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, -- 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
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.]
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
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 Algebra, 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'd, 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 -
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
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 Glees! -- 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 acquaintance.

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 Fahg! 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. Fahg --

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 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 sincere. 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?

ABSOLUTE
Squints! Zounds! no.

SIR ANTHONY
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. Odds-life! 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
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! 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 Beverley! this
decision 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 Fortune 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 drugged, 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 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 tomorrow, 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 unrepining 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.
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!

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

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

Then, prithee, Sir, be brief.

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.

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

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 -

But who is this? Who! Who! Who?

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

Heavens! What, Captain Absolute!

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 -- 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 notwithstanding 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.
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, Faulkland, 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
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.]