegetables, &c. lie about. On a bush near, a red cloak and some portions of dress, are laid out to dry. A wood fire is burning in the space between the tents, with a brown blanket forming a screen behind it, and the fire stick inclining over it—the camp kettle stands beside. URIAH LEE is seated near one of the tents soldering a kettle. HONOR LEE is cutting cabbages into an earthen pan. FLORENTIA LEE, a girl of fourteen, and JOSH LEE, a lad of fifteen, are playing with a mongrel dog. MAHALA is seated near the fire, busied with some small cakes, which she is baking in the ashes.*

URIAH (R.) Leave the jükel* alone, Josh, can't ye?

JOSH. (L.) 'Tis such rare sport, dad; look how he shews his teeth. How, how, Ginger! how, dog!

HON. (C.) Hold your yelp, you and the dog too, or I'll brain you—I can't hear what the lass is saying. (*to MAHALA, L.C.*) Go on, you devil's imp. So you found young Reuben Cooper among the Gorjas?

MAH. (L.C.) Yes, and content to stay among them, too.

URIAH. (R.) The false-hearted patch! I ever thought Sinf Cooper loved white blood better than black. He's no true Rommany.

HON. But he welted the Rei†—the fine gentleman with the diamonds—girl?

MAH. (L.) I thought he'd a' flung him into the moat, diamonds and all.

URIAH. Ecod, Roma, the value o' one of these same bits o' brightness would set us up with a van and a horse, instead of this tent and the wind-galled old Meiler‡ that's grazing down the lane yonder.

URIAH. But what was the quarrel about, Mahala?

MAH. (C.) The Rei was too kind to a white-haired wench, that Reuben's a-courting. (*hushily*) She'll be at the tents today; I promised to read the stars for her. The white face blushed red. She'll be pale enough before long, I'll warrant her. Where's the green box, aunt?

HON. (*starting*) The drow?§ What does the girl want with the white poison? Whose sheep are you after doseing, eh?

URIAH. (*sternly*) No drowing lass, do ye hear? There's meat enough in the camp.

MAH. (*getting a small green box out of the cart and shaking a white powder from it over two of the cakes*) 'Tis not for the

* "Dog."

† Lit. "Chief," but used for any one above the condition of a working-man.

‡ "Donkey."

§ "Poison."

sheep I want it. There's two spiced—I've pricked them with a heart to know 'em by. (*returns back to fire*)

URIAH. (R.) (*rising and coming forward lazily*) What devilry is the girl after?

HON. (L.) (*interrupting*) Doing what old Reuben Cooper would a' done if the great water hadn't been between him and his son's shame. Ain't I right, Mahala? There's one for him and one for her. Eh, lass?

MAH. (*bursting into tears and dropping the cakes*) Oh, my heart, my heart?

FLO. (*who has been looking off—sharply*) Gorja vel akai* (*points L.*)

HON. A man coming? Where? (*looking L.*)

MAH. (*looking L.*) 'Tis Reuben.

Enter REUBEN, thoughtfully, L.E.

FLO. (L.) Give the poor gypsey a sixpence, your honour.

REU. The camp! curse it, 'tis the devil that led my feet this road, I think; to have fallen on the very spot in the Manor I most wanted to miss.

URIAH. (*slowly rising, coming forward and holding out his hand*) Nephew Reuben Cooper, Uriah Lee bids you welcome back to your people.

JOSH. (L.) Cushgar divus!† I'm Josh Lee and this is Florentia Lee—(*putting her forward*)—and yon's Mahala Stanley. She aint a Lee, tho' she travels with us.

HON. Hold thy croak, toad. (*FLORENTIA and JOSH bring pack-saddle down to WILL and HONOR, c.*) Well, Reuben Cooper?

REU. (C.) (*with suppressed impatience*) So you know me I see (*pointing to MAHALA, R.*) She has told you all, has she? How I was beaten and trampled on, and discharged, because I used my hands for want of a knife. Mahala, I was short and harsh with thee yesterday! Wilt shake hands on it? (*MAHALA is about to take his hand, but draws back and turns away.*) As thou wilt! We shall be better friends soon, when we've eaten bread and salt together.

HON. (*pointing to the cakes with a sinister smile*) Sit down, and let us talk quietly, as aunt and nephew should, of old times.

BLACK WILL and HONOR sit on the pack-saddle. **URIAH** (R.) *The children group themselves in the back-ground.*

REU. How sweet the wood smoke smells; my heart seems to warm somehow to the old brown blankets.

MAH. (R.) (*creeps nearer to him*) Leave these Gorjas, Reuben, their stifling houses, and their hate of each other; their service, where there is no love; their wicked law, that spares the great and smites the small, for our tents where the free sweet air takes us as it will, our true hearts to each other,

* "A man comes this way."

† "Good day,"

and our scorn of all law, save that which Rommany makes for Rommany. Come and travel with us, Reuben, wherever the water is freshest, and the grass greenest, and the woods give the deepest shade. And you shall ask no man's leave to come, and no man's leave to go, and you shall find a wife, Reuben, that will trudge the road with you, and bear her share of the load; that will tell fortunes for you, and lie, and cheat, aye, and steal too, Reuben, (*proudly*) that her Rom* may wear rings on his fingers and a yellow kerchief round his neck, and lie on his back all day in the sun, and say, "I do no work, I have a Roma that's proud to work for me."

HON. (*clapping her hands*) Well spoke, Mahala, well spoke; come, Reuben.

REU. No, no, the blood that's in me answers to her, but I've not dwelt with the house-dwellers these six years, and read in their books, to be content to lie in the sun, and have a wife to tell lies, and steal for me.

URIAH. Hark'ye, Will, if this boree hockneſt turns out well, we may all of us lie on our backs in the sun for the rest of our lives.

REU. What d'ye mean?

HON. That fine gentleman thou wert for flinging into the moat.

REV. Curse him, what of him?

HON. He blazes with diamonds like an autumn bank with glowworms, and Uriah says, not a stone but's worth golden guineas. He's lodged in the bay-windowed room that opens on the Manor-garden. Mahala marked the place yesterday.

REU. You would not murder him?

URIAH. We don't want his blood, but we must have his sparklers!

REU. How?

URIAH. (*clapping MAHALA on the back*) We've our plan for that. Here's the girl to do it! Here's our decoy!

REU. She? (*recoiling*.)

URIAH. But we need one that knows the place well, and if you're a true Cooper, Reuben, you're the boy for us.

REU. (*starting up*) I turn burglar?—and to rob a friend of my good old master?

HON. Hear him own to a master, the poor-spirited half-blood—(*all the GYPSIES point and sneer at him*).

REU. Mahala there may be your decoy if she will, though I shouldn't have looked for it from her—she hasn't always travelled with the Lees! But I wash my hands of your choring† dodge; and by the sun above us, Uriah Lee, if you set a leg over the garden-wall of Coverley Manor, you'll

* "Husband."

† "Great trick."

‡ "Stealing."

never draw it back again, though Reuben Cooper be the man to split your head open for it.

While this speech is being spoken, FLORENTIA, who has been looking off L.U.E., whispers her mother and points off.

URIAH. You false hound! (*starting up fiercely*)

HON. (*interfering*) Sit down, you fool. You're like an ill-hung kettle, always boiling over at the wrong time. (*aside to URIAH*) We can silence him—Gorja vel akai.

URIAH. Where? (*looking off*) The Barengro,* the Rei with the sparklers!

REU. (*following the direction of their looks*) Sir Roger and the London Jack-a-dandy! I'll be off, I'm e'en ashamed of my company! (*Going, HONOR stops him.*)

HON. You don't leave us so, Reuben Cooper! you may hide here (L.), and hearken how the poor Rommany can fool the rich house-dweller.

