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The Rivals: A Comedy

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The Rivals A Comedy

By Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Adapted by John Bellomo (C)2014

DRAMATIS PERSONAE
Originally acted at COVENT GARDEN
THEATRE in 1775

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE

CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE

FAULKLAND

ACRES

SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

MR. FAG

DAVID

THOMAS

MRS. MALAPROP

LYDIA LANGUISH

JULIA

LUCY

Maid, Boy, Servants, &c.

SCENE: Bath.

Time of action: Five hours.

ACT I

Scene I. -- A Street. [Enter THOMAS;
he crosses the stage; MR.FAG follows,
looking after him.]

MR. FAG

What! Thomas! - Sure 'tis he? -- What!
Thomas! Thomas!

THOMAS

Hey! -- Odd's life! Mr. Fag!

MR. FAG

Ah ah ah. - It's pronounced Mr. Fahg

THOMAS

It is?

FAG

Yes.

THOMAS

Mr. Fahg?

FAG

Mr. Fahg.

THOMAS

Odd's life! Mr. Fahg! -- give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

MR. FAG

Excuse my glove, Thomas: -- I'm devilish glad to see you, my Lad. Why, my Prince of Charioteers, you look as hearty! -- but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath?

THOMAS

Sure, Master Absolute, Madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate, and the postilion, be all come.

MR. FAG

Indeed!

THOMAS

Ay, Master Absolute thought another Fit of the Gout was coming to make him a Visit; -- so he'd a mind to gi't the Slip, and whip! we were all off at an hour's warning.

MR. FAG

Ay, ay, hasty in every thing, or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute!

THOMAS

But tell us, Mr. Fag -

MR. FAG

Mr. Fahg

THOMAS

Mr. Fahg?

FAG

Mr. Fahg.

THOMAS

But tell us, Mr. Fahg, how does young master? Odd! Sir Anthony will stare to see the Captain here!

MR. FAG

I do not serve Captain Absolute now.

THOMAS

Why sure!

MR. FAG

At present I am employ'd by Ensign Beverley.

THOMAS

I doubt, Mr. Fahg -

MR. FAG

Mr. Fahg

THOMAS

Mr. Fog?

FAG

Mr. Fahg.

THOMAS

I doubt, Mr. Fog, you ha'n't chang'd for the better.

FAG

I have not chang'd, Thomas.

THOMAS

No! Why didn't you say you had left young master?

MR. FAG

No. -- Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no farther: -- Briefly then -- Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person.

THOMAS

The Devil they are!

MR. FAG

You'll be Secret, Thomas?

THOMAS

As a Coach-horse.

MR. FAG

Why then the cause of all this is -- L-O-V-E,
E, -- Love, Thomas, who (as you may
get read to you in Ovid's
Metamorphosis) has been a Masquerader
ever since the Days of Jupiter.

THOMAS

Ay, ay; -- I guess'd there was a Lady
in the case: -- but pray, why does
your master pass only for ensign? --
Now if he had shamm'd General indeed --
--

MR. FAG

Ah! Thomas, there lies the mystery o'
the Matter. Hark'ee, Thomas, My Master
is in love with a Lady of a very
{S}ingular taste: a lady who likes him
better as a half pay ensign than if
She knew he was Son and Heir to Sir
Anthony Absolute, a Baronet of Three
Thousand a year.

THOMAS

That is an odd Taste indeed! -- But
has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag?

MR. FAG

Fahg

THOMAS

Fahg?

MR. FAG

Fahg.

THOMAS

Is she rich, Mr. Fog?

MR. FAG

Rich! -- Why, I believe she owns half
the Stocks! Zounds! Thomas, she could

pay the National Debt as easily as I could my Washerwoman! She has a Lapdog that eats out of Gold, -- she feeds her Parrot with small Pearls, -- and all her Thread-papers are made of Bank-notes!

THOMAS

Bravo! - Faith! -- Odd! - I warrant she has a set of Thousands at least: -- but does she draw kindly with the captain?

MR. FAG

Fond as pigeons.

THOMAS

May one hear her Name?

MR. FAG

Miss Lydia Languish. -- But there is an old tough Aunt in the way; though, by the by, she has never seen my Master -- for we got acquainted with Miss Languish while on a visit in Gloucestershire.

THOMAS

Well -- I wish they were once harness'd together in Matrimony. -- But pray, Mr. Fag, -

Fahg

THOMAS

Fahg?

MR. FAG

Fahg.

THOMAS

But pray, Mr. Fog, what kind of a Place is this Bath? -- I ha' heard a deal of it -- here's a mort o' merrymaking, hey?

MR. FAG

Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well -- 'tis a good Lounge; - But hold -- Mark! mark! Thomas.

THOMAS

Zooks! 'tis the Captain. -- Is that the Lady with him?

MR. FAG

No, no, that is Madam Lucy, my Master's Mistress's Maid. They lodge at that House -- but I must after him to tell him the News.

THOMAS

Odd! he's giving her money! -- Well, Mr. Fog (together with Mr. FAG) --

FAG

(Together with THOMAS) Fahg -- Good-bye, Thomas. I have an Appointment in Gyde's porch this Evening at Eight; meet me there, and we'll make a little Party.)
[Exeunt severally.]

Scene II. -- A Dressing room in MRS. MALAPROP's Lodgings.
[LYDIA sitting on a sofa, with a book in her hand. Lucy, as just returned from a message.]

LUCY

Indeed, Ma'am, I traversed half the Town in search of it: I don't believe there's a Circulating Library in Bath I ha'n't been at.

LYDIA

And could not you get The Reward of Constancy?

LUCY

No, indeed, Ma'am.

LYDIA

Nor The Fatal Connexion?

LUCY

No, indeed, Ma'am.

LYDIA

Nor The Mistakes of the Heart?

LUCY

Ma'am, as ill luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just

fetch'd it away.

LYDIA

Heigh-ho! -- Did you inquire for The Delicate Distress?

LUCY

Or, The Memoirs of Lady Woodford? Yes, indeed, Ma'am. I ask'd every where for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soil'd and dog's-ear'd it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

LYDIA

Heigh-ho! -- Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me. She has a most observing thumb; Well, child, what have you brought me?

LUCY

Oh! here, Ma'am. -- [Taking books from under her cloak, and from her pockets.] This is The Gordian Knot, -- and this Peregrine Pickle. Here are The Tears of Sensibility, and Humphrey Clinker. This is The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality, written by herself, and here the second volume of The Sentimental Journey.

LYDIA

Heigh-ho! -- What are those books by the glass?

LUCY

The Great one is only The Whole Duty of Man, where I press a few flowers, Ma'am.

LYDIA

Very well -- give me the sal volatile.

LUCY

Is it in a blue Cover, Ma'am?

LYDIA

My Smelling-bottle, you Simpleton!

LUCY

Oh, the drops! -- Here, Ma'am.

LYDIA
No Note, Lucy?

LUCY
No indeed, Ma'am - but I have seen a certain Person.

LYDIA
What! - my Beverley? - well, Lucy!

LUCY
Oh! Ma'am! - he looks so desponding and melancholic -

LYDIA
Hold! -- Here's some one coming -- quick, see who it is. -- --

[Exit LUCY.]

Surely I heard my Cousin Julia's voice.

[Re-enter LUCY.]

LUCY
Lud! Ma'am, here is Miss Melville.

LYDIA
Is it possible! -- --

[Exit LUCY.]

[Enter JULIA.]

LYDIA
My dearest Julia, how delighted am I! --
[Embrace.] How unexpected was this Happiness!

JULIA
True, Lydia -- and our Pleasure is the greater. -- But what has been the matter? -- you were denied to me at first!

LYDIA
Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you! -- But first inform me what has conjured you to Bath? -- Is Sir

Anthony here?

JULIA

He is -- we are arriv'd within this hour -- and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dress'd.

LYDIA

Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to you some of my Distress! -- I know your gentle nature will sympathize with me, though your prudence may condemn me! My Letters have inform'd you of my whole connection with Beverley; but I have lost him, Julia! My Aunt has discover'd our Intercourse by a Note she intercepted, and has confin'd me ever since! Yet, would you believe it? she has absolutely fallen in Love with a tall Irish Baronet she met one night since we have been here.

JULIA

You Jest, Lydia!

LYDIA

No, upon my word. -- She really carries on a kind of Correspondence with him, under a feign'd name though, till she chooses to be known to him: -- but it is a Delia or a Celia, I assure you.

JULIA

Then, surely, she is now more indulgent to her Niece.

LYDIA

Quite the Contrary, since she has discover'd her own frailty, she is become more suspicious of mine. Then I must inform you of another Plague! -- That odious Acres is to be in Bath to day; so that I protest I shall be teas'd out of all spirits!

JULIA

Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best --

Sir Anthony shall use his interest
with Mrs. Malaprop.

LYDIA

But you have not heard the worst.
Unfortunately I had quarrel'd with my
poor Beverley, just before my Aunt
made the Discovery, and I have not
seen him since, to make it up.

JULIA

What was his Offence?

LYDIA

Nothing at all! -- But, I don't know
how it was, as often as we had been
together, we had never had a quarrel,
and, somehow, I was afraid he would
never give me an opportunity. So, last
Thursday, I wrote a Letter to myself,
to inform myself that Beverley was at
that time paying his Addresses to
another Woman. I sign'd it "Your
Friend Unknown", show'd it to
Beverley, charg'd him with his
Falsehood, put myself in a violent
Passion, and vow'd I'd never see him
more.

JULIA

And you let him {D}epart so, and have
not seen him {S}ince?

LYDIA

`Twas the next {D}ay my aunt found the
matter out. I {I}ntended only to have
teas'd him three days and a half, and
now I've lost him forever.

JULIA

If he is as deserving and sincere as
you have represented him to me, he
will never give you up so. Consider,
Lydia, you tell me he is but an
Ensign, and you have Thirty Thousand
Pounds.

LYDIA

But you know I lose most of my Fortune
if I marry without my aunt's consent,
till of age; and that is what I have

determin'd to do, ever since I knew the Penalty. Nor could I love the Man who would wish to wait a day for the Alternative.

JULIA

Nay, this is Caprice!

LYDIA

What, does Julia tax me with Caprice? --
I thought her Lover Faulkland had inur'd her to it.

JULIA

I do not love even his Faults.

LYDIA

But Apropos -- you have sent to him, I suppose?

JULIA

Not yet, upon my word -- nor has he the least idea of my being in Bath. Sir Anthony's resolution was so sudden, I could not inform him of it.

LYDIA

Well, Julia, you are your own Mistress, though under the protection of Sir Anthony, yet have you, for this long year, been a Slave to the Caprice, the Whim, the Jealousy of this ungrateful Faulkland, who will ever delay assuming the right of a Husband, while you suffer him to be equally imperious as a Lover.

JULIA

Nay, you are wrong entirely. We were contracted before my Father's death. That, and some consequent Embarrassments, have delay'd what I know to be my Faulkland's most ardent wish. He is too generous to trifle on such a point: -- and for his Character, you wrong him there, too. No, Lydia, he is too proud, too noble to be jealous; if he is Captious, 'tis without dissembling; if fretful, without rudeness. Unus'd to the Fopperies of Love, he is negligent of

the little duties expected from a Lover -- but being unhackney'd in the Passion, his Love is Ardent and Sincere; and as it engrosses his whole Soul, he expects every Thought and Emotion of his Mistress to move in unison with his. Yet, though his pride calls for this full return, his Humility makes him undervalue those qualities in him which would entitle him to it; and not feeling why he should be lov'd to the degree he wishes, he still suspects that he is not lov'd enough. This Temper, I must own, has cost me many unhappy Hours; but I have learn'd to think myself his debtor, for those imperfections which arise from the Ardour of his Love.

LYDIA

Well, I cannot blame you for defending him. But tell me candidly, Julia, had he never sav'd your life, do you think you should have been attach'd to him as you are? -- Believe me, the rude blast that overset your Boat was a prosperous Gale of Love to him.

JULIA

Gratitude may have strengthen'd my Attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I lov'd him before he had preserv'd me; yet surely that alone were an obligation sufficient.

LYDIA

Obligation! why a Water Spaniel would have done as much! -- Well, I should never think of giving my Heart to a Man because he could swim.

JULIA

Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

LYDIA

Nay, I do but jest. -- What's here?

[Re-enter LUCY in a hurry.]

LUCY

Ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute
just come home with your Aunt.

LYDIA

They'll not come here. -- Lucy, do you
watch.

[Exit LUCY.]

JULIA

Yet I must go. Sir Anthony does not
know I am here, and if we meet, he'll
detain me, to show me the Town. I'll
take another Opportunity of paying my
Respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she
shall treat me, as long as she
chooses, with her select words so
ingeniously misapplied, without being
mispronounced.

[Re-enter LUCY.]

LUCY

Lud! Ma'am, they are both coming up
Stairs.

LYDIA

Well, I'll not detain you, Coz. --
Adieu, my dear Julia. I'm sure you are
in haste to send to Faulkland. --
There -- through my Room you'll find
another Staircase. Adieu, my dear
Julia.

JULIA

Adieu!

[Embraces LYDIA, and exit.]

LYDIA

Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books.
Quick, quick! -- Fling Peregrine
Pickle under the toilet -- throw
Roderick Random into the closet -- put
The Innocent Adultery into The Whole
Duty of Man -- thrust Lord Aimworth
under the sofa -- cram Ovid behind the
bolster -- there -- put The Man of
Feeling into your pocket -- so, so --
now lay Mrs. Chapone in sight, and
leave Fordyce's Sermons open on the

table.

LUCY

burn it, Ma'am! the hair Dresser has
torn away as far as Proper Pride.

LYDIA

Never mind -- open at Sobriety. --
Fling me Lord Chesterfields Letters. --
Now for 'em.

[Exit LUCY.]

[Enter MRS. MALAPROP, and SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.]

MRS. MALAPROP

There, Sir Anthony, there sits the
deliberate Simpleton who wants to
disgrace her Family, and lavish
herself on a Fellow not worth a
Shilling.

LYDIA

Madam, I thought you once -- --

MRS. MALAPROP

You thought, ! I don't know any
business you have to think at all --
Thought does not become a young Woman.

SIR ANTHONY

Aye, Aye, this comes of reading.

LYDIA

I Believe, Sir, some People may be as
rude from Nature, as others can be
from Precept.

MRS. MALAPROP

Don't be so censorious, Lydia; I say,
don't give yourself such Airs. - Sir
Anthony, you'll excuse her; Come Miss,
the point we would request of you is,
that you will promise to forget this
Fellow -- to illiterate him, I say,
quite from your memory.

LYDIA

Ah, madam! our memories are
independent of our Wills. It is not so
easy to forget.

MRS.MALAPROP

But I say it is, Miss; there is nothing on Earth so easy as to forget, if a Person chooses to set about it. I'm sure I have as much forgot your poor dear Uncle as if he had never existed -- and I thought it my Duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don't become a young Woman.

SIR ANTHONY

Why sure she won't pretend to remember what she's order'd not! -- ay, this comes of her reading!

LYDIA

What Crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

MRS. MALAPROP

Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it. -- But tell me, will you promise to do as you're bid? Will you take a Husband of your Friends' choosing?

LYDIA

Madam, I must tell you plainly, that had I no preferment for any one else, the choice you have made would be my Aversion.

MRS. MALAPROP

What business have you, Miss, with {P}reference and Aversion? They don't become a young Woman; and you ought to know, that as both always wear off, 'tis safest in Matrimony to begin with a little Aversion. I am sure I hated your poor dear Uncle before Marriage as if he'd been a Blackamoor -- and yet, Miss, you are sensible what a Wife I made! -- and when it pleas'd Heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what Tears I shed! -- But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

LYDIA

Could I belie my Thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

MRS. MALAPROP

Take yourself to your Room. -- You are fit Company for nothing but your own ill humours.

LYDIA

Willingly, Ma'am -- I cannot change for the worse. [Exit.]

MRS. MALAPROP

There's a little intricate hussy for you!

SIR ANTHONY

It is not to be wonder'd at, Ma'am, -- all this is the natural Consequence of teaching Girls to read. Had I a thousand Daughters, by Heavens! I'd as soon have them taught the Black Art as their Alphabet!

MRS. MALAPROP

Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

SIR ANTHONY

In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observ'd your Niece's maid coming forth from a Circulating Library! -- She had a book in each hand -- they were half-bound Volumes, with marble Covers! -- From that moment I guess'd how full of Duty I should see her Mistress!

MRS. MALAPROP

Those are vile places, indeed!

SIR ANTHONY

Madam, a Circulating Library in a Town is as an Evergreen tree of Diabolical Knowledge! It blossoms through the Year! -- And depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the Fruit at last.

MRS. MALAPROP

Fie, fie, Sir Anthony! you surely speak laconically.

SIR ANTHONY

Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation now, what would you have a Woman know?

