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WEST INDIAN



LOUISA. — UNHAND ME, SIR!

ACT. IV.

SCENE. I

THE

(3)

WEST INDIAN;

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS;

BY RICHARD CUMBERLAND, Esq.

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRES ROYAL,

DRURY LANE AND COVENT GARDEN.

PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MANAGERS

FROM THE PROMPT BOOK.

WITH REMARKS

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME,
PATERNOSTER ROW.



DR.

T. DAVISON, Whitefriars,
London.

REMARKS.

A good play, like a female beauty, may go out of fashion before it becomes old. Men may admire, till admiration is exhausted, and forsake both the one and the other, for that novelty, which has less intrinsic worth.

This is exactly the case with "The West Indian." Its attraction has been so powerful, that the custom of seeing it has weakened its force. Still its value is acknowledged. Every one commends it as a most excellent comedy; but it is no longer for the advantage of the theatre to perform it often.

Mr. Cumberland, in his Memoirs, lately published, says—He wrote this play in Ireland; at the house of his father, the Bishop of Kilmore, to whom he was on a visit; and, that he chose a room for this task, which had a prospect no more inviting than a haystack or a barn, that his attention might not be seduced from his literary employment. It was a fortunate room; and if equal success were attached to the spot, it would be worth the pains of a voyage to Ireland, over a stormy sea, with a view to such another composition.

“The West Indian” was produced in the year 1771; and it must be consoling for the authors of the present day, to read these lines in the prologue, addressed to the audience—

“ You say we write not like our fathers—true:
Nor were our fathers half so strict as you.”

By this passage it may be concluded, that certain critics had the same heavy charges against the dramatists of that period, as of the present time: and yet, as a proof of the general injustice of their accusation, the following are amongst the very excellent dramas, which just then had made their appearance.

The elder Colman’s “ Jealous Wife” and “ Clandestine Marriage.”—Murphy’s “ Way to keep Him” and “ All in the Wrong.”—Home’s “ Douglas,” and Bickerstaff’s “ Love in a Village.”

A quotation from the prologue leads to one from the epilogue; in which it will be seen, that bad habits have also descended from mother to daughter, as they have done from father to son.

“ Now let the modern modish fair appear;
Till noon they sleep, from noon till night they dress;
From night till morn, they game it more or less.
Next day, the same sweet course of joy run o’er,
Then the night after, as the night before,
And the night after that, encore, encore !”

Remarks, which precede a work, must be written with infinite restraint, lest an observation carried too far upon any one part of the fable or characters should reveal secrets which it is the reader’s chief

amusement, in the perusal of the play, himself to find out. It cannot be, however, any diminution of the pleasure of reading this comedy, to be told—that, although it may bestow no small degree of entertainment in the closet, its proper region is the stage.—Many of the characters require the actor's art, to fill up the bold design, where the author's pen has not failed, but wisely left the perilous touches of a finishing hand to the judicious comedian.

Of the persons, who acted originally in this play, it is melancholy to reflect how few are now living: yet its author not only survives but flourishes!—King was the original Belcour; and, strange to say, that, although the play had brilliant success, the hero was not properly represented. King was, at that time, above fifty years of age, and looked to be so—he had other impediments to prevent his exactly personating the young, high-spirited, open-hearted, inconsiderate, West Indian; though, in almost all the other characters which he performed, he was perfectly a good actor.

Moody's O'Flaherty was in high repute—Johnstone's can scarcely be thought superior by the audiences of the present century. Yet Johnstone's Irishmen, Patrician or Plebeian, are so excellent, they are in danger of bringing the whole group into disrepute; for they tempt authors to write bad parts, in imitation of good ones, and to comprise every degree of Irish character, in the mere tone of the voice.

Mr. Cumberland has not always the talent to make his female characters prominent. Elegance in Char-

lotte Rusport, and beauty in Louisa Dudley, are the only qualities which the two actresses, who represent those parts, require; and these gifts were perfectly in the possession of the original performers—Mrs. Abington and Mrs. Baddeley.

In the Spectator is a letter with this question—
“ Mr. Spectator, be so kind as to let me know, what you esteem to be the chief qualification of a good poet, especially of one who writes plays ?”

Answer—“ To be a wellbred man.”

On this position—Mr. Cumberland is a man of perfect good breeding.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

	DRURY LANE.	COVENT GARDEN.
STOCKWELL	<i>Mr. Downton.</i>	<i>Mr. Murray.</i>
BELCOUR	<i>Mr. Elliston.</i>	<i>Mr. Lewis.</i>
MAJOR O'FLAHERTY	<i>Mr. Johnstone.</i>	<i>Mr. Waddy.</i>
CAPTAIN DUDLEY	<i>Mr. Dormer.</i>	<i>Mr. Hull.</i>
CHARLES DUDLEY	<i>Mr. De Camp.</i>	<i>Mr. Claremont.</i>
VARLAND	<i>Mr. Cherry.</i>	<i>Mr. Emery.</i>
STUKELY	<i>Mr. Maddocks.</i>	<i>Mr. Davenport.</i>
FULMER	<i>Mr. Purser.</i>	<i>Mr. Thompson.</i>
LADY RUSPORT	<i>Mrs. Sparks.</i>	<i>Mrs. Davenport.</i>
CHARLOTTE RUSPORT	<i>Miss Duncan.</i>	<i>Mrs. Glover.</i>
LOUISA DUDLEY	<i>Miss Mellon.</i>	<i>Mrs. H. Johnstone.</i>
MRS. FULMER	<i>Miss Tidswell.</i>	<i>Mrs. Gilbert.</i>
LUCY	<i>Mrs. Scott.</i>	<i>Miss Leserpe.</i>

SCENE—London.

THE
WEST INDIAN.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

A Merchant's Compting House. -

In an inner Room, set off by Glass Doors, are discovered several CLERKS, employed at their Desks. A Writing Table in the Front Room. STOCKWELL is discovered, reading a Letter;—STUKELY comes gently out of the Back Room, and observes him some Time before he speaks.