REU. (*aside*) 'Tis better I should stop—I may prevent mischief. But, harkye, I shall have an eye on you, and if you rob the old man of the value of a groat, I'll split, and you know what that means! (*he conceals himself inside one of the tents, L.2 E.*)

Enter Sir ROGER and WILL HONEYCOMBE in conversation, L.U.E.—FLORENTIA and JOSH go up to them, and beg.

FLO. (R.C.) Give the poor gypsey girl a sixpence, my noble gentleman. Oh, please, my pretty gentleman.

Sir Rog. (c.) Get along, you young baggage!

HON. Cross the poor gypsey's hand with a piece of silver, my noble gentleman, and I'll tell you your fortune.

Sir Rog. Go away, you idle slut!

MAH. (L., to WILL) Cross my hand, pretty gentleman.

WILL. Nay! thy lips, thy lips, my tawny Roxalana, for, strike me stupid! if thy hands be not brown and dry, whereas thy lips are red and juicy. (*she begins to tell his fortune.*)

HON. (*getting hold of the KNIGHT's hand*) Ha! here's a widow in your honour's line of life.

Sir Rog. Go, go, thou art an idle baggage! (*to WILL*) Dost hear, Will? A widow in my line of life. Go, slut—go!

She draws him up a little, while MAHALA comes down with WILL HONEYCOMBE.

WILL. By moonlight? delicious!

MAH. They that watch will win, my pretty young gentleman. And when the clock strikes nine there'll be a pretty bird behind the bush, and if a gallant gentleman steps out of his chamber window he'll find what he little looks for, and miss what he little expects to lose—

WILL. My heart.

MAH. (*aside*) His diamond buckles!

* "Man of the stones."

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

37

WILL. An assignation, by Venus and her doves, and as neatly turned as in one of Will Congreve's plays. Here, my little Mercury in petticoats, here's a crown for thee! 'Gad, how I'll make the bucks' mouths water with this when I get back to St. James's.

MAHALA retires up. SIR ROGER coming down to WILL. H.

Sir Rog. (R.) Eh, Will? lying vagabonds, Will! I have seen many sensible people that believe they now and then foretell strange things.

WILL. Egad, Knight, they now and then foretell very pleasant ones.

Sir Rog. And, after all, they are tolerably honest after their fashion, Will.

WILL. True, Sir Knight, and if their fashion is not ours, 'tis all one.

Exit Sir Roger and Will 1st entrance L.

RHU. (advancing from L.) And now good-bye all. (goes up, C.)

URIAH. What, art going to leave us.

REU. Yes—yes; there's an under-keeper's place to be had at Sir John's, and I would ask Master Wimble's good word.

HON. The hound will back to chain and collar. And thou wilt not be in that business with us?

REU (fiercely) No, I tell you; do your devil's work yourselves—you have hands enough, your own, and her's to boot. (pointing contemptuously to MAHALA, who has offered her hand. WILL turns away coldly) Nay, mine are clean, I would keep them so. (MAHALA starts convulsively.)

MAH. At least, you will break bread with us, before you go? (offers him one of the poisoned cakes) for the sake of our old troth plight, Reuben—(REUBEN takes the cake from her, she betrays emotion.)

REU. Well, well, I care not, if I do eat with thee (he breaks the cake, and gives a piece to MAHALA, then sees the dog (L.)—And with thee too old Jükel (he throws a piece to the dog—URIAH stealthily puts the heel of his boot on it, and crushes it—REUBEN observes him, then aside) ha! foul play! the drow, the drow (he pretends to eat his cake.)

FLO. (R.) (aside—pulling her mother's sleeve) Gorja rawnee..

WILL. (R.) (to Mahala) A petticoat in the bushes.

MAH. (vehemently to Honor) 'Tis the Gorja girl, she comes in time (as they look off, REUBEN conceals his cake.)

WILL. (aside) Ha! Susan Holiday (to MAHALA) thou hast not lost the art my mother taught thee. The cake was rarely spiced.

MAH. (laughing hoarsely) Rarely; thou hast eaten all Reuben? See, I have mine yet; I will eat it ere I sleep; though, for thy sake, and it will give me a sweeter sleep than I have had for long.

WILL. Well, I'm for the village.

MAH. And will thou not give me thy hand, Reuben? Not once?

HON. (*aside*) The girl's hard by, Mahala.

MAH. Ha! (*she turns fiercely from REUBEN, who passes behind the tents as if to leave the stage, but returns quickly and crouches behind the bushes at back.*)

MAHA. Hist, my pretty maiden—Hist, to the poor Rommany.

Enter SUSAN timidly l. e. r.

MAHA. (*runs to her and seizes her hand*) Look, aunt, uncle, look at her rosy cheek and her bright hair, like the sun light on the hazel bark.

SUSAN (R. C.) Nay, marry, good people, I am as nature made me.

MAH. (*looking at her*) Yet, though my skin be dark and my hair like pitch, methinks my face is as well fashioned as hers, and my heart should have warmer blood in it; there is no faith in those cold blue eyes.

SUSAN (R. C.) Nay, I come to have the stars read, not to measure faces with you, gypsey girl.

MAH. (C.) True, true, (*seizes her hand*) Here's two meeting in thy line of love, maiden, one dark, and one fair—and the pretty lady can scarce choose between the daylight and the darkness—and here's a black shadow falls across the line of life, and creeps up—and up—

SUSAN. Dont'ee then—oh—dont'ee frighten me!

MAH. And it runs towards the heart, and when it comes where the dark face and the fair face are lying side-by-side, it grows, and grows, till it mantles in the bright blood, and pinches the smooth check, and draws the pretty face awry in agony.

SUSAN. (R.C) (*in great terror*) Have done then, Gypsey-girl—oh, for mercy-sake dont talk so, and look so, or I shall faint! (*she reels in terror.*)

HON. (R.) Ha, ha, ha!—pretty lady, be not frightened at the poor Rommany—here is some water for thee.

SUSAN. I feel all of a tremble—oh, please gypsey-girl (*looking deprecatingly in MAHALA's face*) do not look so, I never did you any harm.

MAH. Harm! the pretty bright lady harm the poor dark Rommany!—Nay, we are friends, good friends—here; you shall have the Rommany's token of faith—eat bread with me—this puts to sleep fears, and hates, and loves. (*offers her one of the poisoned cakes*).

SUSAN. (R.) (*takes it*) I thank you. (*she is about to eat when REUBEN springs from behind the bushes, and dashes down the cake from SUSAN's hand, l..*)

WILL. Eat not, Susan! (*to MAHALA*) Devil! have I foiled thee?

MAHALA falls on her face.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Garden of the Warren—An Alley of formally cut Yew, clumps of box and holly clipped in fantastic forms, and one large box trimmed into a close arbour, l. 2 E.—The House is seen at the back of the garden—A garden seat, c., on which the WIDOW is discovered seated with Sir ROGER—WILL HONEYCOMBE, Sir ANDREW, and DICK GRECIAN, r. H., they are in conversation as the Curtain rises.*

Lady BEL. I vow I'm deafened with the clack of men's tongues, and smothered with the scent of pulvilio. Sir Roger, for mercy's sake call off your town friends, and give a poor, artless, country widow a little breathing time before dinner!

Sir Rog. Your wish was ever my command. This way gentlemen, her ladyship would be alone (*he waves his cane, they bow and retire up the alley, grouping themselves.*)

Lady BEL. Never had Sultana such a duteous troop of slaves. Odds bodikens, that a poor, weak, shallow-witted woman, should have this power over these self-sufficient men! Nature has been very kind to us—and to think that I'm going to renounce this pleasant privilege, and for a husband too. But still, I am not married yet. They allow the highwayman his St. Giles's bowl, on the way to Tyburn; like him, I will take a last draught of the pleasant wine of vanity and use my few remaining hours of liberty in enslaving as many lords of the creation as my ladyship has the wit to enchant and the will to laugh at. Each has put his hobby through his paces before me, till methinks I can turn and wind every one of them as well as his master (*observes Sir ROGER*)—And here's the oldest and eagerest of my men fish playing about the bait (*she plays her fan.*) I wonder if Sentry hath disclosed to him his attachment and his offer?