MRS. MALAPROP

Observe me, Sir Anthony. I would by no means wish a Daughter of mine to be a Progeny of Learning; I don't think so much Learning becomes a young Woman; but I would not have her be so inarticulate in her Ideas as you mention. For instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or {A}lgebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of Learning -- neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your Mathematical, Astronomical, Diabolical Instruments. -- But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at Nine years old, to a Boarding-School, in order to learn a little Ingenuity and Artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in Accounts; -- and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in Geometry, that she might know something of the contagious Countries; -- But above all, Sir Anthony, she should be Mistress of Orthodoxy, that she might not misspell, and mispronounce words so shamefully as Girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a Woman know; -- and I don't think there is a superstitious Article in it.

SIR ANTHONY

Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess, that you are a truly moderate and polite Arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the Question. But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point

in debate -- you say you have no objection to my Proposal?

MRS. MALAPROP

None, I assure you. I am under no positive Engagement with Mr. Acres, and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

SIR ANTHONY

Well, madam, I will write for the Boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the Proposal in my head. He is at present with his Regiment.

MRS. MALAPROP

We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

SIR ANTHONY

Objection! -- let him object if he dare! -- No, no, Mrs. Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a Frenzy directly. My process was always very simple -- in their younger days, 'twas "Jack, do this"; -- if he demurr'd, I knock'd him down -- and if he grumbl'd at that, I always sent him out of the Room.

MRS. MALAPROP

Ay, and the properest way, o' my Conscience! -- nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity. -- Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations; -- and I hope you will represent her to the captain as an object not altogether illegible.

SIR ANTHONY

Madam, I will handle the Subject prudently. -- Well, I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the Girl. -- Take my advice -- keep a tight hand: if she rejects this

Proposal, clap her under Lock and Key;
and if you were just to let the
Servants forget to bring her Dinner
for three or four days, you can't
conceive how she'd come about. [Exit.]

MRS. MALAPROP

Well, at any rate, I shall be glad to
get her from under my intuition. She
has somehow discover'd my partiality
for Sir Lucius O'Trigger -- sure, Lucy
can't have betray'd me! -- No, the
Girl is such a Simpleton, I should
have made her confess it. -- Lucy! --
Lucy! -- [Calls.] Had she been one of
your artificial ones, I should never
have trusted her.

[Re-enter LUCY.]

LUCY

Did you call, Ma'am?

MRS. MALAPROP

Yes, girl. -- Did you see Sir Lucius
while you was out?

LUCY

No, indeed, Ma'am, not a glimpse of
him.

MRS. MALAPROP

You are sure, Lucy, that you never
mention'd -- --

LUCY

Oh gemini! I'd sooner cut my Tongue
out.

MRS. MALAPROP

Well, don't let your Simplicity be
impos'd on.

LUCY

No, Ma'am.

MRS. MALAPROP

So, come to me presently, and I'll
give you another Letter to Sir Lucius;
but mind, Lucy -- if ever you betray
what you are entrusted with (unless it

be other people's secrets to me), you forfeit my Malevolence for ever; and your being a Simpleton shall be no excuse for your Locality. [Exit.]

LUCY

Ha! ha! ha! -- So, my dear Simplicity, let me give you a little Respite. -- [Altering her manner.] Let Girls in my Station be as fond as they please of appearing expert, and knowing in their Trusts; commend me to a Mask of Silliness, and a pair of Sharp eyes for my own Interest under it! -- Let me see to what Account have I turn'd my Simplicity lately. -- [Looks at a paper.] For abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an Ensign! -- in Money, sundry times, Twelve Pounds twelve; gowns, five; hats, ruffles, caps, &c., &c., numberless! -- From the said Ensign, within this last Month, Six Guineas and a half. -- About a Quarter's Pay! -- Item, from Mrs. Malaprop, for betraying the young People to her -- when I found matters were likely to be discover'd -- Two Guineas, and a black paduasoy. -- Item, from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers Letters -- which I never deliver'd -- two Guineas, and a pair of Buckles. -- Item, from Sir Lucius O'Trigger for cherishing an Idea he had modestly form's, that he was corresponding with the Neice, and not the Aunt -- Three crowns, Two Gold Pocket-pieces, and a Silver snuff-box! -- Well done, Simplicity! -- [Exit.]

ACT II

Scene I. -- CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE's Lodgings. [CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE and Mr. FAG.]

MR. FAG

Sir, while I was there Sir Anthony came in.

ABSOLUTE

Well, Fag -

MR. FAG

Fahg

ABSOLUTE

Fahg?

MR. FAG

Fahg.

ABSOLUTE

Well, Fog, What did he say, on hearing I was at Bath?

MR. FAG

Sir, in my Life I never saw an elderly Gentleman more astonish'd! He started back two or three paces, rapp'd out a dozen interjectural Oaths, and ask'd, what the Devil had brought you here.

ABSOLUTE

Well, sir, and what did you say?

MR, FAG

Oh, I lied, sir -- I forgot the precise Lie; but you may depend on't, he got no Truth from me. Yet, with Submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what has brought us to Bath; in order that we may lie a little consistently. Sir Anthony's Servants were curious, sir, very curious indeed.

ABSOLUTE

You have said nothing to them?

FAG

Oh, not a word, sir, -- not a word! Mr. Thomas, indeed, the Coachman, whom I take to be the discreetest of Whips --
--

ABSOLUTE

'Sdeath! -- you rascal! you have not trusted him!

MR. FAG

Oh, no, sir -- no -- no -- not a Syllable, upon my Veracity! -- He was, indeed, a little inquisitive; but I

was sly, Sir -- devilish sly! "My Master", said I, "honest Thomas", you know, sir, one says honest to one's inferiors, "is come to Bath to recruit" -- Yes, Sir, I said to Recruit -- and whether for Men, Money, or Constitution, you know, Sir, is nothing to him, nor any one else.

ABSOLUTE

Well, Recruit will do -- let it be so.

MR. FAG

Oh, sir, recruit will do surprisingly -- indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas, that your Honour had already enlisted five disbanded Chairmen, seven Minority waiters, and thirteen Billiard-markers.

ABSOLUTE

You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

MR. FAG

I beg pardon, sir -- I beg pardon -- but, with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge Indorsements as well as the Bill.

ABSOLUTE

Well, take care you don't hurt your credit, by offering too much Security. -- Is Mr. Faulkland return'd?

MR. FAG

He is above, Sir, changing his dress.

ABSOLUTE

Can you tell whether he has been inform'd of Sir Anthony and Miss Melville's arrival?

MR. FAG

I fancy not, Sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his Gentleman, who was with him at Bristol -- I think, Sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down -- --

ABSOLUTE

Go, tell him I am here.

MR. FAG

Yes, sir. -- [Going.] I beg pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favour to remember that we are Recruiting, if you please.

ABSOLUTE

Well, well. [Exit MR. Fag.]

Now for my whimsical friend -- if he does not know that his Mistress is here, I'll tease him a little before I tell him --
--

[Enter FAULKLAND.]

Faulkland, you're welcome to Bath again; you are punctual in your return.

FAULKLAND

Yes; I had nothing to detain me, when I had finish'd the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you? how stand matters between you and Lydia?

ABSOLUTE

Faith, much as they were; I have not seen her since our quarrel; however, I expect to be recall'd every hour.

FAULKLAND

Why don't you persuade her to go off with you at once?

ABSOLUTE

What, and lose two-thirds of her Fortune? you forget that, my Friend. --
No, no, I could have brought her to that long ago.

FAULKLAND

Nay then, you trifle too long -- if you are sure of her, propose to the Aunt in your own Character, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

ABSOLUTE

Softly, softly; for though I am convinc'd my little Lydia would elope

with me as Ensign Beverley, yet am I by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our Friends' Consent, a regular Humdrum Wedding, and the reversion of a good Fortune on my side: no, no; I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her, before I risk it. -- Well, but Faulkland, you'll dine with us to-day at the Hotel?

FAULKLAND

Indeed I cannot; I am not in Spirits to be of such a party.

ABSOLUTE

By heavens! I shall forswear your Company. You are the most teasing, Captious, incorrigible Lover! -- Do love like a Man.

FAULKLAND

I own I am unfit for Company.

ABSOLUTE

Am I not a Lover; ay, and a romantic one too? Yet do I carry everywhere with me such a confounded Farrago of Doubts, Fears, Hopes, Wishes, and all the flimsy Furniture of a Country Miss's brain!

FAULKLAND

Ah! Jack, your Heart and Soul are not, like mine, fix'd immutably on one only object. You throw for a large Stake, but losing, you could Stake, and throw again; -- but I have set my Sum of Happiness on this Cast, and not to succeed, were to be stripp'd of all.

ABSOLUTE

But, for Heaven's sake! what grounds for Apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present? Why, her Love - her Honour - her Prudence, you cannot doubt?

FAULKLAND

O! upon my Soul, I never . But what

grounds for Apprehension, did you say?
 Heavens! are there not a Thousand! I
 fear for her Spirits -- Her health --
 Her life! -- My absence may fret her;
 her anxiety for my return, her fears
 for me may oppress her gentle Temper. -

O Jack! when delicate and Feeling
 Souls are separated, there is not a
 Feature in the Sky, not a movement of
 the Elements, not an aspiration of the
 Breeze, but hints some cause for a
 Lover's apprehension!

ABSOLUTE

Ay, these mighty delicate Feelings are
 very troublesome Companions! -- well,
 then, Faulkland, if you were convinc'd
 that Julia were well and in Spirits,
 you would be entirely content?

FAULKLAND

I should be happy beyond measure -- I
 am anxious only for that.

ABSOLUTE

Then to cure your anxiety at once --
 Miss Melville is in perfect health,
 and is at this moment in Bath.

FAULKLAND

Nay, Jack -- don't trifle with me.

ABSOLUTE

She is arriv'd here with my father
 within this hour.

FAULKLAND

Can you be serious?

ABSOLUTE

Upon my Honour.

FAULKLAND

My dear friend! -- Hollo - my Hat - My
 dear Jack -- now nothing on Earth can
 give me a moment's uneasiness.

[Re-enter Mr. FAG.]

MR. FAG

Sir, Mr. Acres, just arriv'd, is

below.

ABSOLUTE

Stay, Faulkland, this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your Mistress has been ever since you left her. -- show this gentleman up.

[Exit MR. FAG.]

FAULKLAND

What, is he much acquainted in the Family?

ABSOLUTE

Oh, very intimate: I insist on your not going: besides, his Character will divert you.

FAULKLAND

Well, I should like to ask him a few Questions.

ABSOLUTE

He is likewise a Rival of mine -- that is, of my other Self's, for he does not think his Friend Captain Absolute ever saw the Lady in Question; and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of one Beverley, a conceal'd skulking Rival, who -- --

FAULKLAND

Hush! -- he's here.

[Enter ACRES.]

ACRES

Ha! my Dear Friend, noble Captain, and honest Jack, how do'st thou? just arriv'd, Faith, as you see. -- [to Faulkland] Sir, your humble Servant. -- Warm work on the roads, Jack! -- Odds whips and wheels! I've travell'd like a Comet, with a tail of dust all the way as long as the Mall.

ABSOLUTE

Ah! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric Planet, but we know your Attraction

hither. -- Give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

ACRES

Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you: Sir, I solicit your Connections. -- Hey, Jack -- what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who -- --

ABSOLUTE

Ay, Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

ACRES

Odso! She and your father can be but just arriv'd before me: -- I suppose you have seen them. Ah! Mr. Faulkland, you are indeed a happy man.

FAULKLAND

I have not seen Miss Melville yet, Sir; -- I hope she enjoy'd full health and Spirits in Devonshire?

ACRES

Never knew her better in my life, Sir, -- never better. Odds Blushes and Blooms! she has been as healthy as the German Spa.

FAULKLAND

Indeed! I did hear that she had been a little indispos'd.

ACRES

False, false, Sir -- only said to vex you: quite the reverse, I assure you.

FAULKLAND

There, Jack, you see she has the advantage of me; I had almost fretted myself ill.

ABSOLUTE

Now are you angry with your Mistress for not having been sick?

FAULKLAND

No, no, you misunderstand me: yet surely a little trifling indisposition

is not an unnatural Consequence of
Absence from those we love. -- Now
confess -- isn't there something
unkind in this violent, robust,
unfeeling health?

ABSOLUTE

Oh, it was very unkind of her to be
well in your absence, to be sure!

ACRES

Good apartments, Jack.

FAULKLAND

Well, Sir, but you was saying that
Miss Melville has been so exceedingly
well -- what then she has been merry
and gay, I suppose? -- Always in
Spirits -- hey?

ACRES

Merry, - Odds Crickets! she has been
the Bell and Spirit of the Company
wherever she has been -- so lively and
entertaining! so full of wit and
Humour!

FAULKLAND

There, Jack, there. -- Oh, by my Soul!
there is an innate Levity in Woman,
that nothing can overcome. -- What!
happy, and I away!

ABSOLUTE

Have done. -- How foolish this is!
just now you were only apprehensive
for your Mistress' Spirits.

FAULKLAND

Why, Jack, have I been happy? Have I
been the Joy and spirit of the
Company?

ABSOLUTE

No, indeed, you have not.

FAULKLAND

Have I been Lively and Entertaining?

ABSOLUTE

Oh, upon my word, I acquit you.

FAULKLAND

Have I been full of Wit and Humour?

ABSOLUTE

No, faith, to do you Justice, you have been confoundedly stupid indeed.

ACRES

What's the matter with the Gentleman?

ABSOLUTE

He is only expressing his great Satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy -- that's all -- hey, Faulkland?

FAULKLAND

Oh! I am rejoic'd to hear it -- yes, yes, she has a happy disposition!

ACRES

That she has indeed -- then she is so accomplish'd -- so sweet a Voice -- so expert at her Harpsichord -- such a mistress of Flat and Sharp, Squallante, Rumblante, and Quiverante! -- There was this time month -- Odds Minnums and Crotchets! how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert!

FAULKLAND

There again, what say you to this? you see she has been all mirth and Song -- not a thought of me!

ABSOLUTE

Pho! man, is not Music the Food of Love?

FAULKLAND

Well, well, it may be so. -- Pray, Mr. -- , what's his damn'd name? -- Do you remember what songs Miss Melville sung?

ACRES

Not I indeed.

ABSOLUTE

Stay, now, they were some pretty melancholy purling-Stream Airs, I

warrant; perhaps you may recollect; --
did she sing, When Absent from my
Soul's Delight?

ACRES

No, that wa'n't it.

ABSOLUTE

Or, Go, Gentle Gales! [Sings.]

ACRES

Oh, no! nothing like it. odds slips!
now I recollect one of them -- My
Heart's My Own, My Will is Free.
[Sings.]

FAULKLAND

Fool! fool that I am! to fix all my
Happiness on such a Trifler! 'Sdeath!
to make herself the Pipe and Ballad-
monger of a Circle! to soothe her
light Heart with Catches and Glee! --
What can you say to this, Sir?

ABSOLUTE

Why, that I should be glad to hear my
Mistress had been so merry, Sir.

FAULKLAND

Nay, nay, nay -- I'm not sorry that
she has been happy -- no, no, I am
glad of that -- I would not have had
her sad or sick -- yet surely a
Sympathetic heart would have shown
itself even in the choice of a Song --
She might have been temperately
healthy, and somehow, plaintively gay; --
but she has been dancing too, I doubt
not!

ACRES

What does the Gentleman say about
Dancing?

ABSOLUTE

He says the Lady we speak of dances as
well as she Sings.

ACRES

Ay, truly, does she -- there was at
our last race ball -- --

FAULKLAND

Hell and the Devil! there! -- there --
 I told you so! I told you so! Oh! she
 thrives in my absence! -- Dancing! but
 her whole feelings have been in
 opposition with mine; -- I have been
 anxious, silent, pensive, sedentary --
 my Days have been hours of care, my
 nights of Watchfulness. -- She has
 been all Health! Spirit! Laugh! Song!
 Dance! -- Oh! Damn'd, damn'd levity!

ABSOLUTE

For Heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't
 expose yourself so! -- Suppose she has
 danc'd, what then? -- does not the
 Ceremony of Society often oblige -- --

FAULKLAND

Well, well, I'll contain myself --
 perhaps as you say -- for form sake. --
 What, Mr. Acres, you were praising
 Miss Melville's manner of dancing a
 Minuet -- hey?

ACRES

Oh, I dare insure her for that -- but
 what I was going to speak of was her
 Country dancing. Odds swimmings! she
 has such an Air with her!

FAULKLAND

Now disappointment on her! -- Defend
 this, Absolute; why don't you defend
 this? -- Country-dances! Jigs and
 Reels! am I to blame now? A Minuet I
 could have forgiven -- I should not
 have minded that -- I say I should not
 have regarded a Minuet -- but Country-
 Dances! -- Zounds! had she made one in
 a cotillion -- I believe I could have
 forgiven even that -- but to be monkey-
 led for a night! -- to run the
 Gauntlet through a string of amorous
 palming Puppies! -- to show Paces like
 a manag'd Filly! -- Oh, Jack, there
 never can be but one Man in the world
 whom a truly modest and delicate Woman
 ought to pair with in a Country-Dance;
 and, even then, the rest of the
 Couples should be her great-Uncles and

Aunts!