Stuke. He seems disordered : something in that letter ; and, I'm afraid, of an unpleasant sort.—He has many ventures of great account at sea : a ship richly freighted for Barcelona ; another for Lisbon ; and others expected from Cadiz, of still greater value. Besides these, i know he has many deep concerns in foreign bottoms, and underwritings to a vast amount. I'll accost him—Sir—Mr. Stockwell !

Stock. Stukely !—Well, have you shipped the cloths ?

Stuke. I have, sir ; here's the bill of lading, and

copy of the invoice; the assortments are all compared: Mr. Traffic will give you the policy upon 'Change.

Stock. 'Tis very well—lay these papers by; and no more of business for a while. Shut the door, Stukely; I have had long proof of your friendship and fidelity to me; a matter of most intimate concern lies on my mind, and 'twill be a sensible relief to unbosom myself to you; I have just now been informed of the arrival of the young West Indian, I have so long been expecting—you know whom I mean?

Stuke. Yes, sir; Mr. Belcour, the young gentleman, who inherited old Belcour's great estate in Jamaica.

Stock. Hush! not so loud; come a little nearer this way. This Belcour is now in London; part of his baggage is already arrived, and I expect him every minute. Is it to be wondered at, if his coming throws me into some agitation, when I tell you, Stukely, he is my son?

Stuke. Your son!

Stock. Yes, sir, my only son. Early in life, I accompanied his grandfather to Jamaica as his clerk; he had an only daughter, somewhat older than myself; the mother of this gentleman: it was my chance (call it good or ill) to engage her affections; and, as the inferiority of my condition made it hopeless to expect her father's consent, her fondness provided an expedient, and we were privately married; the issue of that concealed engagement is, as I have told you, this Belcour.

Stuke. That event surely discovered your connexion.

Stock. You shall hear. Not many days after our marriage, old Belcour set out for England; and, during his abode here, my wife was, with great secrecy, delivered of this son. Fruitful in expedients to disguise

her situation without parting from her infant, she contrived to have it laid and received at her door as a foundling. After some time her father returned, having left me here; in one of those favourable moments that decide the fortunes of prosperous men, this child was introduced; from that instant he treated him as his own, gave him his name, and brought him up in his family.

Stuke. And did you never reveal this secret, either to old Belcour, or your son?

Stock. Never.

Stuke. Therein you surprise me; a merchant of your eminence, and a member of the British Parliament, might surely aspire, without offence, to the daughter of a planter. In this case too, natural affection would prompt to a discovery.

Stock. Your remark is obvious; nor could I have persisted in this painful silence, but in obedience to the dying injunctions of a beloved wife. This letter, you found me reading, conveyed those injunctions to me; it was dictated in her last illness, and almost in the article of death; (you'll spare me the recital of it) she there conjures me, in terms as solemn as they are affecting, never to reveal the secret of our marriage, or withdraw my son, while her father survived.

Stuke. But on what motives did your unhappy lady found these injunctions?

Stock. Principally, I believe, from apprehension on my account, lest old Belcour, on whom at her decease I wholly depended, should withdraw his protection: in part from consideration of his repose, as well knowing the discovery would deeply affect his spirit, which was haughty, vehement, and unforgiving: and lastly, in regard to the interest of her infant, whom he had warmly adopted; and for whom, in case of a discovery, every thing was to be dreaded from his resentment. And, indeed, though the al-

teration in my condition might have justified me in discovering myself, yet I always thought my son safer in trusting to the caprice than to the justice of his grandfather. My judgment has not suffered by the event: old Belcour is dead, and has bequeathed his whole estate to him we are speaking of.

Stuke. Now then you are no longer bound to secrecy.

Stock. True: but before I publicly reveal myself, I could wish to make some experiment of my son's disposition: this can only be done by letting his spirit take its course without restraint; by these means, I think I shall discover much more of his real character under the title of his merchant, than I should under that of his father.

SCENE II.

Enter a SAILOR, ushering in several BLACK SERVANTS, carrying Portmanteaus, Trunks, &c.

Sail. 'Save your honour! is your name Stockwell, pray?

Stock. It is.

Sail. Part of my master Belcour's baggage, an't please you: there's another cargo not far a-stern of us; and the coxswain has got charge of the dumb creatures.

Stock. Pr'ythee, friend, what dumb creatures do you speak of; has Mr. Belcour brought over a collection of wild beasts?

Sail. No, lord love him; no, not he; let me see; there's two green monkeys, a pair of grey parrots, a Jamaica sow and pigs, and a Mangrove dog; that's all.

Stock. Is that all?

Sail. Yes, your honour: Yes, that's all; bless his heart, a' might have brought over the whole island if he would; a' didn't leave a dry eye in it.

Stock. Indeed! Stukely, show them where to bestow their baggage. Follow that gentleman.

Sail. Come, bear a hand, my lads, bear a hand.

[*Exit with STUKELY and SERVANTS.*

Stock. If the principal tallies with his purveyors, he must be a singular spectacle in this place: he has a friend, however, in this sea-faring fellow; 'tis no bad prognostic of a man's heart, when his shipmates give him a good word. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A Drawing Room.

A FOOTMAN discovered setting the Chairs by, &c.

Enter HOUSEKEEPER.

Housek. Why, what a fuss does our good master put himself in about this West Indian! see what a bill of fare I've been forced to draw out; seven and nine, I'll assure you, and only a family dinner, as he calls it: why, if my Lord Mayor was expected, there couldn't be a greater to-do about him.

Foot. I wish to my heart you had but seen the loads of trunks, boxes, and portmanteaus, he has sent hither. An ambassador's baggage, with all the smuggled goods of his family, does not exceed it.

Housek. A fine pickle he'll put the house into: had he been master's own son, and a christian Englishman, there could not be more rout than there is about this Creolian, as they call them.

Foot. No matter for that; he's very rich, and that's sufficient. They say, he has rum and sugar enough belonging to him, to make all the water in the Thames into punch. But I see my master's coming.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Enter STOCKWELL, followed by a SERVANT.

Stock. Where is Mr. Belcour? Who brought this note from him?