Sir Rog. (r.) She hath simply the finest hand—oh, if it were mine—but to kiss.

Lady BEL. (l.) (tenderly) Sir Roger.

Sir Rog. (eagerly coming forward) Madam (*pauses.*)

Lady BEL. Well, Sir Roger?

Sir Rog. Methought your ladyship spoke.

Lady BEL. Methought your Honour waited to speak. Ha, ha, ha! by my fan, Sir Roger, this is very idle. We have known each other too long for these toys of ceremony, these madams and ladyships—I can be frank with you.

Sir Rog. Ah, Sylvia—ah, Madam.

Lady BEL. I'm not afraid of you (*Sir ROGER bows rather less pleasantly*) I can reveal my secrets to you. Do you know I feel almost as if you had a right to peep into my strong box.

Sir Rog. Nay, Madam, I protest.

Lady BEL. (tapping her left side with her fan) Here, Sir Roger. You have seen your nephew this morning (*Sir ROGER intimates that he has*) and (*pausing*) he has told you?

Sir Rog. All, Madam.

Lady BEL. (*aside*) He is but little moved methinks, and I feared he would be inconsolable.

Sir Rog. And you must permit me to wish you joy from my heart (*he takes her hand timidly and sighs*.)

Lady BEL. (*sighs also aside*)—And I, who shrunk from telling him out of regard for his feelings!

Sir Rog. In short Madam, 'tis the happiest chance that has befallen me since the day I first saw you at Worcester assizes, in the year—in the year—how many years ago was it madam?

Lady BEL. (*impatiently*) Nay, I know not. (*aside*) He wants to irritate me.

Sir Rog. You were a Widow in your first year's weeds—plaintiff in an action for dower against your first husband's heir-at-law.

Lady BEL. My first husband's. (*severely*) Sir Roger de Overley, I have not had several husbands.

Sir Rog. Not yet, my dear Madam, but soon, perhaps—

Lady BEL. Perhaps! (*aside*) He's determined to vex me, because I've accepted his nephew. I've a good mind to bring him to his knees again?

Sir Rog. Ah, Madam, second thoughts, they say, are best. Why should not that rule extend to husbands?

Lady BEL. (*aside*) And I will, too. Ah! Sir Roger, true affection is a jewel we may scarce find in our path twice in a life-time. (*looks tenderly at him*) Constancy is so rare. (*takes his hand*) The affection that will go on, hoping against hope—too timid to trust itself in words. (*sighs*) Ah!

Sir Rog. Go on—go on—'tis music, and you will not give me enough of it.

Lady BEL. Could I hope for such affection as that, Sir Roger, then, indeed—

Sir Rog. Hope for it Madam. By heaven, Madam, you have had it these twenty years.

Lady BEL. (*aside*) Now, for the cold bath! Sir Roger—(*coldly*) I don't understand you—it grows chilly—I am imprudent to stay thus in the air—imprudent for every reason (*looks tenderly at him and offers him her hand*). Farewell, for a while.

Sir Rog. (*r., seizing her hand passionately*)—Angel!

Lady BEL. (*screams*.) Oh, you torture me. (*holds her hand*.) See, you have crushed my diamond into my finger! (*shews her hand*, *Sir ROGER kisses it in a fit of desperate courage—she taps him over the knuckles and goes towards L.*) Wretch! (*shakes her fan at him*.) Heigho!

Exit, L.

Sir Rog. Tra-la-la, Tra-la-la! (*dancing about*.) Here, Will, Will Honeycombe, (*WILL comes forward*.) "Wretch," dost hear, Will, she called me "wretch," and tapped me with her fan, Will, the time is come—the iron is hot—and—and—

WILL. Thou wouldst strike, Knight?

Sir Rog. Nay, I would have thee strike for me.

WILL. When she leaves us to our claret, I will after her, you shall entertain Sir Andrew and Dick, and by the time her chocolate froths, she is thine, Knight, thine—the captive of this beau and spear. (*holds up his cane, and exit, L.*—*Grecian comes forward.*)

DICK. (R.) Hist, Sir Roger, there's stout Sir Andrew fallen asleep over the last *Gazette*. Shall we be merry with him, and leave him there to digest our relations with the Dutch, while we steal in to dinner?

Sir Rog. Oh, Dick Grecian, Dick Grecian, I believe, nay, I feel, Dick, she loves me. Thou hauntest plays, and hast wit at will. Ply her with blank verse, Dick, shew her the passion of it, Dick, wilt thou not?

DICK. Give me two bottles of claret under my belt, and I'll turn into the channel of thy love all the passion that ever spouted and sparkled on the boards of Drury Lane.

Sir Rog. (R.) Do--do, Dick, but not a word to Will or Sir Andrew.

DICK. (L.) (*puts his finger on his lips.*) "As secret as the night—as still as death." Come, will you in to dinner? Stomach cries, "'tis time—'tis time."

Exit L. 1 E.

Sir Rog. I'll but wake Sir Andrew, and then in with you. (*Sir Roger goes up to Sir Andrew, at back R. and shakes him*) Sir Andrew—Sir Andrew. Come, bully Whig, come, old non juror! (*slapping him on the shoulder*)

Sir AND. What's means this? Art thou drunk, Sir Roger, methinks thou mightest have waited till after dinner.

Sir Rog. Not drunk, Sir Andrew, save with the light of her eyes and the lusciousness of her smile.

Sir AND. Whose? I protest—

Sir Rog. The Widow's. Old sober sides! What a dinnner I shall make—shall we run, Sir Andrew? I'll race you for a hundred! shall we sing—shall we dance. Tra-la-la. Tra-la-la.

Exeunt Sir ANDREW, remonstrating.

Enter WILL WIMBLE, R. 1 E.

WIM. (*looking after Sir Roger*) Sir Roger dancing like a hind at a harvest home. Pray heavens, he may not have discovered the Widow's mistake, and straight gone mad of grief. (*looking off*) I've carried most live or dead things about the country, from a pair of tulip roots to a sucking pig, but for difficult portage, commend me to a secret. There it lies, bob-bobbing against your lips every moment, till at last, it fairly burns a hole in the bottom of your discretion. If I could but unbosom myself to the widow and Sir Roger (*sits down on the seat*). But how to break it to them? If I might (*pauses while he is in search of an idea*)—but I mustn't (*disappointed*). Suppose they would (*similar pause*)—but of course they would not (*pause*). Ha! yes!

if I could (*pause*)—only, damn it, I can't (*falls into a reverie*).

Enter MAHALA timidly, R. 2 E.—she is pale, and humbled in her demeanour.

MAH. They told me at the other great house I should find him here. Ha! there he is—there is kindness in his eye. I will speak to him. Ah, who would have dared say, yesterday, that to-day Mahala Stanley would be a beggar, and a broken-hearted beggar, too, for him—that she might, but for him, be a murderer (*goes towards WILL and makes an inclination of respect, which is unnoticed by WILL in his reverie*). May the poor gypsey crave speech of your Honour?

WIM. (*L., roused from his abstraction*) Eh? What? Go along, you baggage. Hold—'tis the wench that saved the Widow and Sylvy from a tumble. I must be liberal with her. Here's a groat for thee.

MAH. I come to beg for your Honour's interest with your noble brother.

WIM. My noble brother—eh? Oh! Sir John—well?

MAH. For a place—

WIM. To pitch your tents in? Nay, he cannot abide gypsies.

MAH. Not so!—for a place as under-keeper in his service.

WIM. (*whistles*) Under-keeper! Well, thou'rt a sturdy wench enough, and I dare say thou knowest something of vermin—but as for making thee under-keeper—ha, ha, ha!—“beware of man-traps in this preserve!”—ha, ha ha!