ABSOLUTE

Ay, to be sure! -- Grand Fathers and Grandmothers!

FAULKLAND

If there be but one vicious mind in the set, 'twill spread like a Contagion -- the action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movement of the Jig -- their quivering, warm-breath'd sighs impregnate the very air -- the Atmosphere becomes electrical to Love, and each amorous Spark darts through every link of the Chain! -- I must leave you [Going.]

ABSOLUTE

Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good News.

FAULKLAND

Damn his News! [Exit.]

ABSOLUTE

Ha! ha! ha! poor Faulkland five minutes since -- "nothing on Earth could give him a moment's uneasiness!"

ACRES

The Gentleman wa'n't angry at my praising his Mistress, was he?

ABSOLUTE

A little jealous, I believe, Bob.

ACRES

You don't say so? Ha! ha! jealous of me -- that's a good joke.

ABSOLUTE

There's nothing strange in that, Bob; let me tell you, that Sprightly Grace and insinuating manner of yours will do some mischief among the Girls here.

ACRES

Ah! you joke -- ha! ha! mischief -- ha! ha! but you know I am not my own Property, my Dear Lydia has

forestall'd me. She could never abide me in the Country, because I us'd to dress so badly -- but Odds Frogs and Tambours! I shan't take matters so here, now ancient Madam has no Voice in it: I'll make my old Clothes know who's Master. I shall straightway cashier the Hunting-Frock, and render my Leather Breeches incapable, and instead, Odds Quilts and Blankets, I'll have your true rugged coat, and Petticoat Waistcoat. My Hair has been in Training some time.

ABSOLUTE

Indeed!

ACRES

Ay -- and tho'ff the side curls are a little restive, my hind-part takes it very kindly.

ABSOLUTE

Ah, you'll polish, I doubt not.

ACRES

Truly, I propose so -- then if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, Odds Triggers and Flints! I'll make him know the difference o't.

ABSOLUTE

Spoke like a Man!

[Re-enter MR. FAG.]

MR. FAG

Sir, there is a Gentleman below desires to see you. -- Shall I show him into the Parlour?

ABSOLUTE

Ay -- you may.

ACRES

Well, I must be gone -- --

ABSOLUTE

Stay; who is it Fag?

MR. FAG

Fahg

ABSOLUTE

Fahg?

MR. FAG

Fahg.

ABSOLUTE

Who is it, Fahg?

MR. FAG

Your Father, Sir.

ABSOLUTE

You Puppy, why didn't you show him up directly?

[Exit MR. FAG.]

ACRES

You have business with Sir Anthony. --
I expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop
at my Lodgings. I have sent also to my
Dear Friend Sir Lucius O'Trigger.
Adieu, Jack! we must meet at night,
Odds Bottles and Glasses, you shall
give me a dozen bumpers to little
Lydia.

ABSOLUTE

That I will with all my heart. -- --

[Exit ACRES.]

Now for a Parental Lecture -- I hope he has heard nothing of
the business that brought me here -- I wish the Gout had held
him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul!

[Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.]

Sir I am delighted to see you here; looking so well! your
sudden Arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

SIR ANTHONY

Very apprehensive, I dare say, Jack. --
What, you are recruiting here, hey?

ABSOLUTE

Yes, Sir, I am on Duty.

SIR ANTHONY

Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I did not expect it, for I was going to write to you on a little matter of Business. -- Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

ABSOLUTE

Pardon me, Sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty; and I pray frequently that you may continue so.

SIR ANTHONY

I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Now, Jack, I am sensible that the income of your commission, and what I have hitherto allow'd you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit.

ABSOLUTE

Sir, you are very good.

SIR ANTHONY

And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my Boy make some figure in the World. I have resolv'd, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

ABSOLUTE

Sir, your kindness overpowers me -- such generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensations even of filial affection.

SIR ANTHONY

I am glad you are so sensible of my Attention -- and you shall be Master of a large Estate in a few weeks.

ABSOLUTE

Let my future life, Sir, speak my gratitude; I cannot express the sense I have of your munificence. -- Yet, Sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the Army?

SIR ANTHONY

Oh, that shall be as your Wife chooses.

ABSOLUTE

My Wife, Sir!

SIR ANTHONY

Ay, ay, settle that between you -- settle that between you.

ABSOLUTE

A wife, Sir, did you say?

SIR ANTHONY

Ay, a Wife -- why, did not I mention her before?

ABSOLUTE

Not a word of her, Sir.

SIR ANTHONY

Odd so! -- I mustn't forget her though. -- Yes, Jack, the Independence I was talking of is by Marriage -- the Fortune is saddl'd with a Wife -- but I suppose that makes no difference.

ABSOLUTE

Sir! Sir! -- you amaze me!

SIR ANTHONY

Why, what the {D}evil's the matter with the {F}ool? Just now you were all {G}ratitude and {D}uty.

ABSOLUTE

I was, Sir, -- you talk'd to me of {I}ndependence and a {F}ortune, but not a word of a {W}ife.

SIR ANTHONY

Why -- what difference does that make? Odds life, Sir! - If you have the Estate, you must take it with the Live Stock on it, as it stands.

ABSOLUTE

If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase. -- Pray, sir, who is the Lady?

SIR ANTHONY

What's that to you, Sir? -- Come, give me your promise to Love, and to marry her directly.

ABSOLUTE

Sure, Sir, this is not very reasonable, to summon my Affections for a Lady I know nothing of!

SIR ANTHONY

I am sure, Sir, 'tis more unreasonable in you to object to a Lady you know nothing of.

ABSOLUTE

Then, Sir, I must tell you plainly that my inclinations are fix'd on another -- my Heart is engag'd to an Angel.

SIR ANTHONY

Then pray let it send an excuse. It is very sorry -- but Business prevents its waiting on her.

ABSOLUTE

But my Vows are pledg'd to her.

SIR ANTHONY

Let her foreclose, Jack; let her foreclose; they are not worth redeeming; besides, you have the Angel's vows in exchange, I suppose; so there can be no loss there.

ABSOLUTE

You must excuse me, Sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

SIR ANTHONY

Hark'ee, Jack; -- I have heard you for some time with Patience -- I have been cool -- quite cool; but take care -- you know I am compliance itself -- when I am not thwarted; -- no one more easily led -- when I have my own way; -- but don't put me in a frenzy.

ABSOLUTE

Sir, I must repeat it -- in this I cannot obey you.

SIR ANTHONY

Now damn me! if ever I call you Jack again while I live!

ABSOLUTE

Nay, Sir, but hear me.

SIR ANTHONY

Sir, I won't hear a word -- not a word! not one word! so give me your Promise by a Nod -- and I'll tell you what, Jack -- I mean, you dog -- if you don't, by -- --

ABSOLUTE

What, Sir, promise to link myself to some Mass of Ugliness! to -- --

SIR ANTHONY

Zounds! Sirrah! the Lady shall be as ugly as I choose: she shall have a hump on each shoulder; she shall be as crooked as the Crescent; her one eye shall roll like the Bull's in Cox's Museum; she shall have a skin like a Mummy, and the beard of a Goat -- she shall be all this, Sirrah! -- yet I will make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write Sonnets on her Beauty.

ABSOLUTE

This is Reason and Moderation indeed!

SIR ANTHONY

None of your sneering, Puppy! no Grinning, Jackanapes!

ABSOLUTE

Indeed, Sir, I never was in a worse humour for mirth in my Life.

SIR ANTHONY

'Tis false, Sir, I know you are laughing in your Sleeve; I know you'll grin when I am gone, Sirrah!

ABSOLUTE

Sir, I hope I know my Duty better.

SIR ANTHONY

None of your Passion, Sir! none of your Violence, if you please! -- It won't do with me, I promise you.

ABSOLUTE

Indeed, Sir, I never was cooler in my life.

SIR ANTHONY

'Tis a confounded lie! -- I know you are in a Passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young Dog! but it won't do.

ABSOLUTE

Nay, Sir, upon my word -- --

SIR ANTHONY

So you will fly out! can't you be cool like me? What the devil good can Passion do? -- Passion is of no Service, you impudent, insolent, overbearing Reprobate! -- There, you sneer again! don't provoke me! -- but you rely upon the mildness of my Temper -- you do, you dog! you play upon the meekness of my Disposition! -- Yet take care -- the Patience of a Saint may be overcome at last! -- but mark! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this: if you then agree, without any Condition, to do every thing on Earth that I choose, why -- confound you! I may in time forgive you. -- If not, zounds! don't enter the same Hemisphere with me! don't dare to breathe the same {A}ir, or use the same {L}ight with me; but get an {A}tmosphere and a {S}un of your own! I'll strip you of your Commission; I'll lodge a Five-and-Threepence in the hands of Trustees, and you shall live on the Interest. -- I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you! and Damn me! if ever I call you Jack again!

[Exit.]

ABSOLUTE

Mild, gentle, considerate Father -- I kiss your hands! -- What a tender method of giving his Opinion in these matters Sir Anthony has! I dare not trust him with the Truth. -- I wonder what old Wealthy Hag it is that he wants to bestow on me! -- Yet he married himself for Love! and was in his youth a bold Intriguer, and a Gay Companion!

[Re-enter MR.FAG.]

MR. FAG

Assuredly, Sir, our Father is wrath to a Degree; he comes down stairs eight or ten steps at a time -- muttering, growling, and thumping the Banisters all the way: I and the cook's Dog stand bowing at the Door -- rap! he gives me a stroke on the head with his Cane; bids me carry that to my Master; Then kicking the poor Turnspit into the Area, damns us all, for a Puppy Triumvirate! -- Upon my Credit, Sir, were I in your Place, and found my Father such very bad Company, I should certainly drop his {A}cquaintance.

ABSOLUTE

Cease your Impertinence, Sir, at present. -- Did you come in for nothing more? -- Stand out of the way! [Pushes him aside, and exit.]

MR. FAG

Soh! Sir Anthony trims my Master; he is afraid to reply to his Father -- then vents his Spleen on poor Fag! Fahg. Fahg? Fahg. then vents his Spleen on poor Fahg -- When one is vex'd by one Person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, is the vilest injustice! Ah! it shows the worst temper -- the basest -- --

[Enter BOY.]

BOY

Mr. Fag! Mr. Fag! your Master calls you.

MR. FAG

Mr. Fog! Mr. Fog! Well, you little dirty Rascal, you need not bawl so! -- The meanest disposition! the -- --

BOY

Quick, quick, Mr. Fag!

MR. FAG

Quick! quick! Mr. Fog, you impudent Jackanapes! am I to be commanded by you too? you little impertinent, Insolent, Kitchen-bred -- -- [Exit kicking and beating him.]

Scene II. -- The North Parade. [Enter LUCY.]

LUCY

Sir Lucius is generally more punctual, when he expects to hear from his Dear Delia, as he calls her: I wonder he's not here! --

[Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.]

SIR LUCIUS

Ha! my little Embassadress -- upon my Conscience, I have been looking for you; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

LUCY

[Speaking simply.] O Gemini! and I have been waiting for your Worship here on the North.

SIR LUCIUS

Faith! -- may be that was the reason we did not meet. Well, but my little Girl, have you got nothing for me?

LUCY

Yes, but I have -- I've got a Letter for you in my Pocket.

SIR LUCIUS

Faith! I guess'd you weren't come empty-handed -- Well -- let me see

what the Dear Creature says.

LUCY

There, Sir Lucius. [Gives him a letter.]

SIR LUCIUS

[Reads.] "Sir -- there is often a sudden incentive impulse in Love, that has a greater Induction than years of domestic Combination: such was the Commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O'Trigger." -- Very pretty, upon my word. -- " As my Motive is interested, you may be assur'd my Love shall never be miscellaneous." Very well. "Female punctuation forbids me to say more, yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last Criterion of my affections. Delia." Upon my Conscience! Lucy, your Lady is a Great Mistress of Language. Faith, she's quite the Queen of the Dictionary! -- for the devil a word dare refuse coming at her call -- though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

LUCY

Ay, Sir, a Lady of her Experience -- --

SIR LUCIUS

Experience! what, at Seventeen?

LUCY

true, Sir -- but then she reads so -- my Stars! how she will read off hand!

Sir LUCIUS

Faith, she must be very deep read to write this way -- though she is rather an arbitrary writer too -- for here are a great many poor words press'd into the Service of this Note, that would get their Habeas Corpus from any Court in Christendom.

LUCY

Gemini, I haven't told you of another Rival you have got.

SIR LUCIUS

Aye, pray who is he?

LUCY

Captain Absolute, the Son of our Neighbour, Sir Anthony Absolute - Knight - Lord - Baron - and Justice of the Peace.

SIR LUCIUS

sure, I know that Captain Absolute, he wants to marry Miss Languish too, does he? O if I find it so, I'll be bound I settle matters with him presently - Well my pretty Girl, -[Gives her money] here's a little something to buy you a ribbon; and meet me in the Evening, and I'll give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand to put you in mind. [Kisses her.]

LUCY

Lud! Sir Lucius -- I never seed such a Gemman! My Lady won't like you if you're so impudent.

SIR LUCIUS

Faith she will, Lucy! -- That same -- pho! what's the name of it? -- Modesty -- is a Quality in a Lover more prais'd by the Women than lik'd; so, if your Mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her Fifty -- my Dear.

LUCY

What, would you have me tell her a lie?

SIR LUCIUS

Ah, then, you Baggage! I'll make it a Truth presently.

LUCY

For Shame now! here is some one coming.

SIR LUCIUS

O, Faith, I'll quiet your Conscience! [Exit, humming a tune.]

[Enter MR. FAG.]

MR. FAG

So, so, Ma'am! I humbly beg pardon.

LUCY

Lud! now, Mr. Fag -

MR. FAG

Mr. Fog

LUCY

Mr. Fog?

MR. FAG

Mr. Fog.

LUCY

Mr. Fog -- you flurry one so.

MR. FAG

Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by --
so a little less simplicity, with a
grain or two more sincerity, if you
please. -- You play false with us,
madam. -- I saw you give the baronet a
letter. -- My master shall know this --
and if he don't call him out, I will.

LUCY

Ha! ha! ha! you gentlemen's gentlemen
are so hasty. -- That letter was from
Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton. -- She is
taken with Sir Lucius's address.

MR. FAG

How! what tastes some people have! --
Why, I suppose I have walk'd by her
window a hundred times. -- But what
says our young lady? any message to my
master?

LUCY

Sad news. Mr. Fag.

MR. FAG

Mr. Fahg

LUCY

Mr. Fahg?

MR. FAG

Mr. Fog

LUCY

Sad new Mr. Fog -- A worse rival than Acres! Sir Anthony Absolute has propos'd his son.

MR. FAG

What, Captain Absolute?

LUCY

Even so -- I overheard it all.

MR. FAG

Ha! ha! ha! very good, faith. Good-bye, Lucy, I must away with this news.

LUCY

Well, you may laugh -- but it is true, I assure you. -- [Going.] But, Mr. Fag -

MR. FAG

Mr. Fog

LUCY

Mr. Fahg?

MR. FAG

Mr. Fahg.

LUCY

Mr. Fahg, your master not to be cast down by this.

MR. FAG

Oh, he'll be so disconsolate!

LUCY

And charge him not to think of quarrelling with young Absolute.

MR. FAG

Never fear! never fear!

LUCY

Be sure -- bid him keep up his spirits.

MR. FAG

We will -- we will.

[Exeunt severally.]

ACT III

Scene I -- The North Parade. [Enter
CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]

ABSOLUTE

'Tis just as Fag - Fahg. Fahg? Fahg.
`Tis just as Fahg told me indeed. Dear
Scrawl, let me reperuse thee. (reads)
"My dear Beverly! When I write to you,
I need not add that I forgive you." -
That is very condescending indeed,
considering she had no reason to
quarrel with me- "Sir Anthony Absolute
has given you another Rival in the
person of his Odious Son." - O
Friendly Rival. - "I have never seen
him, nor, if I can help it ever will,
but be assur'd that I detest him as
sincerely as I am wholly Yours." - A
little singular that - "Your
distress'd Lydia." What a churl now
was Sir Anthony, never to hint whom he
had chosen for me? He wants to force
me to marry the very girl I am
plotting to run away with! He must not
know of my connection with her yet
awhile. He has too summary a method of
proceeding in these matters. However,
I'll read my recantation instantly. My
conversion is something sudden, indeed --
but I can assure him it is very
{S}incere. So, so -- here he comes. -
He looks plaguy gruff. [Steps aside.]

[Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.]

SIR ANTHONY

No -- I'll die sooner than forgive
him. Die, did I say? I'll live these
fifty years to plague him. At our last
meeting, his impudence had almost put
me out of Temper. An obstinate,
passionate, self-will'd Boy! Who can
he take after? - his Mother was
meekness itself, this is my return for
getting him before all his Brothers
and Sisters! -- for putting him, at

Twelve years old, into a Marching Regiment, and allowing him Fifty pounds a year, besides his Pay, ever since! But I have done with him; he's anybody's Son for me. I never will see him more, never -- never -- never.

ABSOLUTE

[Aside, coming forward.] Now for a penitential face.