Serv. A waiter from the London Tavern, sir; he says, the young gentleman is just dressed, and will be with you directly.

Stock. Show him in when he arrives.

Serv. I shall, sir. I'll have a peep at him first, however; I've a great mind to see this outlandish spark. The sailor fellow says, he'll make rare doings amongst us.
[*Aside.*]

Stock. You need not wait; leave me. [Exit SERVANT.] Let me see.
[*Reads.*]

SIR,

I write to you under the hands of the hair-dresser; as soon as I have made myself decent, and slipped on some fresh clothes, I will have the honour of paying you my devoirs.

Yours,

BELCOUR.

He writes at his ease; for he's unconscious to whom his letter is addressed; but what a palpitation does it throw my heart into; a father's heart! 'Tis an affecting interview; when my eyes meet a son, whom yet they never saw, where shall I find constancy to support it? Should he resemble his mother, I am overthrown. All the letters I have had from him,

(for I industriously drew him into a correspondence with me) bespeak him of quick and ready understanding. All the reports I ever received give me favourable impressions of his character, wild, perhaps, as the manner of his country is, but, I trust, not frantic or unprincipled.

SCENE V.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, the foreign gentleman is come.

Enter another SERVANT.

Serv. Mr. Belcour.

Enter BELCOUR.

Stock. Mr. Belcour, I am rejoiced to see you; you are welcome to England!

Bel. I thank you heartily, good Mr. Stockwell; you and I have long conversed at a distance; now we are met; and the pleasure, this meeting gives me, amply compensates for the perils I have run through in accomplishing it.

Stock. What perils, Mr. Belcour? I could not have thought you would have made a bad passage at this time o'year.

Bel. Nor did we: courier like, we came posting to your shores, upon the pinions of the swiftest gales that ever blew; 'tis upon English ground all my difficulties have arisen; 'tis the passage from the river side I complain of.

Stock. Ay, indeed! What obstructions can you have met between this and the river side?

Bel. Innumerable! Your town is as full of defiles as the island of Corsica, and I believe they are as obstinately defended; so much hurry, bustle, and

confusion, on your quays: so many sugar casks, porter butts, and common council men, in your streets, that unless a man marched with artillery in his front, 'tis more than the labour of Hercules can effect, to make any tolerable way through your town.

Stock. I am sorry you have been so incommoded.

Bel. Why, 'faith 'twas all my own fault; accustomed to a land of slaves, and out of patience with the whole tribe of custom-house extortioners, boatmen, tide-waiters and water-bailiffs, that beset me on all sides, worse than a swarm of musquitoes, I proceeded a little too roughly to brush them away with my rattan; the sturdy rogues took this in dudgeon, and beginning to rebel, the mob chose different sides, and a furious scuffle ensued; in the course of which, my person and apparel suffered so much, that I was obliged to step into the first tavern to refit, before I could make my approaches in any decent trim.

Stock. All without is as I wish; dear nature, add the rest, I am happy. [*Aside.*] Well, Mr. Belcour, 'tis a rough sample you have had of my countrymen's spirit; but, I trust, you'll not think the worse of them for it.

Bel. Not at all, not at all; I like them the better. Was I only a visiter, I might, perhaps, wish them a little more tractable; but, as a fellow subject, and a sharer in their freedom, I applaud their spirit, though I feel the effects of it in every bone of my skin.

Stock. That's well; I like that well. How gladly I could fall upon his neck, and own myself his father!

[*Aside.*]

Bel. Well, Mr. Stockwell, for the first time in my life, here am I in England; at the fountain head of pleasure, in the land of beauty, of arts, and elegancies. My happy stars have given me a good estate, and the conspiring winds have blown me hither to spend it.

Stock. To use it, not to waste it, I should hope ; to treat it, Mr. Belcour, not as a vassal, over whom you have a wanton and a despotic power ; but as a subject, which you are bound to govern, with a temperate and restrained authority.

Bel. True, sir, most truly said ; mine's a commission, not a right ; I am the offspring of distress, and every child of sorrow is my brother ; while I have hands to hold, therefore, I will hold them open to mankind ; but, sir, my passions are my masters ; they take me where they will ; and oftentimes they leave to reason and to virtue nothing but my wishes and my sighs.

Stock. Come, come, the man, who can accuse, corrects himself.

Bel. Ah ! that's an office I am weary of ; I wish a friend would take it up ; I would to Heaven you had leisure for the employ ; but, did you drive a trade to the four corners of the world, you would not find the task so toilsome as to keep me free from faults.

Stock. Well, I am not discouraged ; this candour tells me I should not have the fault of self conceit to combat ; that, at least, is not amongst the number.

Bel. No ; If I knew that man on earth who thought more humbly of me than I do of myself, I would take up his opinion, and forego my own.

Stock. And was I to chuse a pupil, it should be one of your complexion ; so if you'll come along with me, we'll agree upon your admission, and enter on a course of lectures directly.

Bel. With all my heart.

[*Exeunt,*

SCENE VI.

A Room in LADY RUSPORT'S House.

Enter LADY RUSPORT and MISS RUSPORT.

Lady R. Miss Rusport, I desire to hear no more of Captain Dudley and his destitute family; not a shilling of mine shall ever cross the hands of any of them; because my sister chose to marry a beggar, am I bound to support him and his posterity?

Miss R. I think you are.

Lady R. You think I am! and pray where do you find the law that tells you so?

Miss R. I am not proficient enough to quote chapter and verse; but I take charity to be a mean clause in the great statute of christianity.

Lady R. I say charity, indeed! And pray, Miss, are you sure that it is charity, pure charity, which moves you to plead for Captain Dudley? Amongst all your pity, do you find no spice of a certain anti-spiritual passion, called love? Don't mistake yourself: you are no saint, child, believe me; and I am apt to think the distresses of old Dudley, and of his daughter into the bargain, would never break your heart, if there was not a certain young fellow of two and twenty in the case; who, by the happy recommendation of a good person, and the brilliant appointments of an ensigncy, will, if I am not mistaken, cozen you out of a fortune of twice twenty thousand pounds, as soon as ever you are of age to bestow it upon him.