MAH. 'Tis for a man I want the place, Sir; for one that will fill it rarely—who loves the sports your Honour doth—light of foot as a deer; true of hand and eye: honest to his master as a dog, and knows the ways of all wild things, from the stag in the covert down to the stoat in the dry-stone dyke.

WIM. And no gypsey, I hope? Sir John would as soon think of trusting his pullets' eggs to a foumart, as his game to a gypsey.

MAH. He hath some gypsey blood in him, but no gypsey nurture, and he despises our race.

WIM. That's well, but yet (*shaking his head*)—his name?

MAH. (*R.*) Reuben Cooper, among us—but the house-dwellers call him Black Will.

WIM. (*L.*) What! He's a bad-hearted knave, my lass and not worth the pains you put yourself too for him.

MAH. Oh, no, no, no!—If you knew all—

Enter SYLVIA, L. 1 E.

SYL. Mr. Wimble in deep converse with a gypsey! (*MALALA bows respectfully to SYLVIA, who recognizes her*) Ah! 'tis the pretty girl who quieted our horses the day before yesterday.

WIM. (*C.*) Yes; and who comes to beg my favour with my

brother for an under-keeper's place for that sulky young vagabond whose head Bob Martingale broke so handsomely, and who foully lost his temper thereon.

SYL. Ah! I remember.

MAH. Oh, lady!—oh, my Rei!—they loved the same girl; and if you but knew how bitter love is that is not returned! 'Tis a devil that breeds wicked thoughts, and whispers us to do black deeds.

SYL. Poor girl, how she pleads for him—you love him—(MAHALA bows her head)—And you are going to be married, eh?

MAH. Oh, would to Heaven we were, no, no, no. (*turns up stage.*)

SYL. Mr. Wimble, here's an unhappy girl—here are two unhappy girls—I insist upon your giving one of those unhappy girls—that's her—what she asks for, for the sake of the other of those unhappy girls—that's me.

WIM. (c.) For your sake, Sylvy, I'd recommend the most notorious poacher in the county. But consider the lad's temper.

SYL. (l.) 'Tis not every day that a man's crossed in love and hath his head broke within the twelve hours.

WIM. But he's half a gypsey, Sylvy.

SYL. And, therefore, lest he turn whole vagabond, you must find him a place within the pale of civilization.

WIM. But, Sylvy!

SYL. Promise him, I say.

WIM. Well, if the lad—

SYL. (l.) Promise, Mr. Jesuit, and no reservation.

WIM. (c.) There, there, I promise, he shall have my good word for the place, and then the next thing for my brother to do will be to get a fox to take care of his poultry, and an otter to protect his fish-ponds.

MAH. (*kneels to SYLVIA*) Thanks, pleasant, pretty lady. (*kisses her hand—crosses to c.*) Thanks, noble Rei, I can go hence, now, and know that poor Mahala, whom he scorned for her evil kin, and her wicked thoughts, and wild doings, has served him in his need. And when in the rough nights, I hear the rain pelting on the tent sides, and the wind flapping the blanket—if I live to travel another winter—I will lie and laugh to think that he owes the roof over his head and the bed he lies on to her whose heart he would not have, when she put it under feet. Thanks, thanks, thanks! *you* will let me take your hand, and kiss it too—(*kisses SYLVIA's hand*)—though he would not let me touch his, not once; but shrunk from me as though every finger had been a blind worm (*bursts into a wild wail of grief, but checks it*)—Noble Rei, sweet Rawnee, the Rommany's blessing be about you both.

Bows and exit, R. l E.

SYL. And now she's carried her misery off, about mine, dear Mr. Wimble. I've had such a head-ache all day. I

begged off dinner, and as I saw you from my chamber window, I stole out to be wretched in company, it's so dull to be miserable by one's self.

WIM. (R.) That's it, ecod! (*with a sudden outbreak*)—I have it.

SYL. (L.) Oh, gracious, what?

WIM. A plan to set this blunder of your mother's right.

SYL. What is it, please?

WIM. To tell 'em both the truth right out. But I'll not run in on the matter like an unbroke dog on a covey, but quarter the ground first, then wind the matter, then draw to it, and then to the point, and with a paw raised, and a tail as straight as a ramrod.

SYL. Well, men talk of our using them like dogs, but you talk as if you *were* one. I'm not sportsman enough to follow you.

WIM. Why thus, Sylvy! I mark down her ladyship and Sir Roger into a corner, then I draw up to them, and engage a conversation upon love—I do not understand the subject, but that's all one—'Oh the folly,' quoth I, 'of an old man who falls in love with a young woman.'

SYL. With a look at Sir Roger, of course.

WIM. And then, 'Oh the folly of an old woman who falls in love with a young man.'

SYL. With a look at mama, still better.

WIM. And on their agreeing with me, as they needs must—

SYL. But how, on Sir Roger tweaking your nose as an impudent fellow, and mama's ordering you to the door for an officious coxcomb?

WIM. Nay, I had not thought of that.

SYL. Don't you know that if you want to make mama hate you for life, and me too, and Jack, and all of us, you could not set about it better than in the way you've just described to me?

WIM. As for making her angry I don't care a tobacco stopper, so I can save you from being miserable, Sylvy. Here she comes—Nay don't coax me, Sylvy, I'm determined.

SYL. You'll ruin my only chance of happiness, for mama, will never forgive us, depend upon it. (*aside*) 'Tis a bold stroke, but I'll try. (*she sits in arbour and cries*.)

SYL. (*holding him by both hands*) You will tell mama then, Mr. Wimble?

WIM. I'm d——d, if I don't, and that's a round oath, for which I fine myself five shillings, to be paid by instalments. Let me go, Sylvy!

SYL. Never. Here we are together—the twilight coming on—in an arbour, Mr. Wimble. Do you know that a lady who is found with a gentleman, and the twilight coming on, in an arbour, is—what does mama call it?—is compromised?

WIM. Compromised? I compromise you, Sylvy? I

never compromised anybody—never! and I'm not going to begin now.

SYL. No matter: Jack's as jealous as a tiger—and you're not an old man, Mr. Wimble—*(aside)*—the joke's almost too much for me—and my reputation's in your hands—

WIM. Take it back this instant, Sylvy—I won't be answerable for it.

SYL. And, if you're a man of honour, you'll respect my reputation, and stay where you are. Hush! they're here. *(aside)* Poor, dear Mr. Wimble. (*WIMBLE and SYLVIA sit—he keeping as far off from her as possible. While the previous scene has been in progress, day has been drawing to a close, and twilight has come on.*)

Enter Lady BELASIS, L.

Lady BEL. Oh, the coxcombs! Not an ogle I adventured for the general good of the table, but each took it to himself. Oh, I could find it in my heart so to fool these town-breds—ha! as the scum floats to the top, here comes the most feather-headed of the family. (*she sits R.C.*)

Enter WILL HONEYCOMBE, L.

— What, Mr. Honeycombe! I fear the claret must be sour, or the company dull, that you leave the table so soon. And yet, methought, our dear Sir Roger was in unusual spirits to-day.

WILL. Strike me insensible, Madam, can you wonder at it? You flung him a smile now and then—the lucky dog!

Lady BEL. Poor, dear Sir Roger. But are my smiles so potent with him?

WILL. May I die, Madam, if a course of them would not make him young again—as young as any of us.

Lady BEL. (*R.*) But the creature's so uncouth, Mr. Honeycombe?

WILL. 'Fore Gad, Madam, he is uncouth—I must admit it, as his friend, 'pon my reputation!

Lady BEL. Then his dress, Mr. Honeycombe—for I hold the dress a part of the man, Mr. Honeycombe!

WILL. My own sentiments—strike me philosophical!