SIR ANTHONY

Fellow, get out of my way!

ABSOLUTE

Sir, you see a Penitent before you.

SIR ANTHONY

I see an impudent Scoundrel before me.

ABSOLUTE

A sincere Penitent. I am come, Sir, to acknowledge my Error, and to submit entirely to your will.

SIR ANTHONY

What's that?

ABSOLUTE

I have been revolving, and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness, and kindness, and condescension to me.

SIR ANTHONY

Well, Sir?

ABSOLUTE

I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleas'd to mention concerning duty, and obedience, and authority.

SIR ANTHONY

Well, Puppy?

ABSOLUTE

Why then, Sir, the result of my reflections is -- a resolution to sacrifice every inclination of my own to your satisfaction.

SIR ANTHONY

Why now you talk sense -- Absolute Sense -- I never heard anything more sensible in my Life. Confound you! you shall be Jack again.

ABSOLUTE

I am happy in the Appellation.

SIR ANTHONY

Why then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the Lady really is. Nothing but your Passion and Violence, you silly Fellow, prevented my telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and Rapture -- prepare. What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

ABSOLUTE

Languish! What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

SIR ANTHONY

Worcestershire! no. Did you never meet Mrs. Malaprop and her Niece, Miss Languish, who came into our Country just before you were last order'd to your Regiment?

ABSOLUTE

Malaprop! Languish! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yet, stay -- I think I do recollect something. Languish! Languish! She squints, don't she?

SIR ANTHONY

Squints! Zounds! no.

ABSOLUTE

Then I must have forgot; it can't be the same Person.

SIR ANTHONY

Jack! Jack! what think you of blooming, Blushing, Love-breathing Seventeen?

ABSOLUTE

As to that, Sir, I am quite indifferent. If I can please you in

the matter, 'tis all I desire.

SIR ANTHONY

Nay, but Jack, such Eyes! such Eyes!
so innocently wild! so bashfully
irresolute! not a glance but speaks
and kindles some thought of Love!
Then, Jack, her Cheeks! her Cheeks,
Jack! so deeply blushing at the
insinuations of her Tell-tale Eyes!
Then, Jack, her lips! O, Jack, Lips
smiling at their own discretion; and
if not smiling, more sweetly pouting;
more lovely in sullenness!

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] That's she, indeed. Well
done, old Gentleman.

SIR ANTHONY

Then, Jack, her Neck! O Jack! Jack!

ABSOLUTE

And which is to be mine, Sir, the
Niece, or the Aunt?

SIR ANTHONY

Why, you unfeeling, insensible Puppy,
I despise you! When I was of your Age,
such a description would have made me
fly like a Rocket! The Aunt indeed!
Odds life! when I ran away with your
Mother, I would not have touch'd
anything old or ugly to gain an
Empire.

ABSOLUTE

Not to please your Father, Sir?

SIR ANTHONY

To please my Father! Zounds! not to
please -- O, my Father -- Oddso! --
yes -- yes; if my Father indeed had
desir'd -- that's quite another
matter. Though he wa'n't the indulgent
Father that I am, Jack.

ABSOLUTE

I dare say not, Sir.

SIR ANTHONY

But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your Mistress is so beautiful?

ABSOLUTE

Sir, I repeat it -- if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a Woman the worse for being handsome; but, Sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one Eye, and so forth -- Now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of Limbs, and a limited quantity of {humps}: and though one eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of two, I would not wish to affect a Singularity in that Article.

SIR ANTHONY

What a phlegmatic Sot it is! Zounds, Sirrah, you're an Anchorite! -- a vile, insensible Stock! So lifeless a Clod as you should not dare to approach the Arms of such a glowing Beauty - to lie like a Cucumber, on a hot bed. Oddslife! I have a great mind to marry the girl myself!

ABSOLUTE

I am entirely at your disposal, Sir: if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the Aunt; or if you should change your mind, and take the old Lady -- 'tis the same to me -- I'll marry the Niece.

SIR ANTHONY

Upon my word, Jack, thou'rt either a very great Hypocrite, or -- but, come, I know your indifference on such a Subject must be all a Lie -- I'm sure it must -- come, now -- damn your demure face! -- come, confess Jack -- you have been lying, ha'n't you? You have been playing the Hypocrite, hey! -- I'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the Hypocrite.

ABSOLUTE

I'm sorry, Sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you should be so mistaken.

SIR ANTHONY

Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me, I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the Lady directly, you leaden nerv'd - wooden headed Dolt! Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you -- come along, I'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with Rapture and Impatience -- if you don't, egad, I will marry the {G}irl myself!

[Exeunt.]

Scene II -- JULIA'S Dressing-room. [FAULKLAND discover'd alone.]

FAULKLAND

They told me Julia would return directly; I wonder she is not yet come! How mean does this captious, unsatisfied Temper of mine appear to my cooler Judgment! Yet I know not that I indulge it in any other point: but on this one subject, and to this one subject, whom I think I love beyond my life, I am ever ungenerously fretful and madly capricious! I am conscious of it -- yet I cannot correct myself!

[Enter JULIA.]

JULIA

I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

FAULKLAND

(Aside) What tender honest joy sparkle in her eyes! How delicate is the warmth of her expression! I am ashamed to appear less happy -- Yet, I have come resolved to wear a face of upbraiding.)

JULIA

Faulkland, whatever is the matter?

When your kindness can make me happy,
 let me not think that I discover
 something of coldness in your
 Salutation.

FAULKLAND

'Tis but your fancy, Julia. I am
 rejoic'd to see you -- to see you in
 such health. Sure I have no Cause for
 coldness?

JULIA

Nay, then, I see you have taken
 something ill. You must not conceal
 from me what it is.

FAULKLAND

Well, then -- Shall I own to you that
 my joy at hearing of your health and
 arrival here, by your Neighbour Acres,
 was somewhat dampen'd by his dwelling
 much on the high Spirits you had
 enjoyed in Devonshire -- on your Mirth --
 your Singing -- Dancing, and I know
 not what! For such is my temper,
 Julia, that I should regard every
 mirthful moment in your absence as a
 Treason to Constancy. The mutual Tear
 that steals down the Cheek of Parting
 Lovers is a Compact, that no Smile
 shall live there till they meet again.

JULIA

Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland
 with this teasing minute caprice? Can
 the idle reports of a silly boor weigh
 in your breast against my tried
 affections?

FAULKLAND

They have no weight with me, Julia:
 No, no -- I am happy if you have been
 so -- yet only say, that you did not
 sing with mirth -- say that you
 thought of Faulkland in the dance.

JULIA

I never can be happy in your absence.
 If I wear a Countenance of Content, it
 is to show that my Mind holds no doubt
 of my Faulkland's Truth. If I seemed

sad, it were to make Malice triumph;
 and say, that I had fixed my heart on
 one, who left me to lament his roving,
 and my own Credulity. Believe me,
 Faulkland, I mean not to upbraid you,
 when I say, that I have often dressed
 Sorrow in Smiles, lest my Friends
 should guess whose unkindness had
 caused my Tears.

FAULKLAND

You were ever all goodness to me. Oh,
 I am a Brute, when I but admit a doubt
 of your true Constancy!

JULIA

If ever without such Cause from you,
 as I will not suppose possible, you
 find my Affections veering but a
 point, may I become a Proverbial Scoff
 for Levity and base Ingratitude.

FAULKLAND

Ah! Julia, that last word is grating
 to me. I would I had no Title to your
 Gratitude! Search your heart, Julia;
 perhaps what you have mistaken for
 Love, is but the warm Effusion of a
 too thankful heart.

JULIA

For what Quality must I love you?

FAULKLAND

For no Quality! To regard me for any
 Quality of Mind or Understanding, were
 only to Esteem me. And for Person -- I
 have often wished myself deformed, to
 be convinced that I owed no obligation
 there for any part of your affection.

JULIA

Where Nature has bestowed a show of
 nice Attention in the Features of a
 Man, he should laugh at it as
 misplaced. I have seen Men, who in
 this vain Article, perhaps, might rank
 above you; but my Heart has never
 asked my Eyes if it were so or not.

FAULKLAND

Now this Sentiment is not well from you, Julia -- I despise Person in a Man -- yet if you loved me as I wish, though I were an AETHiop, you'd think none so fair.

JULIA

I see you are determined to be unkind! The Contract which my poor Father bound us in gives you more than a Lover's Privilege.

FAULKLAND

Again, Julia, you raise Ideas that feed and justify my doubts. I would not have been more free -- no -- I am proud of my restraint. Yet -- yet -- perhaps your high respect alone for this solemn Compact has fettered your inclinations, which else had made a worthier Choice. How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought and promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love?

JULIA

Then try me now. Let us be free as Strangers as to what is past: my heart will not feel more Liberty!

FAULKLAND

There now! so hasty, Julia! so anxious to be free! If your Love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not lose your hold, even though I wished it!

JULIA

Oh! you torture me to the heart! I cannot bear it.

FAULKLAND

I do not mean to distress you. If I loved you less I should never give you an uneasy moment. But hear me. All my fretful doubts arise from this. Women are not used to weigh and separate the motives of their Affections: the cold dictates of Prudence, Gratitude, or Filial duty, may sometimes be mistaken for the Pleadings of the Heart. I

would not boast -- yet let me say,
 that I have neither Age, Person, nor
 Character, to found dislike on my
 Fortune such as few Ladies could be
 charged with Indiscretion in the
 Match. O Julia! when Love receives
 such Countenance from Prudence, nice
 minds will be suspicious of its birth.

JULIA

I know not whither your {I}nsinuations
 would tend: -- but as they seem
 pressing to insult me, I will spare
 you the regret of having done so. -- I
 have given you no Cause for this!

[Exit in tears.]

FAULKLAND

In Tears! Stay, Julia: stay but for a
 moment. -- The Door is fastened! --
 Julia! -- my soul -- but for one
 moment! -- I hear her Sobbing! --
 'Sdeath! what a Brute am I to use her
 thus! Yet stay! -- Aye -- she is
 coming now: -- how little Resolution
 there is in a Woman! -- how a few soft
 words can turn them! -- No, faith! --
 she is not coming either. -- Why,
 Julia -- my Love -- say but you
 forgive me -- come but to tell me that --
 now this is being too resentful.
 Stay! She is coming too -- I thought
 she would -- no steadiness in
 anything: her going away must have
 been a mere Trick then -- she shan't
 see that I was hurt by it. -- I'll
 affect indifference -- [Hums a tune;
 then listens.] No -- Zounds! She's not
 coming! -- nor don't intend it, I
 suppose. -- This is not Steadiness,
 but Obstinacy! Yet I deserve it. --
 What, after so long an absence to
 quarrel with her Tenderness! -- 'Twas
 barbarous and unmanly! -- I should be
 ashamed to see her now. -- I'll wait
 till her just resentment is abated --
 and when I distress her so again, may
 I lose her forever! and be linked
 instead to some antique virago, whose
 gnawing passions, and long hoarded

spleen, shall make me curse my folly
half the day and all the night.
[Exit.]

Scene III -- MRS. MALAPROP's Lodgings. [MRS. MALAPROP, with a
letter in her hand, and CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]

MRS. MALAPROP

Your being Sir Anthony's Son, Captain,
would itself be a sufficient
accommodation; but from the Ingenuity
of your appearance, I am convinced you
deserve the Character here given of
you.

ABSOLUTE

Permit me to say, madam, that as I
never yet have had the pleasure of
seeing Miss Languish, my principal
Inducement in this affair at present
is the Honour of being allied to Mrs.
Malaprop; of whose intellectual
accomplishments, elegant Manners, and
unaffected Learning, no Tongue is
silent.

MRS. MALAPROP

Sir, you do me infinite Honour! I beg,
Captain, you'll be seated. -- [They
sit.] Ah! few Gentlemen, now-a-days,
know how to value the ineffectual
Qualities in a Woman! few think how a
little knowledge becomes a
Gentlewoman! -- Men have no Sense now
but for the worthless Flower, Beauty!

ABSOLUTE

It is but too true, indeed, Ma'am; --
yet I fear our Ladies should share the
blame -- they think our admiration of
Beauty so great, that knowledge in
them would be superfluous. Thus, like
Garden-Trees, they seldom show Fruit,
till time has robbed them of the more
Specious Blossom. -- Few, like Mrs.
Malaprop and the Orange-tree, are rich
in both at once!

MRS. MALAPROP

Sir, you overpower me with good-
breeding. -- (Aside) He is the very

Pineapple of politeness! -- You are not ignorant, Captain, that this giddy Girl has somehow contrived to fix her Infections on a beggarly, strolling, eaves-dropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

ABSOLUTE

Oh, I have heard the silly Affair before. -- I'm not at all prejudic'd against her on that Account.

MRS. MALAPROP

You are very good and very Considerate, Captain. I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair; long ago I laid my positive Conjunctions on her, never to think on the Fellow again; -- I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her; but, I am sorry to say, she seems resolved to decline every Particle that I enjoin her.

ABSOLUTE

It must be very distressing, indeed, Ma'am.

MRS. MALAPROP

Oh! it gives me the Hydrostatics to such a Degree. -- I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another Letter from the Fellow; I believe I have it in my Pocket.

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] Oh, the Devil! my last Note.

MRS. MALAPROP

Ay, here it is.

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] Ay, my Note indeed!

MRS. MALAPROP

There, perhaps you may know the writing. [Gives him the letter.]

ABSOLUTE

I think I have seen the hand before --
yes, I certainly must have seen this
hand before -- --

MRS. MALAPROP

Nay, but read it, Captain.

ABSOLUTE

[Reads.] "My Soul's Idol, my adored
Lydia!" -- Very tender, indeed!

MRS. MALAPROP

Tender! ay, and profane too, o' my
conscience.

ABSOLUTE

[Reads.] "I am excessively alarmed at
the Intelligence you send me, the more
so as my new Rival" -- --

MRS. MALAPROP

That's you, Sir.

ABSOLUTE

[Reads.] "Has universally the
Character of being an accomplished
Gentleman and a Man of Honour." --
Well, that's handsome enough.

MRS. MALAPROP

O, the Fellow has some design in
writing so.

ABSOLUTE

That he had, I'll answer for him,
Ma'am.

MRS. MALAPROP

But go on, Sir -- you'll see
presently.

ABSOLUTE

[Reads.] "As for the old weather-
beaten she-dragon who guards you" --
Who can he mean by that?

MRS. MALAPROP

Me, Sir! -- Me! -- he means me! --
There -- what do you think now? -- but
go on a little further.

ABSOLUTE

Impudent Scoundrel! -- [Reads.] "It shall go hard but I will elude her vigilance, as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity, which makes her dress up her coarse Features, and deck her dull Chat with hard words which she don't understand" -- --

MRS. MALAPROP

There, Sir, an attack upon my Language! what do you think of that? -- an aspersion upon my parts of Speech! was ever such a Brute! Sure, if I reprehend any thing in this world, it is the use of my {O}racular Tongue, and a nice derangement of Epitaphs!

ABSOLUTE

He deserves to be hanged and quartered! let me see -- [Reads.] "same ridiculous vanity" --

MRS. MALAPROP

You need not read it again, Sir.

ABSOLUTE

I beg pardon, Ma'am. -- [Reads.] "does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from Flattery and pretended admiration" -- an impudent Coxcomb! -- "So that I have a Scheme to see you shortly with the old Harridan's Consent, and even to make her a go-between in our Interview." -- Was ever such assurance!

MRS. MALAPROP

Did you ever hear anything like it? -- he'll elude my Vigilance, will he -- yes, yes! ha! ha! he's very likely to enter these doors; -- we'll try who can plot best!

ABSOLUTE

So we will, Ma'am -- so we will! Ha! ha! ha! a conceited Puppy, ha! ha! ha! -- Well, but Mrs. Malaprop, as the Girl seems so infatuated by this Fellow, suppose you were to wink at

her corresponding with him for a little time -- let her even plot an Elopement with him -- then do you connive at her escape -- while I, just in the Nick, will have the Fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his Stead.

MRS.MALAPROP

I am delighted with the Scheme; never was anything better perpetrated!

ABSOLUTE

But, pray, could not I see the Lady for a few minutes now? -- I should like to try her Temper a little.

MRS.MALAPROP

Why, I don't know -- I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind. There is a Decorum in these matters.

ABSOLUTE

Lord! she won't mind me -- only tell her Beverley -- --

MRS.MALAPROP

Sir!

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] Gently, good Tongue.

MRS.MALAPROP

What did you say of Beverley?

ABSOLUTE

Oh, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of Jest, that it was Beverley who was below; she'd come down fast enough then -- ha! ha! ha!

MRS.MALAPROP

`Twould be a Trick she well deserves; besides, you know the fellow tells her he'll get my Consent to see her -- ha! ha! Let him if he can, I say again. Lydia, come down here! -- [Calling.] He'll make me a go-between in their Interviews! -- ha! ha! ha! Come down, I say, Lydia! I don't wonder at your

laughing, ha! ha! ha! his impudence is truly ridiculous.

ABSOLUTE

'Tis very ridiculous, upon my Soul, Ma'am, ha! ha! ha!