Miss R. A nephew of your ladyship's can never want any other recommendation with me: and if my partiality for Charles Dudley is acquitted by the

rest of the world, I hope Lady Rusport will not condemn me for it.

Lady R. I condemn you ! I thank Heaven, Miss Rusport, I am no ways responsible for your conduct ; nor is it any concern of mine how you dispose of yourself : you are not my daughter, and, when I married your father, poor Sir Stephen Rusport, I found you a forward spoiled miss of fourteen, far above being instructed by me.

Miss R. Perhaps your ladyship calls this instruction.

Lady R. You are strangely pert ; but 'tis no wonder : your mother, I'm told, was a fine lady : and according to the modern style of education you was brought up. It was not so in my young days ; there was then some decorum in the world, some subordination, as the great Locke expresses it. Oh ! 'twas an edifying sight, to see the regular deportment observed in our family ; no giggling, no gossiping was going on there ; my good father, Sir Oliver Roundhead, never was seen to laugh himself, nor ever allowed it in his children.

Miss R. Ay ; those were happy times, indeed.

Lady R. But, in this forward age, we have coquettes in the egg-shell, and philosophers in the cradle ; girls of fifteen, that lead the fashion in new caps and new opinions, that have their sentiments and their sensations ; and the idle fops encourage them in it : O' my conscience, I wonder what it is the men can see in such babies.

Miss R. True, madam ; but all men do not overlook the maturer beauties of your ladyship's age ; witness your admired Major Dennis O'Flaherty ; there's an example of some discernment ; I declare to you, when your ladyship is by, the Major takes no more notice of me than if I was part of the furniture of your chamber.

Lady R. The Major, child, has travelled through

various kingdoms and climates, and has more enlarged notions of female merit than falls to the lot of an English home-bred lover; in most other countries, no woman on your side forty would ever be named in a polite circle.

Miss R. Right, madam; I've been told that in Vienna they have coquettes upon crutches, and Venuses in their grand climacteric; a lover there celebrates the wrinkles, not the dimples in his mistress's face. The Major, I think, has served in the imperial army.

Lady R. Are you piqued, my young madam? Had my sister, Louisa, yielded to the addresses of one of Major O'Flaherty's person and appearance, she would have had some excuse; but to run away, as she did, at the age of sixteen too, with a man of old Dudley's sort——

Miss R. Was, in my opinion, the most venial trespass that ever girl of sixteen committed; of a noble family, an engaging person, strict honour, and sound understanding, what accomplishment was there wanting in Captain Dudley, but that which the prodigality of his ancestors had deprived him of?

Lady R. They left him as much as he deserves; hasn't the old man captain's half pay? And is not the son an ensign?

Miss R. An ensign! Alas, poor Charles! Would to Heaven he knew what my heart feels and suffers for his sake.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Ensign Dudley, to wait upon your ladyship.

Lady R. Who! Dudley! What can have brought him to town?

Miss R. Déar madam, 'tis Charles Dudley, 'tis your nephew.

Lady R. Nephew! I renounce him as my nephew; Sir Oliver renounced him as his grandson; wasn't he

son of the eldest daughter, and only male descendant of Sir Oliver; and didn't he cut him off with a shilling? Didn't the poor dear good old man leave his fortune to me, except a small annuity to my maiden sister, who spoiled her constitution with nursing him? And, depend upon it, not a penny of that fortune shall ever be disposed of otherwise than according to the will of the donor.

Enter CHARLES DUDLEY.

So, young man, whence came you? What brings you to town?

Charles. If there is any offence in my coming to town, your ladyship is in some degree responsible for it, for part of my errand was to pay my duty here.

Lady R. I hope you have some better excuse than all this.

Charles. 'Tis true, madam, I have other motives; but, if I consider my trouble repaid by the pleasure I now enjoy, I should hope my aunt would not think my company the less welcome for the value I set upon hers.

Lady R. Coxcomb! And where is your father, child; and your sister? Are they in town too?

Charles. They are.

Lady R. Ridiculous! I don't know what people do in London, who have no money to spend in it.

Miss R. Dear madam, speak more kindly to your nephew; how can you oppress a youth of his sensibility?

Lady R. Miss Rusport, I insist upon your retiring to your apartment; when I want your advice, I'll send to you. [*Exit MISS RUSPORT.*] So you have put on a red coat too, as well as your father; 'tis plain what value you set upon the good advice Sir Oliver used to

give you : how often has he cautioned you against the army ?

Charles. Had it pleased my grandfather to enable me to have obeyed his caution, I would have done it ; but you well know how destitute I am ; and 'tis not to be wondered at if I prefer the service of my king to that of any other master.

Lady R. Well, well, take your own course ; 'tis no concern of mine : you never consulted me.

Charles. I frequently wrote to your ladyship, but could obtain no answer ; and, since my grandfather's death, this is the first opportunity I have had of waiting upon you.

Lady R. I must desire you not to mention the death of that dear good man in my hearing ; my spirits cannot support it.

Charles. I shall obey you : permit me to say, that, as that event has richly supplied you with the materials of bounty, the distresses of my family can furnish you with objects of it.

Lady R. The distresses of your family, child, are quite out of the question at present ; had Sir Oliver been pleased to consider them, I should have been well content ; but he has absolutely taken no notice of you in his will, and that to me must and shall be a law. Tell your father and your sister, I totally disapprove of their coming up to town.

Charles. Must I tell my father that, before your ladyship knows the motive that brought him hither ? Allured by the offer of exchanging for a commission on full pay, the veteran, after thirty years service, prepares to encounter the fatal heats of Senegambia ; but wants a small supply to equip him for the expedition.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Major O'Flaberty, to wait on your ladyship.

Enter MAJOR.

O'Fla. Spare your speeches, young man; don't you think her ladyship can take my word for that? I hope, madam, 'tis evidence enough of my being present, when I have the honour of telling you so myself.

Lady R. Major O'Flaherty, I am rejoiced to see you. Nephew Dudley, you perceive I'm engaged.