Lady BEL. Often the best part, Mr. Honeycombe; for strip a beau of his velvet coat, laced waistcoat, rolled stockings, and red-heeled shoes—and what is the man?

WILL. Ah, what indeed! beyond the first forked rascal in fustian!

Lady BEL. Peel the head of its periwig, and what is the kernel?

WILL. My dear lady, you talk as if you'd blazed all these years a fixed star in the firmament of fashion, instead of twinkling here in the milky way of the country undistinguishables. You should be one of us, strike me exclusive!

Lady BEL. A town life!—and with Mr. Honeycombe for a Mentor!

WILL. (*aside, and taking snuff*) She is charming, and grows upon one hugely.

Lady BEL. O, what a charming prospect spreads itself before me! To lie late, in a lace mob, and toy with the last new play till eleven, then my toilette, over in some two hours—eh, Mr. Honeycombe?

WILL. It may be done in two, Madam, (*takes snuff*) when Nature has done so much. (*bows*.)

Lady BEL. (*taps him with her fan*) Then, my coach, and away in the round of morning calls; and when tired of criticising one's best friends, one may turn to the fine arts, and rummage over all the china at Rebecca's, or flirt half the fans at Colmar's. Then off to the New Exchange to cheapen a coloured hood or a French patch-box, and then back to dinner—*tête-à-tête*, of course, Mr. Honeycombe—and after a quarter of an hour's reflection, to extract their moral from the duties of the day, hey for the Opera and the pleasures of the night! What a flutter as I enter my box!—How the women flirt their fans with envy, and the beaux ogle me with glances that put the wax-candles to shame!—Then the fiddles tune, the luscious strains of the orchestra flow forth: and on the nightingale notes of La Camilla, or the tender, transporting trills of a Nicolini, the rapt senses soar into Elysium!

WILL. Zauns! you're a London angel in the linsey woolsey of a Worcestershire widow. (*kneels.*) 'Fore Gad, Madam, behold me at your feet—your adorer—your slave—your—

Lady BEL. Get up, for heaven's sake, Mr. Honeycombe; what would Sir Roger say to this?

WILL. Say? the untaught barbarian. Own that he has as much right to possess such a treasure as the pig who found a pearl would have to wear it in his nose-ring. Divinity!

Lady BEL. For propriety's sake, get up off your knees! Here comes Sir Andrew.

WILL. In an hour, when the moon rises—

Lady BEL. You forget we are engaged for the dance at the Manor.

WILL. 'Gadso! oh!—there, then—anywhere—'fore Gad! 'tis finished; the victim is decked for the sacrifice, and your's is the fair hand that shall bind him to the horns of the altar!

Exit WILL HONEYCOMBE, R.U.E.

Enter Sir ANDREW, L.

Sir AND. Your servant, Madam; I was charged by Sir Reger and the Templar to look for Mr. Honeycombe. Me-thought I heard voices this way?

Lady BEL. Nay; you see I am alone, Sir Andrew.

Sir AND. (*aside.*) A favourable moment to speak for Sir Roger. Hem! (*settling himself*) but how to begin?

Lady BEL. (*aside.*) My club oracle is dumb.

Sir AND. Hem! (*uneasily*) Have you seen the last *Gazette*, Ma'am? Prince Eugene does not stir, Madam.

Lady BEL. Then, Sir, I presume he remains where he was.

Sir AND. Precisely, Madam. (*becomes embarrassed again.*) Patches on the Whig side of the face, I see (*aside.*) May I ask if you feel with the Duke in respect of this peace, Madam?

Lady BEL. (*aside.*) Now would I give one ear to know which Duke, and the other to know which peace. Wit help me at a pinch. Why, Sir Andrew, I may tell you that, speaking between ourselves, I do wish well to—(*pauses for help*)—

Sir AND. The Duke? though he is in disgrace?

Lady BEL. Though he is in disgrace.

Sir AND. And you do not think the Dutch have pursued selfish measures in the war? (*delighted.*)

Lady BEL. On the contrary; I respect Dutch measures and honour Dutch courage.

Sir AND. My dear Madam! I admire and share your principles. Oh! if our friend Sir Roger would but take a lesson of you—you might do a great deal with Sir Roger. And allow me to add, Madam, 'tis long since I have met with so sensible and so original a woman!

Lady BEL. Ah, Sir Andrew, you're a flatterer too!

Sir AND. Nay, Madam, I value your opinion; but you will never suit Sir Roger with these sentiments. (*during the scene the stage has gradually darkened.*) You can never be happy, Madam, but with a man of safe principles—I mean a Whig, Madam—and if I were but that Whig, Madam—(*as he rises to fall on his knees, a branch catches his wig and twitches it off*)—

Lady BEL. You'd be in rather an unpleasant state of suspense, Sir Andrew.

Sir AND. Confound it! (*recovers it.*)

Lady BEL. Hist! some one's coming. 'Tis Mr. Grecian, I declare.

Sir AND. Curse him! I thought he was claret-chained for a two hours; I must see you again, Madam, to disclose my ardent affection, for a Whig never conceals anything.

Exit, setting his wig R., U.E.R.

Lady BEL. Very little sometimes. So much for two of the covey! But here comes a bird rather wilder on the wing methinks.

Enter DICK GRECIAN, flustered, R.I.E.

DICK. Nay; hold me not, Sir Roger—I'm at spouting pitch, Sir Roger. The Widow should be here! Curse the trees! they're twice as many as I thought this morning. Ha! (*seeing the Widow.*) Ha, Madam! I had wandered forth, tempted by the seren—seren—hang it!—serenity of the atmosphere. Sir Roger sends me here to serve on you his declaration; but I won't be Sir Roger's attorney. I'm the

plaintiff in person, and I come into court; and, "by yonder blessed moon, I vow"—

Lady Bel. "Oh, swear not by the moon—the inconstant moon,

That monthly changes in her circled orb;
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable."

DICK. That's my cue; but if I know what comes next!
Oh, claret, claret! But there can be no harm in swearing.
"Madam, I swear!"—(GRECIAN rushes forward to throw himself at her feet, but catches his foot in the garden seat, and falls headlong.)

Lady Bel. I hope you have not hurt yourself, Sir.

DICK. Beat, fairly beat, (*getting up awkwardly*) at my own weapons; you're as witty as you are beautiful. I came drunk, and, ecod! I'm gradually getting sober. I meant to plead for Sir Roger, and see, Madam, I'm praying for myself. (*kneels.*)

Lady Bel. If you want assistance to rise, Mr. Grecian, you had better ask Sir Roger, for here he comes. (*aside*) And the last bird's bagged, as I'm a triumphant widow.

Exit R.H.E.

DICK. (*jumps up*) Sir Roger coming *this* way, then I'll go *that*—motion of course.

Exit R.

WIM. (*puts his head out of the arbour*) Oh, the villainy of man! Oh, the vanity of woman! Three Judases and one Jezabel! Confusion, here are more coming! (*draws his head in again.*)

Enter Sir Roger, L. 1 E.

SIR ROG. Where can all my friends have got to? Doubtless they have won my suit with the Widow e'er now. Ha! methinks I spy a petticoat in the arbour. Should it be the Widow. (*he goes towards the arbour, WIMBLE starts out and defends the entrance*) Will Wimble! why, who the dickens?

WIM. Approach not, Sir Roger, or I must do something disrespectful.

SIR ROG. Ha, rogue!

Enter Sentry, R. 1 E.

CAPT. My dear uncle, the horses are ready--but how now? Sir Roger making an attack on the arbour, and Will Wimble in the breach?

SIR ROG. Ha, ha, ha! 'Tis a petticoat, Jack, the sly rogue was alone with her, and I unkenneled him.

WIM. (L.C.) Sir Roger, Captain Sentry, there *is* a lady in that arbour; but she hath put her reputation in my hands, and I will not have it compromised. (*aside*) compromised methinks was the word.