MRS.MALAPROP

The little hussy won't hear. Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is -- For the present, captain, your servant. Ah! you've not done laughing yet, I see -- elude my vigilance; yes, yes; ha! ha! ha!

[Exit.]

ABSOLUTE

Ha! ha! ha! one would think now that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my Prize with Security; but such is Lydia's Caprice, that to undeceive were probably to lose her. I'll see whether she knows me. [Walks aside, and seems engaged in looking at the pictures.]

[Enter LYDIA.]

LYDIA

What a Scene am I now to go through! surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart. -- there stands the hated Rival -- an officer too! -- but oh, how unlike my Beverley! I wonder he don't begin -- truly he seems a very negligent wooer! -- quite at his ease, upon my word! -- I'll speak first -- Mr. Absolute.

ABSOLUTE

Ma'am. [Turns round.]

LYDIA

Heavens! Beverley!

ABSOLUTE

Hush; -- hush, my Life! softly! be not surprised!

LYDIA

I am so astonished! and so terrified!
and so overjoyed! -- for Heaven's
sake! how came you here?

ABSOLUTE

Briefly, I have deceived your Aunt --
I was informed that my new Rival was
to visit here this Evening, and
contriving to have him kept away, have
passed myself on her for Captain
Absolute.

LYDIA

charming! And she really takes you for
young Absolute?

ABSOLUTE

Oh, she's convinced of it.

LYDIA

Ha! ha! ha! I can't forbear laughing
to think how her Sagacity is
overreached! But my dear Beverly! this
deception cannot last, so you know
this Captain Absolute?

ABSOLUTE

Why I have a kind of slight
acquaintance with him.

LYDIA

Do you think you could not persuade
him to desist from so vain a pursuit?

ABSOLUTE

Hardly, I should think, indeed. -but
we trifle with our precious moments --
such another opportunity may not
occur; then let me now conjure my
kind, my condescending Angel, to fix
the time when I may rescue her from
undeserving persecution, and with a
licensed warmth plead for my reward.

LYDIA

Will you then, Beverley, consent to
forfeit that portion of my paltry
wealth? -- that burden on the wings of
Love?

ABSOLUTE

Oh, come to me -- rich only thus -- in
Loveliness! Bring no Portion to me but
thy Love -- 'twill be generous in you,
Lydia -- for well you know, it is the
only Dower your poor Beverley can
repay.

LYDIA

[Aside.] How persuasive are his words! --
how charming will Poverty be with
him!

ABSOLUTE

Ah! my Soul, what a life will we then
live! Love shall be our Idol and
Support! we will worship him with a
Monastic strictness; abjuring all
worldly Toys, to centre every Thought
and Action there, proud of Calamity,
we will enjoy the wreck of Wealth;
while the surrounding gloom of
Adversity shall make the flame of our
pure love show doubly bright. By
Heavens! I would fling all goods of
{F}ortune from me with a prodigal
hand, to enjoy the scene where I might
clasp my Lydia to my bosom, and say,
the world {A}ffords no smile to me but
here -- [Embracing her.] [Aside.] If
she holds out now, the devil is in it!

LYDIA

[Aside.] Now could I fly with him to
the antipodes! but my persecution is
not yet come to a Crisis.

[Re-enter MRS. MALAPROP, listening.]

MRS. MALAPROP

[Aside.] I am impatient to know how
the little hussy deports herself.

ABSOLUTE

So pensive, Lydia! -- is then your
warmth abated?

MRS. MALAPROP

[Aside.] Warmth abated! -- so! -- she
has been in a Passion, I suppose.

LYDIA

No -- nor ever can while I have life.

MRS.MALAPROP

[Aside.] An ill tempered little Devil!
She'll be in a Passion all her life --
will she?

LYDIA

Think not the idle threats of my
ridiculous Aunt can ever have any
weight with me.

MRS.MALAPROP

[Aside.] Very dutiful, upon my word!

LYDIA

Let her choice be Captain Absolute,
but Beverley is mine.

MRS.MALAPROP

[Aside.] I am astonished at her
assurance! -- to his Face -- This is
to his Face!

ABSOLUTE

Thus then let me enforce my Suit.
[Kneeling.]

MRS.MALAPROP

[Aside.] Ay, poor young man! -- down
on his knees entreating for pity! -- I
can contain no longer. -- [Coming
forward.] Why, huzzy! huzzy! -- I have
overheard you.

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] Oh, confound her vigilance!

LYDIA

Madam! Then since you have discover'd
the deceit-

MRS. MALAPROP

Discovered your impudence, you mean!
deceit!-you have not modesty enough to
attempt it - Captain Absolute, I know
not how to apologize for her shocking
rudeness.

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] So all's safe, I find. --
 [Aloud.] I have hopes, madam, that
 time will bring the young Lady -- --

MRS. MALAPROP

Oh, there's nothing to be hoped for
 from her! she's as headstrong as an
 Allegory on the banks of Nile.

LYDIA

Nay, madam, what do you charge me with
 now?

MRS. MALAPROP

Why, thou unblushing Rebel -- didn't
 you tell this Gentleman to his face
 that you loved another better? --
 didn't you say you never would be his?

LYDIA

No, madam -- I did not.

MRS. MALAPROP

Good heavens! what Assurance! --
 Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that
 lying don't become a young Woman! --
 Didn't you boast that Beverley, that
 Stroller Beverley, possessed your
 Heart? -- Tell me that, Hussy.

LYDIA

'Tis true, Ma'am, and none but
 Beverley -- --

MRS. MALAPROP

Hold! -- hold, Assurance! -- you shall
 not be so rude.

ABSOLUTE

Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop
 the young Lady's speech: she's very
 welcome to talk thus -- it does not
 hurt me in the least, I assure you.

MRS. MALAPROP

You are too good, Captain -- too
 amiably patient -- but come with me,
 miss. -- Let us see you again soon,
 Captain -- remember what we have
 fixed.

ABSOLUTE

I shall, Ma'am.

MRS. MALAPROP

Come, take a graceful leave of the Gentleman.

LYDIA

May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my lov'd Bev -- --

MRS. MALAPROP

Hussy! I'll choke the word in your throat! -- Come along -- come along.

[Exeunt severally; CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE kissing his hand to LYDIA -- Mrs. MALAPROP stopping her from speaking.]

Scene IV -- ACRES' Lodgings. [ACRES, as just dressed, and DAVID.]

ACRES

Indeed, David -- do you think I become it so?

DAVID

You are quite another Creature, believe me, Master, by the Mass! an' we've any luck we shall see the Devon Monkerony in all the Print-shops in Bath!

ACRES

Dress does make a Difference, David.

DAVID

'Tis all in all, I think. --

ACRES

Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.

DAVID

So I says of your Honour's boots; but the Boy never heeds me!

ACRES

But, David, has Mr. De-la-Grace, {the dance master} been here? I must rub up my Balancing, and Chasing, and Boring.

DAVID
I'll call again, Sir.

ACRES
Do -- and see if there are any Letters
for me at the Post-office.

DAVID
I will. -- By the Mass, I can't help
looking at your head! -- if I hadn't
been by at the Cooking, I wish I may
die if I should have known the Dish
again myself! [Exit.]

[Enter SERVANT.]

SERVANT
Here is Sir Lucius O'Trigger to wait
on you, Sir.

ACRES
Show him in.

[Exit SERVANT.]

[Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.]

SIR LUCIUS
Mr. Acres, I am delighted to embrace
you.

ACRES
My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.

SIR LUCIUS
Pray, my friend, what has brought you
so suddenly to Bath?

ACRES
Faith! I have followed Cupid's Jack-a-
Lantern, and find myself in a Quagmire
at last. -- In short, I have been very
ill used, Sir Lucius. -- I don't
choose to mention names, but look on
me as on a very ill used Gentleman.

SIR LUCIUS
Pray what is the Case? -- I ask no
Names.

ACRES

Mark me, Sir Lucius, I fall as deep as
 need be in love with a young Lady --
 her friends take my part -- I follow
 her to Bath -- send word of my
 Arrival; and receive Answer, that the
 Lady is to be otherwise disposed of. --
 This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill-
 used.

SIR LUCIUS

Very ill, upon my Conscience. -- Pray,
 can you divine the cause of it?

ACRES

Why, there's the matter; she has
 another Lover, who use to skulk about
 their Park, in Devon, and whom, I am
 told is playing the same Game here.
 One Beverley -- Odds slanders and
 lies! He must be at the bottom of it.

SIR LUCIUS

A Rival in the Case, is there? -- and
 you think he has supplanted you
 unfairly?

ACRES

Unfairly! to be sure he has. He never
 could have done it fairly.

SIR LUCIUS

Then sure you know what is to be done!

ACRES

Not I, upon my Soul!

SIR LUCIUS

Put him to Death.

ACRES

What! fight him!

SIR LUCIUS

Ay, to be sure: what can I mean else?

ACRES

But he has given me no provocation.

SIR LUCIUS

Now, I think he has given you the
 greatest provocation in the world. Can

a man commit a more heinous offence
against another than to fall in Love
with the same Woman? Oh, by my Soul!
it is the most unpardonable breach of
Friendship.

ACRES

Breach of Friendship! ay, ay; but I
have no acquaintance with this man. I
never saw him in my life.

SIR LUCIUS

That's no argument at all -- he has
the less right then to take such a
Liberty.

ACRES

Gad, that's true -- Odds Blows and
Bruises! I feel my Wrath rising
against him; but on what grounds can I
quarrel with him?

SIR LUCIUS

Is not a woman concern'd? sure that's
enough -Since the days of the Trojan
horse, to this hour, where ever
there's a Woman in the case, there's
very good grounds for a quarrel.

ACRES

I grow full of Anger, Sir Lucius! -- I
fire apace! Odds Hilts and Blades! -
But couldn't I contrive to have a
little right of my side?

SIR LUCIUS

What the Devil signifies right, when
your honour is concerned? Do you think
Achilles, or my little Alexander the
Great, ever inquired where the right
lay? No, by my Soul, they drew their
Swords, and left the lazy Sons of
Peace to settle the Justice of it.

ACRES

Your words are a Grenadier's march to
my Heart! I believe Courage must be
catching! I certainly do feel a kind
of Valour rising as it were -- a kind
of Courage, as I may say. -- Odds
Flints, Pans, and Triggers! I'll

challenge him directly. -- Zounds! as the man in the play says, I could do such deeds!

SIR LUCIUS

Come, come, there must be no Passion at all in the Case -- these things should always be done civilly.

ACRES

I must be in a Passion, Sir Lucius -- I must be in a Rage. -- Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a Rage, if you love me! Come, here's Pen and Paper. -- [Sits down to write.] I would the ink were red! -- Indite, I say, indite! -- How shall I begin? Odds Bullets and Blades! I'll write a good bold hand, however.

SIR LUCIUS

Pray compose yourself.

ACRES

Come -- now, shall I begin with an Oath? Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a "damn me".

SIR LUCIUS

Pho! pho! do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now -- "Sir" --

ACRES

That's too civil by half.

SIR LUCIUS

"To prevent the Confusion that might arise" --

ACRES

Well -- --

SIR LUCIUS

"From our both addressing the same Lady" --

ACRES

Ay, there's the reason -- "same Lady" -- well --

SIR LUCIUS

"I shall expect the Honour of your
Company" --

ACRES

Zounds! I'm not asking him to dinner.

SIR LUCIUS

Pray be easy.

ACRES

Well, then, "Honour of your Company" --

SIR LUCIUS

"To settle our Pretensions" --

ACRES

Well.

SIR LUCIUS

Let me see, ay, King's-Mead-Fields
will do -- "in King's-Mead-Fields".

ACRES

So, that's done --

SIR LUCIUS

You see now this little Explanation
will put a stop at once to all
Confusion or misunderstanding that
might arise between you.

ACRES

Ay, we fight to prevent any
misunderstanding.

SIR LUCIUS

Now, I'll leave you to fix your own
time. -- Take my advice, and you'll
decide it this Evening if you can;
then let the worst come of it, 'twill
be off your mind to-morrow.

ACRES

Very true.

SIR LUCIUS

So I shall see nothing of you, unless
it be by Letter, till the Evening. --
I would do myself the honour to carry

your message; but, to tell you a Secret, I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands. There is a gay captain here, who put a jest on me lately, and I only want to fall in with the Gentleman, to call him out.

ACRES

By my Valour, I should like to see you fight first! Odds life! I should like to see you kill him if it was only to get a little Lesson.

SIR LUCIUS

I shall be very proud of instructing you. -- Well for the present --
[Going]

ACRES

Odds Manners and Bones! I must see you down.

SIR LUCIUS

Not a Foot, Faith! - I hate Ceremony, unless it be in the Field.

ACRES

You must permit me, by my Valour! my Dear Sir Lucius, - my best Friend - my brother Hero - my -

[Exeunt Complementing.]

INTERMISSION

ACT IV

Scene I -- ACRES' Lodgings. [Enter ACRES and DAVID.]

ACRES

Ah! David, if you had heard Sir Lucius! -- Odds sparks and Flames! he would have roused your valour.

DAVID

Not he, indeed. I hate such bloodthirsty Cormorants. Look'ee, Master, if you wanted a bout at Boxing, Quarter staff, or short-Staff, I should never be the Man to bid you

cry off: but for your curst Sharps and Snaps, I never knew any good come of 'em.

ACRES

But my Honour, David, my Honour! I must be very careful of my Honour.

DAVID

Ay, by the Mass! and I would be very careful of it; and I think in return my Honour couldn't do less than to be very careful of me.

ACRES

Odds Blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his Honour!

DAVID

I say then, it would be but civil in Honour never to risk the loss of a Gentleman. -- Look'ee, Master, this Honour seems to me to be a marvellous false Friend: ay, truly, a very Courtier-like Servant. -- Put the Case, I was a Gentleman, (which, thank God, no one can say of me;) well -- my Honour makes me Quarrel with another gentleman of my Acquaintance. -- So -- we fight, (pleasant enough that!), Boo! -- I kill him -- (the more's my Luck!) - now, pray who gets the Profit of it? -- Why, my Honour. But put the Case that he kills me! -- by the Mass! I go to the Worms, and my Honour whips over to my Enemy.

ACRES

No, David -- in that Case! -- Odds Crowns and Laurels! your Honour follows you to the Grave.

DAVID

Now, that's just the place where I could make a Shift to do without it.

ACRES

Zounds! David, you are a Coward! -- It doesn't become my Valour to listen to you. -- What, shall I disgrace my Ancestors? -- Think of that, David --

think what it would be to disgrace my
Ancestors!

DAVID

Under favour, the surest way of not
disgracing them, is to keep as long as
you can out of their Company. Look'ee
now, Master, to go to them in such
haste -- with an ounce of lead in your
Brains -- I should think might as well
be let alone. Our Ancestors are very
good kind of Folks; but they are the
last People I should choose to have a
visiting Acquaintance with.

ACRES

But, David, now, you don't think there
is such very, very, very great danger,
hey? -- Odds life! People often fight
without any Mischief done!

DAVID

By the Mass, I think 'tis ten to one
against you! -- Oons! here to meet
some Lion-headed fellow, I warrant,
with his damn'd double-Barreled
Swords, and cut-and-thrust Pistols! --
Lord bless us! it makes me tremble to
think o't -- Those be such desperate
bloody-minded Weapons! Well, I never
could abide 'em! -- from a child I
never could fancy 'em! -- I suppose
there an't been so merciless a Beast
in the world as your loaded Pistol or
naked sword!

ACRES

Zounds! I won't be afraid! -- Odds
Fire and Fury! you shan't make me
afraid. -- Here now - I'll appoint to
meet him sooner than I had intended,
that so much good Passion mayn't be
wasted.

DAVID

Take a fool's advice, Master, name a
Twelve month hence.

ACRES

I'll not bate an hour, - It shall be
this Evening, - this Evening at six

o'Clock, by my Valour! - (writes)
There, tis done - now for my Name.

DAVID

By the Mass, then I would put my Name
to no such matter. Oons! don't you
know that you may be hang'd only for
writing a Challenge.

ACRES

Odds Ropes, as you say, David, - hold -
I'll not put my every day name to it,
but my Love name - so - there - Collin -
Collin's a very good fighting Name,
by my Valour. (directs and seals it)
Here, now David - I have directed it
to the Lover of Miss Languish! - get
you to the North Parade, and watch for
Mrs. Malaprop's door, if you see
anybody skulking about there, or
plotting with that Jade, Lucy, you may
be sure that's the Man. - Then David,
do you with a bold face and a
determined Tread, as thus - David -
march up to him - And, zounds, Fire,
Death, and Fury give him the Letter.

DAVID

I'll be as bold as I can - but I have
none of your Valour, Master - Well
Heaven send we be all alive, this time
tomorrow. Good bye, Master -
(whimpering)

ACRES

Hold, David - stay - if the Gentleman
should ask what kind of a Man your
Master is, - tell him, zounds - tell
him - I'm a devil of a Fellow - a
determin'd Dog, David -

DAVID

Yes Sir.

ACRES

Tell him I generally kill a man a week -
d'ye mind, David?