Charles. I shall not intrude upon your ladyship's more agreeable engagements. I presume I have my answer?

Lady R. Your answer, child! What answer can you possibly expect? or how can your romantic father suppose that I am to abet him in all his idle and extravagant undertakings? Come, Major, let me show you the way into my dressing-room; and let us leave this young adventurer to his meditation.

[*Exit.*

O'Fla. I follow you, my lady. Young gentleman, your obedient! Upon my conscience, as fine a young fellow as I would wish to clap my eyes on: he might have answered my salute, however—well, let it pass; Fortune, perhaps, frowns upon the poor lad; she's a damn'd slippery lady, and very apt to jilt us poor fellows that wear cockades in our hats. Fare thee well, honey, whoever thou art.

[*Exit.*

Charles. So much for the virtues of a puritan—out upon it; her heart is flint; yet that woman, that aunt of mine, without one worthy particle in her composition, wou'd, I dare be sworn, as soon set her foot in a pest-house, as in a play-house.

Enter MISS RUSPORT.

Miss R. Stop, stay a little, Charles; whither are you going in such haste?

Charles. Madam; Miss Rusport; what are your commands?

Miss R. Why so reserved? We had used to answer to no other names than those of Charles and Charlotte.

Charles. What ails you? You have been weeping.

Miss R. No, no; or if I have, your eyes are full too; but I have a thousand things to say to you: before you go, tell me, I conjure you, where you are to be found: here, give me your direction; write it upon the back of this visiting ticket—Have you a pencil?

Charles. I have: but why should you desire to find us out? 'tis a poor little inconvenient place; my sister has no apartment fit to receive you in.

Enter SERVANT.

Serv. Madam, my lady desires your company directly.

Miss R. I am coming—well, have you wrote it? Give it me. O, Charles! either you do not or you will not understand *me*. *[Exeunt severally.]*

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

A Room in FULMER'S House.

FULMER and MRS. FULMER.

Mrs. Ful. Why, how you sit, musing and moping, sighing and desponding! I'm asham'd of you, Mr.

Fulmer : is this the country you described to me, a second Eldorado, rivers of gold and rocks of diamonds? You found me in a pretty snug retired way of life at Bologne, out of the noise and bustle of the world, and wholly at my ease; you, indeed, was upon the wing, with a fiery persecution at your back; but like a true son of Loyola, you had then a thousand ingenious devices to repair your fortune: and this your native country was to be the scene of your performances. Fool that I was, to be inveigled into it by you: but, thank Heaven, our partnership is revocable; I am not your wedded wife, praised be my stars! for what have we got, whom have we gulled but ourselves? which of all your trains has taken fire? even this poor expedient of your bookseller's shop seems abandoned; for if a chance customer drops in, who is there, pray, to help him to what he wants?

Ful. Patty, you know it is not upon slight grounds that I despair; there had used to be a livelihood to be picked up in this country, both for the honest and dishonest: I have tried each walk, and am likely to starve at last: there is not a point to which the wit and faculty of man can turn, that I have not set mine to, but in vain; I am beat through every quarter of the compass.

Mrs. Ful. Ah! common efforts all: strike me a master-stroke, Mr. Fulmer, if you wish to make any figure in this country.

Ful. But where, how, and what? I have blustered for prerogative; I have bellow'd for freedom; I have offered to serve my country; I have engaged to betray it; a master-stroke, truly! why, I have talked treason, writ treason, and, if a man can't live by that, he can live by nothing. Here I set up as a bookseller, why, men leave off reading; and if I was to turn butcher, I believe, o' my conscience, they'd leave off eating.

CAPTAIN DUDLEY *crosses the Stage.*

Mrs. Ful. Why, there now's your lodger, old Captain Dudley, as he calls himself; there's no flint without fire; something might be struck out of him, if you had the wit to find the way.

Ful. Hang him, an old dry-skinned curmudgeon; you may as well think to get truth out of a courtier, or candour out of a critic: I can make nothing of him; besides, he's poor, and therefore not for our purpose.

Mrs. Ful. The more fool he! Would any man be poor, that had such a prodigy in his possession?

Ful. His daughter, you mean; she is, indeed, uncommonly beautiful.

Mrs. Ful. Beautiful! Why, she need only be seen, to have the first men in the kingdom at her feet. Egad, I wish I had the leasing of her beauty; what would some of our young Nabobs give——?

Ful. Hush! here comes the Captain; good girl, leave us to ourselves, and let me try what I can make of him.

Mrs. Ful. Captain, truly! i'faith I'd have a regiment, had I such a daughter, before I was three months older. [*Exit.*

Enter CAPTAIN DUDLEY.

Ful. Captain Dudley, good morning to you.

Dud. Mr. Fulmer, I have borrowed a book from your shop; 'tis the sixth volume of my deceased friend Tristram: he is a flattering writer to us poor soldiers; and the divine story of Le Fevre, which makes part of this book, in my opinion of it, does honour, not to its author only, but to human nature.

Ful. He's an author I keep in the way of trade,

but one I never relished : he is much too loose and profligate for my taste.

Dud. That's being too severe : I hold him to be a moralist in the noblest sense ; he plays, indeed, with the fancy, and sometimes, perhaps, too wantonly ; but while he thus designedly masks his main attack, he comes at once upon the heart ; refines, amends it, softens it ; beats down each selfish barrier from about it, and opens every sluice of pity and benevolence.

Ful. We of the catholic persuasion are not much bound to him.—Well, sir, I shall not oppose your opinion ; a favourite author is like a favourite mistress ; and there, you know, Captain, no man likes to have his taste arraigned.

Dud. Upon my word, sir, I don't know what a man likes in that case ; 'tis an experiment I never made.

Ful. Sir !—Are you serious ?

Dud. 'Tis of little consequence whether you think so.

Ful. What a formal old prig it is ! [*Aside.*]—I apprehend you, sir ; you speak with caution ; you are married ?

Dud. I have been.

Ful. And this young lady, which accompanies you.—

Dud. Passes for my daughter.