SIR ROG. (R.) We must have her out, Jack?

WIM. Captain Sentry, I warn you, that you enter *not* this arbour save through my body, I mean over my body. 'Tis the first lady that ever placed her honour in my hands, but

I trust I know how such things should be handled. And you are the last man, Captain Sentry—

CAPT. To respect the honour of a dairy-maid. Here goes for a draw!

WIM. Then here goes for a buffet!

SYL. (*peeps out from behind WIMBLE*) Jack!

CAPT.

Sir Rog. (L.C.) } Sylvia!

WIM. There, now, 'tis done! The murder's out! She is compromised! Captain Sentry, I offer you satisfaction. Ruined as this lady's reputation may be, I will still defend it at the point of my sword; you would peep, and now you've made yourself miserable for life, and Sylvy, too. (*Sir Roger, R., Sentry, C., and SYLVIA burst into an uproarious laugh.*)

WIM. (L.E.) Eh, he's laughing! (*looking at SYLVIA*) She's laughing! they're all three laughing! Why, d——n it, they're laughing at me!

SYL. (L.) My dear Jack, 'tis the most chivalrous creature! We found ourselves in the arbour, while mama entertained Sir Roger's friends, and he would not let me forth, lest my reputation might suffer from being seen in his company. (*all laugh again.*)

WIM. Ha, ha, ha! Ecod! one would think there was no danger in Will Wimble. But thy tale is not true, Miss Sylvia. 'Twas she drew me into the arbour, and held me there by both hands!

CAPT. (*rather seriously*) Sylvia!

SYL. Oh!

WIM. Yes; and declared, if I did not sit quiet, she *would* be compromised.

CAPT. Why, Sylvia! (*angrily*) What madcap trifling was this?

SYL. Don't be angry, Jack! 'Twas to prevent him from—(*whispers SENTRY.*)

CAPT. True, true! (*offers his hand*) Pardon my laughter, Will, thou art a trusty soul.

WIM. Nay, nay; I'd have you know, Captain, that a man is not harmless because he doth not wear a red coat. There be girls would be sorry to sit in that arbour at dusk with Will Wimble, though he is a simple fellow, and only fit to be laughed at—

Sir Rog. (R.) Nay, Will—

CAPT. (L.) You're one of the most dangerous creatures I know; and, but that I am sure of Sylvy, the consequences of your tête-à-tête might have been awful, Will—awful!

WIM. Nay, an' you speak so handsomely, Captain, and admit that the consequences might have been awful, I'm satisfied. But as for Miss Sylvy—

SYL. O, please do forgive me, Mr. Wimble—oh, do!

WIM. 'Drat thy sweet face!—'twas made to ask pardon and be forgiven—so—

SYL. (*holding up her face, and looking at SENTRY*) May he, Jack? (*SENTRY nods.*) Set the seal to the bond, Mr. Wimble.

WIM. (*kisses her fervently*) Bless thee for a winning thing, Sylvy! But 'twas very rash in thee. Had it been anybody but the Captain thou wouldst certainly have been compromised; and then, as the Captain *says*, the consequences might have been awful!

SYLVIA and SENTRY retire up, and exit L.

Sir Rog. (R.) Odso, Will, but you were here while her ladyship conversed with my friends—

WIM. (L.) Friends, quotha! Yes, Sir Roger, I was here!

Sir Rog. They were pressing with her, Will, were they not?

WIM. Mighty pressing.

Sir Rog. And how pleaded they for me, Will?

WILL. Why, crab fashion, Sir Roger. The Beau ridiculed your breeding—the stout Knight abused your principles—and the Templar helped you to a non-suit. And when each had done his best to put you out of the widow's heart, he straight proceeded to do his best to climb into it in your place.

Sir Rog. (R.) Ha! Not one true friend—not one true friend! But *she*, Will—she didn't listen to their suits?

WIM. (L.) Ecod! she was a fine lady with the Beau, a politician with the Knight, and a play-actress with the Templar! Methinks her heart's like a common alehouse, Sir Roger; every one who knocks has a right to lodging and entertainment. But you are moved?

Sir Rog. Nay, nay—'tis nothing—a foolish spasm about the heart. But I trusted them all; and I have loved her these twenty years. I'm but an old fool, an old fool! But come to the Manor, Master Wimble; they'll be there, and then for my revenge!

Exeunt L. L E.

SCENE II.—*The Garden of the Manor by Moonlight, with a bay of the house, and practicable casement of WILL HONEYCOMBE'S Apartment, open into the Garden, L.C.—Shrubs—Chimes heard in the distance.*

Enter REUBEN, cautiously.

REU. A quarter to nine!—nine was their hour. 'Twas lucky Mahala named the time to that jack-a-dandy within earshot of the tent where I lay. 'Tis the time I bade Bob Martingale be here.

Enter BOB MARTINGALE, R.

—You're an honest man, Bob Martingale. I'm wiser for my night's sleep. I see you and Susan are for each other—I won't say it does not give me a sore heart—but I'll bear it—like my sore head, Bob—I deserve both of them.

BOB. Nay, I'll give thee thy revenge next Sunday, if thou wilt, Will.

REU. No, Bob, thank you!—and now, hark ye, there's foul play afoot,—there's a plan to rob the fine gentleman—him that's lodged there (L. C.)—of the jewels he's so proud of showing. He'll be kept in play by a girl—a deep one—while his chamber is cleared. I know not how many we may have to deal with. Crouch in this dark corner, nigh the window,—let the thief in, but see that he reckons with thee as he comes out—I'll look to the rest.

BOB. Trust to me, Will—thou know'st my hand.

Bob takes his place in the shadow flung by the bay—

REUBEN hides among the bushes R.—A light appears in HONEYCOMBE'S apartment.

Enter URIAH and HONOR, R., on tiptoe—URIAH with a dark lantern.

URIAH (*in a whisper.*) 'Tis here! (*they creep up to the window and peep in.*) Curse it—a servant! Ha! he leaves the room!—he's alone! Josh! (*whispers.*)

JOSH enters R. 2 E., and creeps up.

—Count, you whelp! and if you miss one, I'll mark you! Down in the shadow as he passes out—then in, and ply your forks!

HON. My mind misgives me about that girl. Have thy knife loose, Uriah!

URIAH. Leave men's business to men, you brimstone!—stick to the Rei's skirts—or, if need be, you can use the choking-cloth. When I whistle, the swag's sacked, and you may pad the droin.*

They retire cautiously L.—The CLOCK strikes nine.

Enter MAHALA L., with the hood of her cloak over her head. As she enters, URIAH lays his hand on her shoulder.

URIAH. Mahala Stanley, this is a night's work that makes us or mars us. Play thy part like a tatchet Rommany, and thou shalt share honestly; but peach or palter, and it will be but a short shrift and scanty shroud for thee, my girl,—Uriah Lee's a man of his word.

JOSH throws some gravel at the window—it opens, and HONEYCOMBE appears on the sill; he wears a dressing-gown and velvet cap.

WILL. A signal, as I'm alive! Now for my bird in the bush! Curse it! 'tis cruelly raw for love-making—and—(*puts out a foot*) Zounds! I shall never kneel on this damned country turf of theirs without paying for the rapture of a moment with the rheumatism of a month! (*steps gingerly out.*) Ha! my Indamora, by all that's muffled and myste-

* "Take to the road."

† "True."

rious! (*advances towards MAHALA—JOSH creeps into the room and blows out the candle.*) Hist, my inamorata!—my—(*puts his arm round her waist.*)

MAH. (*in a low voice, but quickly and firmly.*) No fooling! Keep your arm so. We are watched! Listen—'tis a decoy to draw you from your chamber, that they may steal your diamonds,—are you armed?