DAVID

Yes, Sir.

ACRES

And, stay, David, - David - you may add that you never saw me in such a rage before! - a most devouring rage.

DAVID

Never before.

ACRES

Well, make haste, David! - remember, devil of a fellow, don't forget my Rage - fly, David!

[Exit DAVID.]

[Exeunt severally.]

Scene II -- MRS. MALAPROP's Lodgings. [MRS. MALAPROP and LYDIA.]

MRS. MALAPROP

Why, thou perverse one! -- tell me what you can object to him? Isn't he a handsome Man? -- tell me that. A genteel man? a pretty figure of a Man?

LYDIA

[Aside.] She little thinks whom she is praising! -- [Aloud.] So is Beverley, Ma'am.

MRS. MALAPROP

No caparisons, Miss, if you please. Caparisons don't become a young woman. No! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine Gentleman!

LYDIA

[Aside.] Ay, the Captain Absolute you have seen.

MRS. MALAPROP

Then he's so well bred; -- so full of Alacrity, and Adulation! -- and has so much to say for himself: -- in such good Language, too! His Physiognomy so Grammatical! Then his Presence is so noble! I protest, when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play: -- "Hesperian curls -- the Front of Job himself! -- An Eye, like March,

to threaten at Command! -- A Station,
like Harry Mercury, new" -- --
Something about kissing -- on a hill --
however, the similitude struck me
directly.

LYDIA

[Aside.] How enraged She'll be
presently, when she discovers her
mistake!

[Enter SERVANT.]

SERVANT

Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are
below, Ma'am.

MRS. MALAPROP

Show them up here. -- --

[Exit SERVANT.]

Now, Lydia, I insist on your behaving as becomes a young
woman. Show your good breeding, at least, though you have
forgot your duty.

LYDIA

Madam, I have told you my Resolution! --
I shall not only give him no
encouragement, but I won't even speak
to, or look at him. [Flings herself
into a chair, with her face from the
door.]

[Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE and CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]

SIR ANTHONY

Here we are, Mrs. Malaprop; come to
mitigate the frowns of unrelenting
Beauty, -- and difficulty enough I had
to bring this fellow. -- I don't know
what's the matter; but if I had not
held him by force, he'd have given me
the slip.

MRS. MALAPROP

You have infinite Trouble, Sir
Anthony, in the Affair. I am ashamed
for the Cause! -- [Aside to LYDIA.]
Lydia, Lydia, rise, I beseech you! --
pay your respects!

SIR ANTHONY

I hope, madam, that Miss Languish has reflected on the worth of this Gentleman, and the regard due to her Aunt's choice, and my Alliance. -- [Aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.] Now, Jack, speak to her.

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] What the Devil shall I do! -- [Aside to SIR ANTHONY.] You see, Sir, she won't even look at me whilst you are here. I knew She wouldn't! I told you so. Let me entreat you, Sir, to leave us together! [Seems to expostulate with his father.]

LYDIA

[Aside.] I wonder I ha'n't heard my aunt exclaim yet! sure she can't have looked at him! -- perhaps the regimentals are alike, and she is something blind.

SIR ANTHONY

Zounds, Sir, I won't stir a foot yet!

MRS. MALAPROP

I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my Affluence over my Niece is very small. -- [Aside to LYDIA.] Turn round, Lydia: I blush for you!

SIR ANTHONY

May I not flatter myself, that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my Son! -- [Aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.] Why don't you begin, Jack? -- Speak, you Puppy -- speak!

MRS. MALAPROP

It is impossible, Sir Anthony, she can have any. She will not say she has. -- [Aside to LYDIA.] Answer, Hussy! why don't you answer?

SIR ANTHONY

Then, madam, I trust that a Childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness. -- [Aside to

CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.] Zounds! Sirrah! why don't you speak?

LYDIA

[Aside.] I think my Lover seems as little inclined to conversation as myself. -- How strangely blind my Aunt must be!

ABSOLUTE

Hem! hem! Madam -- hem! -- [Attempts to speak, then returns to SIR ANTHONY.] Faith! Sir, I am so confounded! -- and -- so -- so -- confus'd! -- I told you I should be so, Sir -- I knew it. -- The -- the -- tremor of my Passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

SIR ANTHONY

But it don't take away your voice, Fool, does it? -- Zounds, Go up, and speak to her directly!

[CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE makes signs to MRS. MALAPROP to leave them together.]

MRS. MALAPROP

Sir Anthony, shall we leave them together? -- [Aside to LYDIA.] Ah! you stubborn little Vixen!

SIR ANTHONY

Not yet, Ma'am, not yet! -- [Aside to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.] What the devil are you at? unlock your Jaws, Sirrah, or I shall break them open.

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] Now Heaven send she may be too sullen to look round! -- I must disguise my voice. -- [Draws near LYDIA, and speaks in a low hoarse tone.] Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true Love? Will not -- --

SIR ANTHONY

What the devil ails the Fellow? why don't you speak out? -- not stand croaking like a Frog in a Quinsy!

ABSOLUTE

The -- the -- Excess of my Awe, and my --
my -- my Modesty, quite choke me!

SIR ANTHONY

Ah! your modesty again! -- I'll tell
you what, Jack; if you don't speak out
directly, and glibly too, I shall be
in such a Rage! -- Mrs. Malaprop, I
wish the Lady would favour us with
something more than a side-Front.

[MRS. MALAPROP seems to chide LYDIA.]

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] So all will out, I see! --
[Goes up to LYDIA, speaks softly.] Be
not surprised, my Lydia, suppress all
surprise at present.

LYDIA

[Aside.] Heavens! 'tis Beverley's
voice! Sure he can't have imposed on
Sir Anthony too! -- [Looks round by
degrees, then starts up.] Is this
possible! -- my Beverley! -- how can
this be? -- my Beverley?

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] Ah! 'tis all over.

SIR ANTHONY

Beverley! -- the Devil -- Beverley! --
What can the Girl mean? -- this is my
Son, Jack Absolute.

MRS. MALAPROP

For shame, Hussy! for shame! your head
runs so on that Fellow, that you have
him always in your Eyes! -- beg
Captain Absolute's pardon directly.

LYDIA

I see no Captain Absolute, but my
loved Beverley!

SIR ANTHONY

Zounds! the Girl's mad! -- her Brain's
turned by reading.

MRS. MALAPROP

O' my Conscience, I believe so! --
 What do you mean by Beverley, Hussy? --
 You saw Captain Absolute before to-
 day; there he is -- your Husband that
 shall be.

LYDIA

With all my Soul, Ma'am -- when I
 refuse my Beverley -- --

SIR ANTHONY

Oh! she's as mad as Bedlam! -- or has
 this Fellow been playing us a Rogue's
 Trick! -- Come here, Sirrah, who the
 Devil are you?

ABSOLUTE

Faith, Sir, I am not quite clear
 myself; but I'll endeavour to
 recollect.

SIR ANTHONY

Are you my Son or not? -- answer for
 your Mother, you dog, if you won't for
 me.

MRS. MALAPROP

Ay, Sir, who are you? O Mercy! I begin
 to suspect! --

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] Ye powers of impudence,
 befriend me! -- [Aloud.] Sir Anthony,
 most assuredly I am your Wife's son:
 and that I sincerely believe myself to
 be yours also, I hope my Duty has
 always shown. -- Mrs. Malaprop, I am
 your most respectful Admirer, and
 shall be proud to add affectionate
 Nephew. -- I need not tell my Lydia,
 that she sees her faithful Beverley,
 who, knowing the singular Generosity
 of her Temper, assumed that name and
 Station, which has proved a Test of
 the most disinterested Love, which he
 now hopes to enjoy in a more elevated
 Character.

LYDIA

[Sullenly.] So! -- there will be no
 Elopement after all!

SIR ANTHONY

Upon my Soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent Fellow! to do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more Consummate assurance!

ABSOLUTE

Oh, you flatter me, Sir -- you Compliment -- 'tis my Modesty, you know, Sir, -- my Modesty that has stood in my way.

SIR ANTHONY

Well, I am glad you are not the dull, insensible Varlet you pretended to be, however! -- I'm glad you have made a Fool of your Father, you Dog -- I am. So this was your Penitence, your Duty and Obedience! -- I thought it was damn'd sudden! -- "You never heard their Names before", not you! -- what, "the Languishes of Worcestershire", hey? -- "if you could please me in the affair it was all you desired!" -- Ah! you dissembling Villain! -- What! -- [Pointing to Lydia] She squints, don't She? -- hey? -- Why, you hypocritical young Rascal! -- I wonder you ain't ashamed to hold up your head!

ABSOLUTE

'Tis with difficulty, Sir. -- I am confus'd -- very much confus'd, as you must perceive.

MRS. MALAPROP

Lud! Sir Anthony! -- a new light breaks in upon me! -- hey! -- how! what! captain, did you write the Letters then? -- What -- am I to thank you for the elegant Compilation of an old Weather-beaten She-Dragon -- hey! -- O mercy! -- was it you that reflected on my parts of Speech?

ABSOLUTE

Dear Sir! my Modesty will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me -- I shall certainly not be able to stand it!

SIR ANTHONY

Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive; -- odds life! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find in my heart to be so good-humoured! and so gallant! hey! Mrs. Malaprop!

MRS. MALAPROP

Well, Sir Anthony, since you desire it, we will not anticipate the past! -- so mind, young people -- our retrospection will be all to the future.

SIR ANTHONY

Come, we must leave them together; Mrs. Malaprop, they long to fly into each other's Arms, I warrant! -- Jack -- isn't the cheek as I said, hey? -- and the Eye, you rogue! -- and the lip -- hey? Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness -- theirs is the time of Life for Happiness! -- "Youth's the season made for joy" -- [Sings.] -- hey! -- Odds life! I'm in such Spirits, -- I don't know what I could not do! -- Permit me, Ma'am -- [Gives his hand to MRS. MALAPROP.] Tol-de-rol -- 'gad, I should like to have a little Fooling myself -- Tol-de-rol! de-rol.

[Exit, singing and handing MRS. MALAPROP. -- LYDIA sits sullenly in her chair.]

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] So much thought bodes me no good. -- [Aloud.] So grave, Lydia!

LYDIA

Sir!

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] So! -- egad! I thought as much! -- that damn'd Monosyllable has froze me! -- [Aloud.] What, Lydia, now that we are as happy in our Friends' Consent, as in our Mutual vows -- --

LYDIA

[Peevishly.] Friends' Consent indeed!

ABSOLUTE

Come, come, we must lay aside some of our Romance -- a little Wealth and Comfort may be endured after all. And for your Fortune, the Lawyers shall make such settlements as --

LYDIA

Lawyers! I hate Lawyers!

ABSOLUTE

Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering Forms, but instantly procure the Licence, and -- --

LYDIA

The Licence! -- I hate Licence!

ABSOLUTE

Oh my Love! be not so unkind! -- thus let me entreat -- -- [Kneeling.]

LYDIA

Psha! -- what signifies kneeling, when you know I must have you?

ABSOLUTE

[Rising.] Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you. -- If I have lost your heart -- I resign the rest -- [Aside.] 'Gad, I must try what a little Spirit will do.

LYDIA

[Rising.] Then, Sir, let me tell you, the interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposition, and deserves the punishment of Fraud. -- What, you have been treating me like a Child! -- humouring my Romance! and laughing, I suppose, at your success!

ABSOLUTE

You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me -- only hear -- --

LYDIA

So, while I fondly imagined we were deceiving my Relations, and flattered myself that I should outwit and incense them all -- behold my hopes are to be crush'd at once, by my Aunt's Consent and approbation -- and I am myself the only Dupe at last! -- [Walking about in a heat.] But here, Sir, here is the Picture -- Beverley's Picture! [taking a miniature from her bosom] which I have worn, night and day, in spite of Threats and entreaties! -- There, Sir [Flings it to him.]; and be assured I throw the Original from my Heart as easily.

ABSOLUTE

Nay, nay, Ma'am, we will not differ as to that. -- Here [taking out a picture], here is Miss Lydia Languish. -- What a difference! -- ay, there is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave Soul and Spirit to my hopes! -- those are the lips which sealed a Vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's Calendar! and there the half-resentful blush, that would have checked the Ardour of my Thanks! -- Well, all that's past! -- all over indeed! -- There, Madam -- in Beauty, that Copy is not equal to you, but in my mind its merit over the Original, in being still the same, is such -- that -- I cannot find in my heart to part with it. [Puts it up again.]

LYDIA

[Softening.] 'Tis your own doing, Sir -- I, I, I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

ABSOLUTE

O, most certainly -- sure, now, this is much better than being in Love! -- ha! ha! ha! -- there's some Spirit in this! -- What signifies breaking some scores of solemn Promises: -- half ahundred Vows! -- with the marks of a dozen or two Angels to witness. -- all that's of no Consequence, you know. To be sure People will say, that Miss

don't know her own Mind -- but never mind that! Or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint, that the Gentleman grew tired of the Lady and forsook her -- but don't let that fret you.

LYDIA

There is no bearing his insolence.
[Bursts into tears.]

[Re-enter MRS. MALAPROP and SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE.]

MRS. MALAPROP

Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

LYDIA

This is worse than your Treachery and Deceit, you base Ingrate! [Sobbing.]

SIR ANTHONY

What the Devil's the matter now? -- Zounds! Mrs. Malaprop, this is the oddest billing and cooing I ever heard! -- but what the deuce is the meaning of it? -- I am quite astonished!

ABSOLUTE

Ask the lady, Sir.

MRS. MALAPROP

mercy! -- I'm quite analyz'd, for my part! -- Why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

LYDIA

Ask the Gentleman, Ma'am.

SIR ANTHONY

Zounds! I shall be in a Frenzy! -- Why, Jack, you Scoundrel, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

MRS. MALAPROP

Ay, Sir, there's no more Trick, is there? -- you are not like Cerberus, three Gentlemen at once, are you?

ABSOLUTE

You'll not let me speak -- I say the Lady can account for this much much better than I can.

LYDIA

Madam, you once commanded me never to think of Beverley again -- there is the Man -- I now obey you: for, from this moment, I renounce him forever. [Exit.]

MRS. MALAPROP

Mercy! and Miracles! what a turn here is -- why, sure, Captain, you haven't behaved disrespectfully to my Niece.

SIR ANTHONY

Ha! ha! ha! -- ha! ha! ha! -- now I see it. Ha! ha! ha! -- now I see it -- why you confounded young Rogue, couldn't wait for the Parson - you must be in such a damn'd hurry?

ABSOLUTE

Nay, Sir, upon my word -- --

SIR ANTHONY

Come, no lying, Jack -- I'm sure 'twas so! -- you have been rude -- I know it -- Ah! Mrs. Malaprop, these young Soldiers, must never be trusted with a pretty Girl, Tete a Tete. -- Like Children, they will be picking at the Dish, before Mama has pinn'd the Napkin.

MRS. MALAPROP

Lud! Sir Anthony! -- You make me bush so! -- O fie, Captain, fie! -- I should never have thought it.

ABSOLUTE

Upon my Soul, Ma'am -- --

SIR ANTHONY

Come, no excuses, Jack; why, your Father, you Rogue, was so before you: -- the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient. -- Ha! ha! ha! poor little Lydia! why, you've frightened her, you dog, you have.

ABSOLUTE

By all that's good, Sir -- --

SIR ANTHONY

Zounds! say no more, I tell you --
 Mrs. Malaprop shall make your Peace.
 You must make his Peace, Mrs.
 Malaprop: -- you must tell her 'tis
 Jack's way -- tell her 'tis all our
 ways -- it runs in the blood of our
 Family! Come away, Jack -- Ha! ha! ha! --
 Mrs. Malaprop -- a young Villain!
 [Pushing him out.]

MRS. MALAPROP

O! Sir Anthony! -- I'm so asham'd! --
 O fie, Captain!

[Exeunt severally.]

Scene III -- The North Parade. [Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER.]

SIR LUCIUS

I wonder where this Captain Absolute
 hides himself! -- I am enraged at the
 thought that he may be in the very
 place I should not wish him -- Upon my
 Conscience! These officers are always
 in one's way in Love affairs: -- I
 remember I might have married Lady
 Dorothy Wriggle, if it had not been
 for a little Rogue of a Major, who ran
 away with her before she could get a
 Sight of me! So I have owed them a
 Grudge ever since -- And I wonder too
 what it is the ladies can see in them
 to be so fond of them -- Ha! isn't
 this the captain coming? -- faith it
 is! -- There is a probability of
 succeeding about that Fellow, that is
 mighty provoking! Who the Devil is he
 talking to?

[Steps aside.]

[Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]

ABSOLUTE

[Aside.] To what fine purpose I have
 been plotting! a noble reward for all
 my Schemes, upon my Soul! -- a little

Gipsy! -- I did not think her Romance could have made her so damned absurd either. 'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my Life! -- I could cut my own Throat, or any other Person's, with the greatest Pleasure in the World!

SIR LUCIUS

Oh, faith! I'm in the luck of it. I never could have found him in a sweeter Temper for my Purpose -- to be sure I'm just come in the Nick! Now to enter into Conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly. -- [Goes up to CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.] With regard to that matter, Captain, I must beg leave to differ in Opinion with you.