Ful. Passes for his daughter ! humph—[*Aside.*]—She is exceedingly beautiful, finely accomplished, of a most enchanting shape and air.

Dud. You are much too partial ; she has the greatest defect a woman can have.

Ful. How so, pray ?

Dud. She has no fortune.

Ful. Rather say, that you have none ; and that's a sore defect in one of your years, Captain Dudley : you have served, no doubt ?

Dud. Familiar coxcomb ! But I'll humour him.

[*Aside.*

Ful. A close old fox ! but I'll unkennel him.

[*Aside.*

Dud. Above thirty years I've been in the service, Mr. Fulmer.

Ful. I guessed as much ; I laid it at no less : why, 'tis a wearisome time ; 'tis an apprenticeship to a profession, fit only for a patriarch. But preferment must be closely followed : you never could have been so far behindhand in the chase, unless you had palpably mistaken your way. You'll pardon me ; but I begin to perceive you have lived in the world, not with it.

Dud. It may be so ; and you, perhaps, can give me better counsel. I am now soliciting a favour ; an exchange to a company on full pay ; nothing more ; and yet I meet a thousand bars to that ; though, without boasting, I should think the certificate of services which I sent in might have purchased that indulgence to me.

Ful. Who thinks or cares about them ? Certificate of services, indeed ! Send in a certificate of your fair daughter ; carry her in your hand with you.

Dud. What ! Who ! My daughter ! Carry my daughter ! Well, and what then ?

Ful. Why, then your fortune's made, that's all.

Dud. I understand you : and this you call knowledge of the world ! Despicable knowledge ; but, sirrah, I will have you know— [*Threatening him.*

Ful. Help ! Who's within ? Would you strike me, sir ? would you lift up your hand against a man in his own house ?

Dud. In a church, if he dare insult the poverty of a man of honour.

Ful. Have a care what you do ; remember there is

such a thing in law as an assault and battery ; ay, and such trifling forms as warrants and indictments.

Dud. Go, sir ; you are too mean for my resentment : 'tis that, and not the law, protects you. Hence !

Ful. An old, absurd, incorrigible blockhead ! I'll be revenged of him. [*Aside.*

Enter CHARLES DUDLEY.

Charles. What is the matter, sir ? Sure I heard an outcry as I entered the house.

Dud. Not unlikely ; our landlord and his wife are for ever wrangling.—Did you find your aunt Dudley at home ?

Charles. I did.

Dud. And what was your reception ?

Charles. Cold as our poverty and her pride could make it.

Dud. You told her the pressing occasion I had for a small supply to equip me for this exchange ; has she granted me the relief I asked ?

Charles. Alas, sir ! she has peremptorily refused it.

Dud. That's hard ; that's hard, indeed ! My petition was for a small sum ; she has refused it, you say : well, be it so ; I must not complain. Did you see the broker, about the insurance on my life ?

Charles. There again I am the messenger of ill news ; I can raise no money, so fatal is the climate : alas ! that ever my father should be sent to perish in such a place !

Enter LOUISA DUDLEY.

Dud. Louisa, what's the matter ? you seem frighted.

Lou. I am, indeed : coming from Miss Rusport's,

I met a young gentleman in the streets, who has beset me in the strangest manner.

Charles. Insufferable ! Was he rude to you ?

Lou. I cannot say he was absolutely rude to me, but he was very importunate to speak to me, and once or twice attempted to lift up my hat ; he followed me to the corner of the street, and there I gave him the slip.

Dud. You must walk no more in the streets, child, without me, or your brother.

Lou. O Charles ! Miss Rusport desires to see you directly ; Lady Rusport is gone out, and she has something particular to say to you.

Charles. Have you any commands for me, sir ?

Dud. None, my dear ; by all means wait upon Miss Rusport. Come, Louisa ; I must desire you to go up to your chamber, and compose yourself.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter BELCOUR, after peeping in at the Door.

Bel. Not a soul, as I'm alive. Why, what an odd sort of a house is this ! Confound the little jilt, she has fairly given me the slip. A plague upon this London, I shall have no luck in it : such a crowd, and such a hurry, and such a number of shops, and one so like the other, that whether the wench turned into this house or the next, or whether she went up stairs or down stairs, (for there's a world above and a world below, it seems) I declare I know no more than if I was in the Blue Mountains. In the name of all the devils at once, why did she run away ? If every handsome girl I meet in this town is to lead me such a wildgoose chase, I had better have stay'd in the torrid zone : I shall be wasted to the size of a sugar-cane : what shall I do ? give the chase up ? hang it, that's cowardly : shall I, a true-born son of Phœbus, suffer this little nimble-footed Daphne to

escape me?—"Forbid it, honour, and forbid it, love." Hush! hush! here she comes! Oh! the devil! What tawdry thing have we got here?

Enter MRS. FULMER.

Mrs. Ful. Your humble servant, sir.

Bel. Your humble servant, madam.

Mrs. Ful. A fine summer's day, sir.

Bel. Yes, ma'am; and so cool, that, if the Calendar didn't call it July, I should swear it was January.

Mrs. Ful. Sir!

Bel. Madam!

Mrs. Ful. Do you wish to speak to Mr. Fulmer, sir?

Bel. Mr. Fulmer, madam? I hav'nt the honour of knowing such a person.

Mrs. Ful. No! I'll be sworn, have you not; thou art much too pretty a fellow, and too much of a gentleman, to be an author thyself, or to have any thing to say to those that are so. 'Tis the Captain, I suppose, you are waiting for.

Bel. I rather suspect it is the Captain's wife.

Mrs. Ful. The Captain has no wife, sir.

Bel. No wife! I'm heartily sorry for it; for then she's his mistress; and that I take to be the more desperate case of the two. Pray, madam, wasn't there a lady just now turned into your house? 'Twas with her I wished to speak.

Mrs. Ful. What sort of a lady, pray?

Bel. One of the loveliest sort my eyes ever beheld; young, tall, fresh, fair; in short, a goddess.