WILL. My sword's in my chamber. (*URIAH and HONOR creep up to them behind.*)

MAH. They'll overpower him (*aside*). Draw cautiously towards the window, and when within reach of a rush—

HON. (*L., seizing MAHALA*) Thy knife, Uriah—thy knife! (*URIAH draws his knife, but is seized by REUBEN.*)

URIAH. (*R. struggling with REUBEN*) Damn thee!

HON. Quick, Josh—quick.

Enter SERVANT and MARTINGALE L.

REU. (*knocking down URIAHL*) Hold him fast. (*turns to MAHALA, and rescues her from HONOR; SERVANTS seize HONOR, L.*)

HONOR. (*L.*) Josh—Josh—

JOSH. (*rushing out window.*) I've nabbed the swag.

BOB. (*seizing him.*) And I've nabbed the swagger. Now, Will, shall we raise the house?

WILL. (*c. out of breath.*) While I'm in *dishabille*? No, no; take them somewhere; my fellow shall help thee. (*going to window—calls*) Solitaire!

Bob restores boxes and jewel-cases, SOLITAIRE appears with a candle at the window, half dressed, and very pale.

SOL. Monsieur have call?

WILL. Ah, Solitaire! 'tis time to dress me for the ball—and, Solitaire, here are some robbers for you to take charge of, till the constables come. If they attempt to escape, kill them immediately. Enquire of the butler where they can be put away.

Exit at window, L.C.

BOB. We'll take charge of them, Monsieur Solitaire, never fear. (*SOLITAIRE expresses thanks and retires from window.*) see these vagabonds bestowed, Will?

REU. Aye, Bob, aye.

URIAH. So the game is up, is it? We may look out for Gorja justice—the gallows or the great sea. But whether I hang or cross the water, I leave you, Reuben Cooper, and you, Mahala Stanley, that which will cling to you—the Rommany's curse upon you both! May his hand that held us wither, and her tongue that split upon us dry up in her mouth! May false blood mingle with false—that your children may live to be your sorrows, and die to be your shames! I call the Mulo Beng to witness (*holding up his hand*) that you are accursed! Be cursed in love and hate—in the road and at the fire—in cup and platter—in sleep and waking—in life and death—be cursed!

BOB. And be cursed in your teeth, for a couple of foul-mouthed old heathens, as ye are. Here, Will.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

53

*Exit BOB and REUBEN, SERVANTS guarding URIAH, HONOR,
and JOSH, R. I E.*

MAH. Will he look kindlier on Mahala now? If he doth not, I wish Uriah's knife were in my heart, or the green sods growing over me, far away from this, in the woodside lane where we went hand in hand, and he called me his wife—his cushgar ticknee Roma.*

Enter REUBEN, R. I E.

REU. Still here, Mahala?

MAH. Where should I go? back to the tents where the ashes are grey and cold, and the dogs howling through the dark for those that will not come? Back to the tribe that will spurn the accursed one who betrayed her people, or over the sea to thy father and thy mother, Reuben, to tell them that Mahala has no heart but theirs to creep to—that Mahala is alone?

REU. Nay, Mahala, nay, it may be I can help thee to a home—be't a blanket, or a roof that's over my head, there'll be room for another under it. So if thou wilt share it sister fashion—

MAH. (*eagerly*) With thee, Reuben? But no—no—no. I could not be near thee, and know thou didst despise me, and that thou hadst cause, Will. (*throwing herself on her knees*) Oh, Reuben, Reuben, forgive my black deed of yesterday. I was mad, that thou couldst not love me, and I thought that death was best for both. And it would have been for me, but not for thee, Reuben.

REU. And was thy love so strong?

MAH. And to know that you thought scorn of me for a common cheat, a robber's decoy—'twas that stung me.

REU. I did thee wrong, Mahala, in that at least. Thou didst stake thy life to night to help yon jack-a-dandy; and but for us you would neither of you have seen the sun rise.

MAH. (*bowing her head on her hands*) And why should I wish to see it? What does it bring to me but loneliness and despair?

REU. Look, Mahala, we Rommanies are too ready with our loves and hates, our shadows and our sunshine. Cheer up, and never think of the black cloud thou hast left behind thee. If there be mischief in thee, it is more blame of thy breeding than thyself.

MAH. I had none to teach me, Reuben, since they went hence that loved us both so well.

REU. They did, they did!

MAH. And thought, when they had troth-plighted us, that all was done.

REU. (*taking her hand*) Listen, Mahala, thou knowest what I was, as wild and wayward a cur as was ever reared

* "Pretty little wife."

under a tent, ready to bite the hand that offered me food, and loving nothing so well as my own will and a wild life. Wayward as I am still, thou seest what the house-dwellers have made of me. There's truth in their books, Mahala, and their ways are wiser than ours. Wilt try their life, Mahala? Give up the woodland and the common for a cottage and a still fireside, and I'll try to teach thee what the house-dwellers look up to—to think shame of lies and beggary, and to respect him most that gains his living by honest labour. Eh, Mahala? I know but little myself, but thou art quick to learn, and if thou wouldst like me for a teacher—eh, what say'st thou?

MAH. Anything with thee, Reuben, I would be where thou art—thy life shall be my life, and my home thy home. O, take me to thee, Reuben.

REU. Mahala!

MAH. (*sinking on his breast*) My heart, my heart!

REU. Nay, cheer thee Mahala; though there be a roof over our heads, we shall be nigh the woods, and among the wild things still; and then at night, over the fire, we'll talk of the old people and the old times, and I'll send them a letter over the great water, and tell them how we are come together again; and we'll teach our little ones the old tongue—the cushgar Rommany rokkerpen; and I'll play the fiddle to the old tunes we've danced to many and many a summer night long ago. There—laugh, that's well, Mahala—that's well.

Exeunt L. 1 E.

SCENE III.—*Hall of Coverley Manor—Large Table c., with candelabra at back, chairs—Sir Roger, the Widow, SYLVIA, SENTRY, Sir ANDREW, GRECIAN, WIMBLE, and TOUCHY discovered.*

Sir Rog. (c.) And now, my friends, before the tenantry and the fiddlers make their appearance, give me five minutes, I pray you. A question, fair lady—a question, gentlemen all—Which is the greatest fool in love, he who trusts the promise of a friend, or he who believes in the looks of a woman?

Lady BEL. (R.C.) He who trusts his friend's promises, Sir Roger, for there is no perjury in the Court of Cupid.

DICK. (R.) Cry your mercy, fair lady! He who trusts a woman's looks, for their eyes are perpetually drawing bills at sight, which their mouths refuse to honour when due.

CAPT. (L.) And I say, friends are to be trusted and women believed—until there's a strong temptation for the one to play booty and the other to tell falsehoods.

TOM. (R.) And I say, he's a fool who trusts either; love-making should be under the Statute of Frauds, and all contracts about, concerning, and touching the same, should be void, unless there's an instrument in writing, signed by the parties, as provided by the well-known Statute of Charles the Second.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

55

Sir AND. (R.) What say you, Sir Roger?

Sir Rog. Why, then, in my opinion, he who trusts his friend will be deceived, and he who believes a woman will be bamboozled—Lady Bellasis—gentlemen—I leave you to apply my conclusion.

DICK. (to *Sir ANDREW*) Sir Andrew!

Sir AND. (to *DICK*) Dick!

CAPT. (L.C., to *Sir ANDREW* and *DICK*) Well, gentlemen, your application?

Enter HONEYCOMBE, L.

WILL. (coming forward jauntily) Sir Roger, I've a favour to ask. (*aside*) Madam, your slave!

Sir Rog. (waving his hand) Prithee, Mr. Honeycombe, give us leave awhile.

DICK. (to *Sir ANDREW*) Ha! note his manner; he hath found out the Beau wooing the Widow, for a hundred.

Sir AND. (R.) Yes; Will is the faithless friend, beyond question. (*all look at WILL HONEYCOMBE coldly.*)

WILL. Why, Dick, Sir Andrew, Knight, Jack, have I taken the wrong passage, and walked into the icehouse, that you look so chilling—curse me?