ABSOLUTE

Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant: -- because, Sir, I happened just then to be giving no opinion at all.

SIR LUCIUS

That's no reason. For give me leave to tell you, a man may think an untruth as well as speak one.

ABSOLUTE

Very true, Sir; but if a man never utters his Thoughts, I should think they might stand a Chance of escaping Controversy.

SIR LUCIUS

Then, Sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing. And I must be bold to tell you, that any man, who differs in opinion with me, does as good as contradict me. -- and whoever contradicts me, gives me the lie. -- And upon my Conscience, whoever gives me the lie, is little better than a Scoundrel.

ABSOLUTE

A very logical Induction, truly. -- and extremely polite. Hark'ee, Sir Lucius; if I had not before known you

to be a Gentleman, upon my Soul, I should not have discovered it at this Interview: for what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive!

SIR LUCIUS

I humbly thank you, Sir, for the quickness of your apprehension. -- [Bowing.] You have nam'd the very thing I would be at.

ABSOLUTE

Very well, Sir; I shall certainly not balk your inclinations. -- But I should be glad you would please to explain your motives.

SIR LUCIUS

Pray, Sir, be easy; the Quarrel is a very pretty Quarrel as it stands; we should only spoil it by trying to explain it. So, Captain, if you'll favour me with your time and place.

ABSOLUTE

Well, Sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better; let it be this evening -- here, by the Spring Gardens.

SIR LUCIUS

If it's the same to you, captain, I should take it as a particular kindness if you'd let us meet in King's-Mead-Fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may dispatch both matters at once.

ABSOLUTE

'Tis the same to me exactly. Half past six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously.

SIR LUCIUS

If you please, Sir; there will be very pretty small-sword light. So that matter's settled, and my mind's at ease! [Exit.]

[Enter FAULKLAND.]

ABSOLUTE

Well met! I was going to look for you.
O Faulkland! all the Demons of Spite
and Disappointment have conspired
against me! I'm so vex'd, that if I
had not the prospect of a resource in
being knocked o' the head by-and-by, I
should scarce have spirits to tell you
the Cause.

FAULKLAND

What can you mean? -- Has Lydia
changed her mind? -- I should have
thought her Duty and Inclination would
now have pointed to the same object.

ABSOLUTE

Ay, just as the eyes do of a Person
who squints: when her Love-eye was
fixed on me, t'other, her eye of Duty,
was finely obliqued: but when Duty bid
her point that the same way, off
t'other turned on a Swivel, and
secured its retreat with a frown!

FAULKLAND

But what's the resource you -- --

ABSOLUTE

Oh, to wind up the whole, a good-
natured Irishman here has --
[Mimicking Sir LUCIUS] begged leave to
have the {P}leasure of cutting my
throat; and I mean to indulge him --
that's all.

FAULKLAND

Prithee, be serious!

ABSOLUTE

'Tis fact, upon my Soul! Sir Lucius
O'Trigger -- you know him by sight --
has obliged me to meet him this
Evening at six o'clock: you must go
with me.

FAULKLAND

This evening did you say? I wish it
had been any other time.

ABSOLUTE

Why? there will be light enough

FAULKLAND

But I am myself a good deal ruffled by a difference I have had with Julia. My vile tormenting Temper has made me treat her so cruelly, that I shall not be myself till we are reconciled.

ABSOLUTE

By Heavens! Faulkland, you don't deserve her!

[Enter SERVANT, gives FAULKLAND a letter, and exit.]

FAULKLAND

Oh, Jack! this is from Julia. I dread to open it! I fear it may be to take a last leave! -- perhaps to bid me return her Letters, and restore -- Oh, how I suffer for my Folly!

ABSOLUTE

Here, let me see. -- [Takes the letter and opens it.] Ay, a final sentence, indeed! -- 'tis all over with you, faith!

FAULKLAND

Nay, Jack, don't keep me in suspense!

ABSOLUTE

Here then -- [Reads.] "As I am convinced that my dear Faulkland's own reflections have already upbraided him for his last unkindness to me, I will not add a word on the Subject. I wish to speak with you as soon as possible. Yours ever and truly, Julia." There's stubbornness and resentment for you! -- [Gives him the letter.] Why, Man, you don't seem one whit the happier at this!

FAULKLAND

yes, I am; but -- but -- --

ABSOLUTE

Confound your Buts! you never hear any thing that would make another man

bless himself, but you immediately
damn it with a but!

FAULKLAND

Now, Jack, as you are my Friend, own
honestly -- don't you think there is
something forward, something
indelicate, in this haste to forgive?
Women should never sue for
reconciliation: that should always
come from us. They should retain their
coldness till wooed to kindness; and
their Pardon, like their Love, should
"not unsought be won."

ABSOLUTE

I have not patience to listen to you!
thou'rt incorrigible! so say no more
on the Subject. I must go to settle a
few matters. Let me see you before
six, remember, at my Lodgings. A poor
industrious Devil like me, who have
toiled, and drudged, and plotted to
gain my ends, and am at last
disappointed by other People's folly,
may in pity be allowed to swear and
grumble a little; but a Captious
Skeptic in Love, a Slave to
fretfulness and whim, who has no
difficulties but of his own creating,
is a subject more fit for ridicule
than Compassion! [Exit.]

FAULKLAND

I feel his Reproaches; yet I would not
change this too exquisite nicety for
the gross Content with which he
tramples on the Thorns of Love! His
engaging me in this Duel has started
an idea in my head, which I will
instantly pursue. I'll use it as the
Touchstone of Julia's Sincerity and
Disinterestedness. If her love prove
pure and Sterling Ore, my Name will
rest on it with Honour; and once I've
stamp'd it there, I lay aside my
Doubts for ever! But if the dross of
Selfishness, the alloy of Pride,
predominate, 'twill be best to leave
her as a Toy for some less cautious
Fool to sigh for! [Exit.]

Scene IV -- North Parade. [Enter David, with challenge in his hand.]

DAVID

Ah! mercy on me! - I wish I was fairly quit of my Charge! if I had not drank my two good pints, I hadn't bodily strength to go thro' with it! - but now, what with the Ale, and my own resolution, I hope I shall behave as becomes a a Gentleman's Footman, - Ah David! - foolish David! a pox on this wicked scrawl, - it don't look like another Letter - It is, as I may say, a malicious looking letter! - I handle it as a Girl of Fifteen would a Cocked Pistol - foh! how it smells of Gunpowder! - Oons! it may go off for what I know! - I am marvellously tempted to loose it. - I see no one watching by the house - not I - Oons! who comes here? - [Lucy crosses the stage] By the mass, `tis Miss Lucy.

[Enter SIR Lucius calling after Lucy, - Lucy returns, They talk together.]

By the Mass! That's he! - ay, that's certainly he! Oons! He'll make no more of my Master, that I should of a Tame rabbit, if it provoked me.

SIR LUCIUS

(to Lucy) Do so, and tell her I will be here tonight, as soon as I have put the Gentleman to Death.)

[Exit Lucy]

DAVID

my poor Master! - I'll be rid of this, however, and so as I was bid! - (goes up to Sir Lucius) No Offence, Sir, but my Master is a desperate Fellow, - with your leave a determined dog! -

SIR LUCIUS

Your Master!

DAVID

Aye, Sir! - under favour he bid me tell you he was in a cruel Rage! -

with Submission, Sir, a most devouring
Rage.

SIR LUCIUS

Indeed! - So this is some message from
the Captain I suppose - well - what of
his Rage?

DAVID

There, Sir - (giving him the letter)
no offence, I hope - `tis none of my
doing - I am only David, my poor
Master's Servant - that is 'til sic
Six o'Clock, with your leave, Sir - O
my poor Master. [Exit]

SIR LUCIUS

(reads) "To the Lover of Miss
Languish!" - Aye, that's me
indeed - "Confusion might arise" -
"except - honour of your Company -
Kings Mead Fields - six o'Clock -
shall bring a Friend - yours
Collin" who the Devil's Collin? -
well, if he don't choose to put
his name, that's his business - I
see the Captain has discovered my
reason for quarrelling with him -
and chooses to meet a little
earlier - well, faith, we shall
be two and two and a very pretty
Quartetto we may make of it!
[Exit])

ACT V

Scene I -- JULIA's Dressing-Room.
[JULIA discovered alone.]

JULIA

How this message has alarmed me! what
dreadful accident can he mean? why
such charge to be alone? -- O
Faulkland! -- how many unhappy moments --
how many tears have you cost me.

[Enter FAULKLAND.]

JULIA

What means this? -- why this Caution,
Faulkland?

FAULKLAND

Alas! Julia, I am come to take a long Farewell.

JULIA

Heavens! What do you mean?

FAULKLAND

You see before you a Wretch, whose life is forfeited. Nay, start not! -- the infirmity of my Temper has drawn all this misery on me. I left you fretful and Passionate -- an untoward accident drew me into a quarrel -- the event is, that I must fly this Kingdom instantly. O Julia, had I been so fortunate as to have call'd you mine entirely, before this mischance had fallen on me, I should not so deeply dread my Banishment!

JULIA

My soul is oppressed with sorrow at the nature of your misfortune: had these adverse Circumstances arisen from a less fatal Cause, I should have felt strong Comfort in the thought that I could now chase from your Bosom every doubt of the warm sincerity of my Love. My Heart has long known no other Guardian -- I now entrust my Person to your Honour -- we will fly together. When safe from pursuit, my Father's Will may be fulfill'd -- and I receive a legal Claim to be the Partner of your Sorrows, and tenderest Comforter. Then on the bosom of your wedded Julia, you may lull your keen regret to slumbering; while virtuous {L}ove, with a Cherub's hand, shall smooth the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck the thorn from compunction.

FAULKLAND

Julia! I am Bankrupt in Gratitude! but the time is so pressing, it calls on you for so hasty a resolution. -- Would you not wish some hours to weigh the advantages you forego, and what little Compensation poor Faulkland can make you beside his solitary Love?

JULIA

I ask not a moment. No, Faulkland, I have lov'd you for yourself: and if I now, more than ever, prize the solemn Engagement which so long has pledged us to each other, it is because it leaves no room for hard Aspersions on my Fame, and puts the Seal of Duty to an Act of Love. But let us not linger. Perhaps this delay -- --

FAULKLAND

'Twill be better I should not venture out again till dark. Yet am I griev'd to think what numberless Distresses will press heavy on your gentle disposition!

JULIA

Perhaps your fortune may be Forfeited by this unhappy Act. -- I know not whether 'tis so; but sure that alone can never make us unhappy. The little I have will be sufficient to support us; and Exile never should be splendid.

FAULKLAND

Ay, but in such an abject State of Life, my wounded pride perhaps may increase the natural fretfulness of my Temper, till I become a rude, morose Companion, beyond your patience to endure. Perhaps the recollection of a Deed my Conscience cannot justify may haunt me in such gloomy and unsocial Fits, that I shall hate the Tenderness that would relieve me, break from your Arms, and quarrel with your Fondness -

JULIA

If your Thoughts should assume so unhappy a bent, you will the more want some mild and affectionate Spirit to watch over and console you: One who, by bearing your Infirmities with Gentleness and Resignation, may teach you so to bear the Evils of your Fortune.

FAULKLAND

Julia, I have proved you to the Quick!
and with this useless device I throw
away all my doubts. How shall I plead
to be forgiven this last unworthy
effect of my restless, unsatisfied
disposition?

JULIA

Has no such disaster happened as you
related?

FAULKLAND

I am ashamed to own that it was
pretended; yet in pity, Julia, do not
kill me with resenting a fault which
never can be repeated: but sealing,
this once, my pardon, let me to-
morrow, in the face of Heaven, receive
my future Guide and Monitress, and
expiate my past Folly by years of
tender Adoration.

JULIA

Hold, Faulkland! -- that you are free
from a Crime, which I before fear'd to
name, Heaven knows how sincerely I
rejoice! These are Tears of
Thankfulness for that! But that your
cruel doubts should have urged you to
an imposition that has wrung my Heart,
gives me now a pang more keen than I
can express!

FAULKLAND

By Heavens! Julia -- --

JULIA

Yet hear me, -- My Father lov'd you,
Faulkland! and you preserved the life
that tender Parent gave me; in his
presence I pledg'd my hand -- joyfully
pledg'd it -- where before I had given
my heart. When, soon after, I lost
that Parent, it seem'd to me that
Providence had, in Faulkland, shown me
whither to Transfer without a Pause,
my grateful Duty, as well as my
Affection; Hence I have been content
to bear from you what Pride and
Delicacy would have forbid me from
another. I will not upbraid you, by

repeating how you have trifled with my
sincerity -- --

FAULKLAND

I confess it all! yet hear -- --

JULIA

After such a year of Trial, I might
have flatter'd myself that I should
not have been insulted with a new
probation of my sincerity, as cruel as
unnecessary! I now see it is not in
your nature to be content or confident
in Love. With this Conviction -- I
never will be yours. While I had hopes
that my persevering attention, and
unreproaching kindness, might in time
reform your Temper, I should have been
happy to have gain'd a dearer
influence over you; but I will not
furnish you with a licensed power to
keep alive an incorrigible Fault, at
the expense of one who never would
contend with you.

FAULKLAND

Nay, but, Julia, by my Soul and
Honour, if after this -- --

JULIA

But one word more. -- As my Faith has
once been given to you, I never will
barter it with another. -- I shall
pray for your happiness with the
truest Sincerity; And the dearest
blessing I can ask of Heaven to send
you will be to charm you from that
unhappy Temper, which alone has
prevented the Performance of our
solemn {E}ngagement. All I request of
you is, that you will yourself reflect
upon this infirmity, and when you
number up the many true delights it
has deprived you of, let it not be
your least regret, that it lost you
the love of one who would have
followed you in beggary through the
world! [Exit.]

FAULKLAND

She's gone forever! There was an awful

resolution in her manner, that riveted me to my place. -- O Fool! -- Dolt! -- Barbarian! Curst as I am, with more Imperfections than my Fellow wretches, kind Fortune sent a Heaven-gifted Cherub to my aid, and, like a Ruffian, I have driven her from my side! -- O Love! -- Tormentor! -- Fiend! -- whose influence, like the Moon's, acting on Men of dull Souls, makes Idiots of them, but meeting subtler Spirits, betrays their Course, and drives them into madness! [Exit.]

[Enter LYDIA and MAID.]

MAID

My Mistress, Ma'am, I know, was here just now -- perhaps she is only in the next room.

[Exit.]

LYDIA

Heigh-ho! Though he has used me so, this Beverly - Absolute, runs strangely in my head. I believe one Lecture from my grave Cousin will make me recall him.

[Re-enter JULIA.]

Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for Consolation. -- You know who Beverley proves to be?

JULIA

I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr. Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair. Had young Absolute been the Person you took him for, I should not have accepted your Confidence on the Subject, without a serious endeavour to counteract your Caprice.

LYDIA

So, then, I see I have been deceived by every one! But I don't care -- I'll never have him.

JULIA

Nay, Lydia -- --

LYDIA

Why, is it not provoking? When I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last! There, had I projected one of the most Sentimental Elopements! -- so becoming a Disguise! -- so amiable a Ladder of Ropes! -- Conscious Moon -- Four Horses -- Scotch Parson -- with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop -- and such Paragraphs in the Newspapers! -- Oh, I shall die with disappointment!

JULIA

I don't wonder at it!

LYDIA

Now -- sad reverse! -- what have I to expect, but, after a deal of flimsy preparation with a Bishop's License, and my Aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the Altar; or perhaps be cried three times in a Country Church, and have an unmannerly Fat Vicar ask the consent of every Butcher in the Parish to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, Spinster! Oh that I should live to hear myself called Spinster!

JULIA

Melancholy indeed!

LYDIA

How mortifying, to remember the dear delicious Shifts I used to be put to, to gain half a minute's Conversation with this Fellow! How often have I stole forth, in the coldest night in January, with Snow, up to my Ankles, and found him in the Garden, Stuck like a dripping Statue! - There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically! He shivering with cold and I with apprehension! And while the freezing blast numb'd our Joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame,

and glow with mutual Ardour! -- Ah, Julia, that was something like being in Love.

JULIA

If I were in Spirits, Lydia, I should chide you only by laughing heartily at you; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to entreat you not to let a man, who loves you with Sincerity, suffer that unhappiness from your Caprice, which I know too well Caprice can inflict.

LYDIA

Lud! What has brought my Aunt here?

[Enter MRS. MALAPROP, Mr. FAG, and DAVID.]

MRS. MALAPROP

So! So! Here's fine work! -- here's fine Suicide, Parricide, and Salivation, going on in the Fields! And Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the {Apostrophe}!

JULIA

For Heaven's sake, madam, what's the meaning of this?

MRS. MALAPROP

That Gentleman can tell you -- 'twas he enveloped the affair to me.

LYDIA

[To Mr. FAG.] Do, Sir, will you, inform us?