Mrs. Ful. Nay, but dear, dear sir, now I'm sure you flatter; for 'twas me you followed into the shop door this minute.

Bel. You! No, no, take my word for it, it was not you, madam.

Mrs. Ful. But what is it you laugh at?

Bel. Upon my soul, I ask your pardon ; but it was not you, believe me ; be assured it wasn't.

Mrs. Ful. Well, sir, I shall not contend for the honour of being noticed by you ; I hope you think you wou'dn't have been the first man that noticed me in the streets ; however, this I'm positive of, that no living woman but myself has entered these doors this morning.

Bel. Why, then, I'm mistaken in the house, that's all ; for it is not humanly possible I can be so far out in the lady. [Going.]

Mrs. Ful. Coxcomb !—But hold—a thought occurs ; as sure as can be, he has seen Miss Dudley. A word with you, young gentleman ; come back.

Bel. Well, what's your pleasure ?

Mrs. Ful. You seem greatly captivated with this young lady ; are you apt to fall in love thus at first sight ?

Bel. Oh, yes : 'tis the only way I can ever fall in love ; any man may tumble into a pit by surprise ; none but a fool would walk into one by choice.

Mrs. Ful. You are a hasty lover, it seems ; have you spirit to be a generous one ? They, that will please the eye, mustn't spare the purse.

Bel. Try me ; put me to the proof ; bring me to an interview with the dear girl that has thus captivated me, and see whether I have spirit to be grateful.

Mrs. Ful. But how, pray, am I to know the girl you have set your heart on ?

Bel. By an undescribable grace, that accompanies every look and action that falls from her ; there can be but one such woman in the world, and nobody can mistake that one.

Mrs. Ful. Well, if I should stumble upon this angel in my walks, where am I to find you ? What's your name ?

Bel. Upon my soul I can't tell you my name.

Mrs. Ful. Not tell me! Why so?

Bel. Because I don't know what it is myself; as yet I have no name.

Mrs. Ful. No name!

Bel. None; a friend, indeed, lent me his; but he forbade me to use it on any unworthy occasion.

Mrs. Ful. But where is your place of abode?

Bel. I have none; I never slept a night in England in my life.

Mrs. Ful. Hey day!

Enter FULMER.

Ful. A fine case, truly, in a free country; a pretty pass things are come to, if a man is to be assaulted in his own house.

Mrs. Ful. Who has assaulted you, my dear?

Ful. Who! why this Captain Drawcansir, this old Dudley, my lodger; but I'll unlodge him; I'll unharbour him, I warrant.

Mrs. Ful. Hush! hush! Hold your tongue, man; pocket the affront, and be quiet; I've a scheme on foot will pay you a hundred beatings. Why you surprise me, Mr. Fulmer; Captain Dudley assault you! Impossible.

Ful. Nay, I can't call it an absolute assault; but he threatened me.

Mrs. Ful. Oh, was that all? I thought how it would turn out—A likely thing, truly, for a person of his obliging compassionate turn: no, no, poor Captain Dudley, he has sorrows and distresses enough of his own to employ his spirits, without setting them against other people. Make it up as fast as you can: watch this gentleman out; follow him wherever he goes, and bring me word who and what he is; be sure you don't lose sight of him; I've other business in hand. [Exit.

Bel. Pray, sir, what sorrows and distresses have befallen this old gentleman you speak of?

Ful. Poverty, disappointment, and all the distresses attendant thereupon: sorrow enough of all conscience: I soon found how it was with him, by his way of living, low enough of all reason; but what I overheard this morning put it out of all doubt.

Bel. What did you overhear this morning?

Ful. Why, it seems he wants to join his regiment, and has been beating the town over to raise a little money for that purpose upon his pay; but the climate, I find, where he is going is so unhealthy, that nobody can be found to lend him any.

Bel. Why, then your town is a damned good-for-nothing town: and I wish I had never come into it.

Ful. That's what I say, sir; the hard heartedness of some folks is unaccountable. There's an old Lady Rusport, a near relation of this gentleman's; she lives hard by here, opposite to Stockwell's, the great merchant; he sent to her a-begging, but to no purpose; though she is as rich as a Jew, she would not furnish him with a farthing.

Bel. Is the Captain at home?

Ful. He is up stairs, sir.

Bel. Will you take the trouble to desire him to step hither! I want to speak to him.

Ful. I'll send him to you directly. I don't know what to make of this young man; but, if I live, I will find him out, or know the reason why. [Exit.

Bel. I've lost the girl, it seems, that's clear: she was the first object of my pursuit; but the case of this poor officer touches me; and, after all, there may be as much true delight in rescuing a fellow creature from distress, as there would be in plunging one into it—But let me see: it's a point that must be managed with some delicacy—Apropos! there's pen

and ink—I've struck upon a method that will do. [*Writes.*] Ay, ay, this is the very thing: 'twas devilish lucky I happened to have these bills about me. There, there, fare you well! I'm glad to be rid of you; you stood a chance of being worse applied, I can tell you. [*Encloses and seals the Paper.*]

FULMER *brings in* DUDLEY.

Ful. That's the gentleman, sir. I shall make bold, however, to lend an ear.

Dud. Have you any commands for me, sir?

Bel. Your name is Dudley, sir?—

Dud. It is.

Bel. You command a company, I think, Captain Dudley?

Dud. I did: I am now upon half-pay.

Bel. You have served some time?

Dud. A pretty many years; long enough to see some people of more merit, and better interest than myself, made general officers.

Bel. Their merit I may have some doubt of; their interest I can readily give credit to; there is little promotion to be looked for in your profession, I believe, without friends, Captain?

Dud. I believe so too: have you any other business with me, may I ask?

Bel. Your patience for a moment. I was informed you was about to join your regiment in distant quarters abroad.

Dud. I have been soliciting an exchange to a company on full pay, quartered at James's Fort, in Senegambia; but, I'm afraid, I must drop the undertaking.

Bel. Why so, pray?

Dud. Why so, sir? 'Tis a home question, for a perfect stranger to put; there is something very particular in all this.