Sir AND. Oh, Mr. Honeycombe!

DICK. Fie, Mr. Honeycombe!

Lady BEL. To betray your host!

CAPT. To abuse the rights of hospitality!

WIM. To go poaching on a friend's preserve—oh!

TOM. To expose yourself to an action on the case for fraud and covin!

WILL. Why, how now? What have I done?

ALL. Oh, oh!

Sir Rog. Yes, listen, Madam—listen, all. I trusted him to plead my suit here (*pointing to WIDOW*)—where I had knelt and prayed these twenty years. He laid his siege—he obtained a parley—and, when the gates were opened, would have slipped in, and held the fortress against him in whose name he laid siege to it.

ALL. Oh, fie, fie, Mr. Honeycombe!

Sir Rog. (C.) But, luckily, I had other friends: mistrusting him, I asked for their help in my suit, and they—

DICK and Sir ANDREW look embarrassed.

WIM. (*breaks out*) Did just what the Beau had done—sprung the game for Sir Roger, and then did their best to knock it down for their own eating—the rogues! I was in the arbour at the time, and overheard the leash of 'em.

ALL. (but *DICK and Sir ANDREW*) Oh, shame, shame!

Lady BEL. (L.C.) Gentlemen, gentlemen! how dare you look your deeply-injured friend in the face? My honest woman's heart revolts at so much treachery!

Sir Rog. (R.C.) Nay, but your own looks, Madam—your smiles?

Lady BEL. Ah, Sir Roger, confess that if you misread my looks 'tis rather you than I who must answer for the error;

you construed the warmth of friendly regard into something warmer—but could I help that? Much as I valued you as a friend, the disproportion of our ages forbade every other feeling. Besides, you had approved my union with another.

Sir Rog. Your union with another?

Lady Bel. Yes; if I exposed myself to the lively musket-fire of Mr. Honeycombe, the heavy artillery of Sir Andrew, and the grape of Mr. Grecian, 'twas that I wished to enjoy my last day of woman's dominion ere I bestowed my hand and heart—

Sir Rog. Your hand and heart?

Lady Bel. Here—where you had already expressed your satisfaction with my choice. (*takes SENTRY's hand, L.*)

Capt. Confusion!

Sir Rog. Jack!

All. Captain Sentry!

Wim. (*aside*) She's pulled the trigger for herself, after all!

Lady Bel. Yes; he asked my hand yesterday, and thus openly and proudly I bestow it. (*offers her hand—SENTRY shrinks.*)

Sir Rog. (*L.C.*) Jack! How now? Explain this riddle! (*crosses up.*)

Lady Bel. (*C.*) He refuses my hand!

Capt. (*C., aside to Sir Roger*) 'Tis a coquette's mistake, uncle. I asked for Sylvia's hand—she gave me her own. Madam, believe me, 'tis with regret that—confound it—you tell her, Sir Roger.

Sir Rog. (*L.C.*) You see, Madam—(*to HONEYCOMBE*) You do it, Will.

Lady Bel. (*R.C.*) Captain Sentry!—Sir Roger de Coverley!

WILL. (*L.*) 'Fore heaven, Madam!—I am *au désespoir*. But we men are not the only ones whom love—that is, self-love—blinds sometimes. (*crosses to L.*)

Lady Bel. Speak out, some of you gentlemen—what means this whispering?

WIM. It means, ma'am, that you've made a false start, ma'am. The Captain didn't aim at you, ma'am—'twas at Sylvy—and you marked the wrong bird, that's all ma'am!

SYL. (*R.C.*) Oh yes, mama, 'twas my hand he meant to ask of you, and I durst not tell you. Do you forgive me, mama?

(*The WIDOW conceals her face in her hands a few moments.*)

TOM. There ought to be an action out of this, methinks!

CAPT. Dear madam, believe me, this unfortunate mistake,—I mean this flattering preference of yours—gives me the greatest pain—that is, makes me proud—(*aside*) Confound it, it's quite impossible to say anything satisfactory under the circumstances.

Lady Bel. (*C., aside*) I will shew them a Spartan front.

Yes, though grief may gnaw my heart out, I will smile still. Sylvia, my children, I wish you joy—(*they retire up, R.*) My woman's vanity has recoiled on myself, Master Wimble.

WIM. (*L., aside*) And an infernal kick it must have given you, methinks, for 'twas plaguey overloaded.

Lady Bel. Come, if you please, gentlemen, shall we forget the last six hours? You smile, gentlemen. But pray remember, that if those six hours have bequeathed me one defeat, they have also crowned me with four triumphs—and that the Squire, the Beau, the Politician, and the Wit, have all bowed under the yoke of the Woman.

WILL. Forget the last six hours—Stap my vitals, madam! with all my heart, if the rheumatism doesn't take it in hand to remind me of them. But here, Sir Roger, is an honest lad, whose pardon you must grant me—between them they've just saved my diamonds; and egad, my weasand too, I believe. There's a leash of cut throats, a petticoat among 'em, I regret to say, down stairs, for the justice-room to-morrow, of his bagging.

TOM. Then, there will be a trial after all, ha, ha! and mayhap a hanging, or the plantations for life, at the end of it. Now, that's what I call satisfactory, mighty satisfactory, eh, Sir Roger? Leave me to get up the evidence; I'll trounce the rogues, I'll warrant.

WILL. And here they come.

Enter REUBEN and MAHALA, MARTINGALE, and SUSAN, L. I E. also LADIES escorted by GENTLEMEN, SERVANTS, & RUSTICS.

SIR ROG. Black Will, and who is this with him?

WILL. That's my Indamora; you must take him into your service again.

SIR ROG. Eh? he used to be a good lad, but that temper of his—

BOB. (*L.*) Was sorely tried, your honour. An' your honour could forgive him—

SIR ROG. Well, when the man who broke his head pleads for him, methinks I may—

Lady Bel. (R.) You must, Sir Roger.

SYL. (*L., brings forward MAHALA*) Yes, Sir Roger, you must, for the sake of my dark-haired friend here, who loves him so! 'Twould have done your heart good to hear her plead for him to-day—

SIR ROG. What! has the rogue found a sweetheart, too? Nay, then, thou mayst put on thy livery again, Will; and I'll fit up the Hutch for you both, in hope of a reformation.

REU. (*L., crosses to Sir Roger*) God bless your Honour! I had been sorely tried before the wake, and the dark blood broke out in me. I ask pardon of your Honour—and of all. Look, gentlefolks—she and I were plighted to each other, a boy and a girl, eight years ago. I claim her troth and give her mine. (*takes her hand.*) Our people have warm blood, Sir Roger, and she will learn to love and

respect your Honour, as I do. Thank his Honour, Mahala.
(*putting her over.*)

MAH. My heart is too full, Reuben. But I'll pray for them, if you'll teach me how, Reuben? (*they retire up, and*

Exit L.U.E.

WIM. (L.) And if he do, I'll back him to break the hardest-mouthed filly that ever wore surcingle.

SIR ROG. I forgive everybody. I had no right to expose you to such a trial, my good friends. There, there. Ah! they'll be happy together. And you, my boy, and my little Sylvia—

LADY BEL. And now, Sir Roger, my hand.

SIR ROG. For life, Madam?

LADY BEL. No, Sir Roger—for the first country-dance.

And though my woman's pride has had a fall,
My step shall be the blythest 'mong them all:

As I lead off, the choice of tune I claim—

Strike up the dance that bears Sir Roger's name;

And lest the fiddles trip—give us the chime

Of your applauding hands, to mark the time.

DANCE:—"Sir Roger de Coverley." Fall into a line, and advance to front.

LADY. DICK. LA. TOM. LA. SIR A. WIDOW. SIR R. LA. WILL. SYLV. CAPT. LA. WIM.

CURTAIN.