MR. FAG

Ma'am, I should hold myself very deficient in every requisite that forms the man of Breeding, if I delay'd a moment to give all the information in my power to a Lady so deeply interested in the Affair as you are.

LYDIA

But quick! Quick Sir!

MR.

MR. FAG

True, Ma'am, as you say, one should be quick in divulging matters of this Nature; for should we be tedious, perhaps while we are flourishing on the subject, two or three lives may be lost!

LYDIA

patience! -- Do, Ma'am, for Heaven's sake! tell us what is the matter?

MRS. MALAPROP

Why, Murder's the matter! Slaughter's the matter! {K}illing's the matter! -- but he can tell you the perpendiculars.

LYDIA

Then, prithee, Sir, be brief.

MR. FAG

Why, then, Ma'am, as to murder -- I cannot take upon me to say -- and as to Slaughter, or Manslaughter, that will be as the Jury finds it.

LYDIA

But who, Sir -- who are engaged in this?

MR. FAG

Faith, Ma'am, one is a young Gentleman whom I should be very sorry any thing was to happen to -- a very pretty behaved Gentleman! We have lived much together, and always on Terms -

LYDIA

But who is this? Who! Who! Who?

MR. FAG

My Master, Ma'am -- my Master -- I speak of my Master.

LYDIA

Heavens! What, Captain Absolute!

MRS. MALAPROP

Oh, to be sure, you are frighten'd now!

JULIA

But who are with him, Sir?

MR. FAG

As to the rest, Ma'am, this Gentleman
can inform you better than I.

JULIA

[To DAVID.] Do speak, friend.

DAVID

Look'ee, my Lady -- by the Mass!
there's mischief going on. Folks don't
use to meet for amusement with
Firearms, Firelocks, Fire-engines,
Fire-screens, Fire-office, and the
Devil knows what other Crackers
beside! -- This, my Lady, I say, has
an angry savour.

JULIA

But who is there beside Captain
Absolute, Friend?

DAVID

My poor Master -- You know me, my Lady --
I am David -- and my Master of course
is, or was, Squire Acres. Then comes
Squire Faulkland.

JULIA

Do, Ma'am, let us instantly endeavour
to prevent mischief.

MRS. MALAPROP

fy! it would be very inelegant in us: --
we should only participate things.

DAVID

Ah! do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives --
they are desperately given, believe
me. -- Above all, there is that
bloodthirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius
O'Trigger.

MRS. MALAPROP

Sir Lucius O'Trigger? O Mercy! have
they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius
into the Scrape? -- Why how you stand,
Girls! you have no more feeling than
one of the Derbyshire Putrifactions!

LYDIA

What are we to do, madam?

MRS. MALAPROP

Why, fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief! -- Here, Friend, you can show us the place?

MR. FAG

If you please, Ma'am, I will conduct you. -- David, do you look for Sir Anthony.

[Exit DAVID.]

MRS. MALAPROP

Come, Girls! this Gentleman will exhort us. -- Come, Sir, you're our Envoy -- lead the way, and we'll precede.

MR. FAG

Not a step before the Ladies for the world!

MRS. MALAPROP

You're sure you know the spot?

MR. FAG

I think I can find it, Ma'am; and one good thing is, we shall hear the Report of the Pistols as we draw near, so we can't well miss them; -- never fear, Ma'am, never fear.

[Exeunt, he talking.]

Scene II -- King's-Mead-Fields. [Enter SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER and ACRES, with pistols.]

ACRES

By my Valour! then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance. Odds Levels and Aims! -- I say it is a good distance.

SIR LUCIUS

Is it for Muskets or small Field-pieces? Upon my Conscience, Mr. Acres, you must leave those things to me. -- Stay now -- I'll show you. --

[Measures paces along the stage.]
 There now, that is a very pretty
 distance -- a pretty gentleman's
 distance.

ACRES

Zounds! we might as well fight in a
 Sentry-box! I tell you, Sir Lucius,
 the farther he is off, the cooler I
 shall take my aim.

SIR LUCIUS

Faith! then I suppose you would aim at
 him best of all if he was out of
 sight!

ACRES

No, Sir Lucius; but I should think
 forty or eight-and-thirty yards -- --

SIR LUCIUS

Pho! pho! nonsense! three or four feet
 between the mouths of your Pistols is
 as good as a mile.

ACRES

Odds Bullets, no! -- by my Valour!
 there is no merit in killing him so
 near; do, my dear Sir Lucius, let me
 bring him down at a long Shot: -- a
 long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me!

SIR LUCIUS

Well, the Gentleman's Friend and I
 must settle that. -- But tell me now,
 Mr. Acres, in case of an Accident, is
 there any little will or Commission I
 could execute for you?

ACRES

I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius --
 but I don't understand -- --

SIR LUCIUS

Why, you may think there's no being
 shot at without a little Risk -- and
 if an unlucky bullet should carry a
 Quietus with it -- I say it will be no
 time then to be bothering you about
 Family matters.

ACRES

A Quietus!

SIR LUCIUS

For instance, now -- if that should be the case -- would you choose to be pickled and sent home? -- or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey? I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

ACRES

Pickled! -- Snug lying in the Abbey! -- Odds Tremors! Sir Lucius, don't talk so!

SIR LUCIUS

I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engag'd in an Affair of this kind before?

ACRES

No, Sir Lucius, never before.

SIR LUCIUS

Ah! that's a pity! -- there's nothing like being us'd to a thing. -- [Looking at his watch.] Sure they don't mean to disappoint us -- hah! -- no, faith -- I think I see them coming.

ACRES

Hey! -- what! -- coming! -- --

SIR LUCIUS

Ay. -- Who are those yonder?

ACRES

There are two of them indeed! -- well -- let them come -- hey, Sir Lucius! -- we -- we -- we -- we -- won't run.

SIR LUCIUS

Run!

ACRES

No -- I say -- we won't run, by my Valour!

SIR LUCIUS

What the Devil's the matter with you?

ACRES

Nothing -- nothing -- my dear friend --
my dear Sir Lucius -- but I -- I -- I
don't feel quite so bold, somehow, as
I did.

SIR LUCIUS

fy! -- consider your Honour.

ACRES

Ay -- true -- my Honour - do, Sir
Lucius, edge in a word or two every
now and then about my Honour.

SIR LUCIUS

[Looking.] Well, here they're coming.

ACRES

Sir Lucius -- if I wa'n't with you, I
should almost think I was afraid. --
If my Valour should leave me! --
Valour will come and go.

SIR LUCIUS

Then pray keep it fast, while you have
it.

ACRES

Sir Lucius -- I doubt it is going --
yes -- my valour is certainly going! --
it is sneaking off! -- I feel it
oozing out as it were at the Palms of
my hands!

SIR LUCIUS

Your honour -- your Honour. -- Here
they are.

ACRES

mercy! -- now -- that I was safe at
home! or could be shot before I was
aware!

[Enter FAULKLAND and CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.]

SIR LUCIUS

Gentlemen, your most Obedient -- hah! --
what, Captain Absolute! -- So, I
suppose, Sir, you are come here, just

like myself -- to do a kind office,
 first for your friend -- then to
 proceed to business on your own
 account.

ACRES

What, Jack! -- my dear Jack! -- my
 dear friend!

ABSOLUTE

Why Bob, - You are not come to tilt
 with us, are you?.

SIR LUCIUS

Well, Mr. Acres -- I don't blame your
 saluting the gentleman civilly. -- [To
 FAULKLAND.] So, Mr. Beverley, if
 you'll choose your Weapons, the
 captain and I will measure the Ground.

FAULKLAND

My weapons, sir!

ACRES

Odds life! Sir Lucius, I'm not going
 to fight Mr. Faulkland; these are my
 particular friends.

SIR LUCIUS

What, sir, did you not come here to
 fight Mr. Acres?

FAULKLAND

Not I, upon my word, sir.

SIR LUCIUS

Well, now, that's mighty provoking!
 But I hope, Mr. Faulkland, as there
 are three of us come on purpose for
 the game, you won't be so cantankerous
 as to spoil the Party by sitting out.

ABSOLUTE

pray, Faulkland, fight to oblige Sir
 Lucius.

FAULKLAND

Nay, if Mr. Acres is so bent on the
 matter -- --

ACRES

No, no, Mr. Faulkland; -- I'll bear my disappointment like a Christian. -- Look'ee, Sir Lucius, there's no occasion at all for me to fight; and if it is the same to you, I'd as lieve let it alone.

SIR LUCIUS

Observe me, Mr. Acres -- I must not be trifled with. You have certainly challeng'd Somebody -- and you came here to fight him. Now, if that Gentleman is willing to represent him -- I can't see, for my Soul, why it isn't just the same thing.

ACRES

Zounds, Sir Lucius, I tell you, 'tis one Beverley I've challenged -- a Fellow, you see, that dare not show his Face! -- if he were here, I'd make him give up his Pretensions directly!

ABSOLUTE

Hold, Bob -- let me set you right -- there is no such Man as Beverley in the case. -- The Person who assum'd that Name is before you; and as his Pretensions are the same in both Characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please.

SIR LUCIUS

Well, this is lucky. -- Now you have an opportunity -- --

ACRES

What, quarrel with my dear Friend Jack Absolute? -- not if he were fifty Beverleys! Zounds! Sir Lucius, you would not have me so unnatural.

SIR LUCIUS

Upon my Conscience, Mr. Acres, your Valour has oozed away with a vengeance!

ACRES

Not in the least! Odds Backs and Abettors! I'll be your Second with all my Heart -- and if you should get a

Quietus, you may command me entirely.
I'll get you snug lying in the Abbey
here; or pickle you, and send you over
to Ireland, or anything of the kind,
with the greatest Pleasure.

SIR LUCIUS

Well, then, captain, 'tis we must
begin -- so come out, my little
Counsellor -- [Draws his sword] -- and
ask the Gentleman, whether he will
resign the Lady, without forcing you
to proceed against him?

ABSOLUTE

Come on then, sir -- [Draws]; since
you won't let it be an amicable Suit,
here's my Reply.

[Enter SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE, DAVID]

DAVID

Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony;
knock down my Master in particular;
and bind his hands over to their good
behaviour!

SIR ANTHONY

Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in
a Frenzy -- how came you in a Duel,
sir?

ABSOLUTE

Faith, sir, that Gentleman can tell
you better than I; 'twas he called on
me, and you know, sir, I serve his
Majesty.

SIR ANTHONY

Here's a pretty Fellow; I catch him
going to cut a man's Throat, and he
tells me, he serves his Majesty! --
Zounds! Sirrah, then how durst you
draw the King's sword against one of
his Subjects?

SIR LUCIUS

I call'd on the Captain, 'tis true,
and he has given me his promise under
his hand here (produces letter) to
settle our differences - o if he wants

to break his word -

SIR ANTHONY

Let me see. (Takes letter) Odds life!
this isn't Jack's writing - (reads)
"prevent confusion - Kings Mead Fields -
yours, Collin" - Zounds! who's
Collin?

ACRES

Odds Triggers and Flints! - my
fighting Name. - Why Sir Anthony, let
me see - by my Valour, this is my
Challenge.

SIR LUCIUS

Your Challenge!

SIR ANTHONY

So then you and Sir Lucius must fight.

ACRES

Ods Blades, Sir Anthony, I should
never have penn'd such a Thing if it
had not been for Sir Lucius himself -
Ask David else.

DAVID

Sir, My Master is a peaceable Master;
he wouldn't challenge a Worm.

ACRES

Besides, Sir Anthony, It is all Sir
Lucius's inditing, - every word of it
his own.

SIR LUCIUS

I did indite it. I confess.

SIR ANTHONY

Gads Life, Sir Lucius, the you have
challenged yourself.

SIR LUCIUS

Challeng'd myself! - Hell and Fury,
Sir, what do you mean? `Sblood, I
would resent an affront from myself,
as soon as from another Gentleman. But
not withstanding all this, there is a
certain Quality of Affront given
somewhere, which must be Mended - we

must Fight - for it appears to me that we are all Rivals.

ABSOLUTE

Explain your pretensions, Sir Lucius.

SIR LUCIUS

My pretensions are to the person and Fortune of Miss Lydia Languish, and I'll cut an man's throat, that stands on my way.

ABSOLUTE

A very concise method of wooing that.

ACRES

I give up all my right - I make no pretensions to anything in the world - and if I can't get a wife without fighting for her, by my Valour, I'll live a Bachelor.

ABSOLUTE

But on what do you ground your hopes?

SIR LUCIUS

On her affection for me, my dear - I only have it under her own hand, that's all.

ABSOLUTE

Well, Sir Lucius, if that be the Case, and the Lady is willing to ratify - I give you my Honour, I will be no impediment.

SIR LUCIUS

Well, that's very fair.

SIR ANTHONY

What the deuce is all this - So - here comes the Women, - we only wanted them to make the Confusion complete.

(MRS. MALAPROP, LYDIA, and JULIA.)

MRS. MALAPROP

Sir Anthony, tell us who's dead. - O mercy, I am glad to see you all Horizontal on your Legs

SIR ANTHONY

We are all alive, I believe, Mrs.

Malaprop.

MRS. MALAPROP

Captain Absolute, come here -- How could you intimidate us so? -- Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you.

ABSOLUTE

For fear I should be killed, or escape, Ma'am?

Mrs. MALAPROP

Nay, no delusions to the past -- Lydia is convinced; speak, child.

SIR LUCIUS

With your leave, Ma'am, I must put in a word here: I believe I could interpret the young Lady's Silence. Now mark -- --

LYDIA

What is it you mean, sir?

SIR LUCIUS

Come, come, Delia, we must be serious now -- this is no time for trifling.

LYDIA

Tis true, sir; and your reproof bids me offer this Gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections.

ABSOLUTE

O! My little Angel, say you so?

SIR LUCIUS

What's this! is this your promise, that your Love should never be Miscellaneous? Come out then little Delia. Can you deny your own handwriting, here -- [Takes

out letters.]

MRS. MALAPROP

O, he will dissolve my mystery! -- Sir Lucius, perhaps there's some mistake -- perhaps I can illuminate -- --

SIR LUCIUS

Pray, old Gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business. -- Miss Languish, are you my Delia, or not?

LYDIA

Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not.

ABSOLUTE

Gas, Sir Lucius, since you have been challenging yourself, -are you sure you have not been wooing yourself?

SIR LUCIUS

'Sdeath, Sir, how durst you -

MRS. MALAPROP

Sir Lucius O'Trigger -- ungrateful as you are -- I own the soft impeachment -- pardon my blushes, I am Delia.

SIR LUCIUS

You Delia -- pho! pho! be easy.

MRS. MALAPROP

Come here, thou barbarous Vandyke -- thou inhuman Goat - those letters are mine -- let me convict you. Men are all barbarians. (Takes him aside)

SIR ANTHONY

Well-done Mrs. Malaprop. So, to her Jack - set matters right, and I'll forgive you all.

[ABSOLUTE and LYDIA walk aside .]

[All retire but JULIA and FAULKLAND.]

FAULKLAND

Julia! -- how can I sue for what I so little deserve? I dare not presume -- yet Hope is the child of Penitence.

JULIA

Oh! Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind Treatment of me, than I am now in wanting inclination to resent it. As my Heart honestly bids me place my weakness to the Account of Love, I should be

ungenerous not to admit the same Plea
for yours.

FAULKLAND

Now I shall be blest indeed!

ABSOLUTE

[Coming forward.] All the faults I
have ever seen in my friend Faulkland
seemed to proceed from what he calls
the delicacy and warmth of his
affection for you --

SIR ANTHONY

[Coming forward.] Julia, I never
interfered before; but let me have a
hand in the matter at last. -- There,
marry him directly, Julia; you'll find
he'll mend surprisingly!

[The rest come forward.]

SIR LUCIUS

Come, now, I hope there is no
dissatisfied Person, but what is
content; for as I have been
disappointed myself, it will be very
hard if I have not the satisfaction of
seeing other people succeed better.

ACRES

You are right, Sir Lucius. -- So Jack,
I wish you Joy -- Mr. Faulkland the
same. -- Ladies, -- come now, to show
you I'm neither vex'd nor angry, Odds
Tabors and Pipes! I'll order the
Fiddles in half an hour to the New
Rooms -- and I insist on your all
meeting me there.

SIR ANTHONY

'Gad! sir, I like your spirit; and at
night we single lads will drink a
health to the young couples, and a
husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

ABSOLUTE

Well, Faukland, we have both tasted
the Bitters, as well as the Sweets of
Love; with this difference only, that
you always prepared the bitter cup for

yourself, while I -- --

LYDIA

Was always obliged to me for it, hey!
Mr. Modesty? -- But come, no more of
that -- our happiness is now as
unallay'd as general.

JULIA

It is a common observation, the Evils
of Love are more numerous than its
Blessings -- but I believe the former
was mostly of our own Creating. --
When Hearts Deserving Happiness would
unite their Fortunes, Virtue would
crown them with an unfading Garland of
modest hurtless Flowers; but ill-
judging Passion will force the gaudier
Rose into the Wreath, whose Thorn
offends them when its leaves are
dropp'd!

[Exeunt omnes.]