Bel. If it is not impertinent, sir, allow me to ask you what reason you have for despairing of success.

Dud. Why, really, sir, mine is an obvious reason, for a soldier to have—Want of money; simply that.

Bel. May I beg to know the sum you have occasion for?

Dud. Truly, sir, I cannot exactly tell you on a sudden; nor is it, I suppose, of any great consequence to you to be informed: but I should guess, in the gross, that two hundred pounds would serve.

Bel. And do you find a difficulty in raising that sum upon your pay? 'Tis done every day.

Dud. The nature of the climate makes it difficult: I can get no one to insure my life.

Bel. Oh! that's a circumstance may make for you, as well as against: in short, Captain Dudley, it so happens, that I can command the sum of two hundred pounds: seek no farther; I'll accommodate you with it upon easy terms.

Dud. Sir! do I understand you rightly?—I beg your pardon; but am I to believe that you are in earnest?

Bel. What is your surprise? Is it an uncommon thing for a gentleman to speak truth? Or is it incredible that one fellow-creature should assist another?

Dud. I ask your pardon—May I beg to know to whom?—Do you propose this in the way of business?

Bel. Entirely: I have no other business on earth.

Dud. Indeed! you are not a broker, I'm persuaded.

Bel. I am not.

Dud. Nor an army agent, I think?

Bel. I hope you will not think the worse of me for being neither; in short, sir, if you will peruse this paper, it will explain to you who I am, and upon what terms I act; while you read it, I will step home, and fetch the money: and we will conclude the bargain without loss of time. In the mean while, good day to you.

[Exit hastily.

Dud. Humph! there's something very odd in all

this—let me see what we've got here—This paper is to tell me who he is, and what are his terms: in the name of wonder, why has he sealed it? Hey-day! what's here? Two Bank notes, of a hundred each! I can't comprehend what this means. Hold; here's a writing; perhaps that will show me. "Accept this trifle; pursue your fortune, and prosper." Am I in a dream? Is this a reality?

Enter MAJOR O'FLAHERTY.

O' Fla. 'Save you, my dear! Is it you now that are Captain Dudley, I would ask?—Whub! What's the hurry the man's in? If 'tis the lad that run out of the shop you would overtake, you might as well stay where you are; by my soul he's as nimble as a Croat; you are a full hour's march in his rear—Ay faith, you may as well turn back, and give over the pursuit: well, Captain Dudley, if that's your name, there's a letter for you. Read, man; read it; and I'll have a word with you after you have done.

Dud. More miracles on foot! So, so, from Lady Rusport.

O' Fla. You're right; it's from her ladyship.

Dud. Well, sir, I have cast my eye over it; 'tis short and peremptory; are you acquainted with the contents?

O' Fla. Not at all, my dear; not at all.

Dud. Have you any message from Lady Rusport?

O' Fla. Not a syllable, honey: only when you've digested the letter, I've a little bit of a message to deliver you from myself.

Dud. And may I beg to know who yourself is?

O' Fla. Dennis O'Flaherty, at your service; a poor Major of Grenadiers; nothing better.

Dud. So much for your name and title, sir; now be so good to favour me with your message.

O' Fla. Why then, Captain, I must tell you I have

promised Lady Rusport you shall do whatever it is she bids you to do in that letter there.

Dud. Ay, indeed; have you undertaken so much, Major, without knowing either what she commands, or what I can perform?

O' Fla. That's your concern, my dear, not mine; I must keep my word, you know.

Dud. Or else, I suppose, you and I must measure swords.

O' Fla. Upon my soul you've hit it.

Dud. That would hardly answer to either of us; you and I have, probably, had enough of fighting in our time before now.

O' Fla. Faith and troth, Master Dudley, you may say that; 'tis thirty years, come the time, that I have followed the trade, and in a pretty many countries.—Let me see—In the war before last I served in the Irish brigade, d'ye see; there, after bringing off the French monarch, I left his service, with a British bullet in my body, and this ribband in my button-hole. Last war I followed the fortunes of the German eagle, in the corps of grenadiers; there I had my bellyful of fighting, and a plentiful scarcity of every thing else. After six and twenty engagements, great and small, I went off with this gash on my scull, and a kiss of the Empress Queen's sweet hand, (Heaven bless it!) for my pains. Since the peace, my dear, I took a little turn with the confederates there in Poland—but such another set of madcaps!—by the Lord Harry, I never knew what it was they were scuffling about.

Dud. Well, Major, I won't add another action to the list; you shall keep your promise with Lady Rusport: she requires me to leave London; I shall go in a few days, and you may take what credit you please from my compliance.

O' Fla. Give me your hand, my dear boy! this will

make her my own; when that's the case, we shall be brothers, you know, and we'll share her fortune between us.

Dud. Not so Major; the man, who marries Lady Rusport, will have a fair title to her fortune without division. But, I hope, your expectations of prevailing are founded upon good reasons.

O' Fla. Upon the best grounds in the world; first, I think she will comply, because she is a woman; secondly, I am persuaded she won't hold out long, because she's a widow: and thirdly, I make sure of her, because I have married five wives, (*en militaire*, Captain) and never failed yet; and, for what I know, they are all alive and merry at this very hour.

Dud. Well, sir, go on, and prosper; if you can inspire Lady Rusport with half your charity, I shall think you deserve all her fortune; at present, I must beg your excuse: good morning to you. [*Exit.*

O' Fla. A good sensible man, and very much of a soldier; I did not care if I was better acquainted with him: but 'tis an awkward kind of country for that; the English, I observe, are close friends, but distant acquaintance. I suspect the old lady has not been over generous to poor Dudley: I shall give her a little touch about that: upon my soul, I know but one excuse a person can have for giving nothing, and that is, like myself, having nothing to give. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

LADY RUSPORT'S *House.**A Dressing Room.*

MISS RUSPORT and LUCY.

Miss R. Well, Lucy, you've dislodged the old lady at last; but methought you was a tedious time about it.

Lucy. A tedious time, indeed; I think they who have least to spare, contrive to throw the most away; I thought I should never have got her out of the house.

Miss R. But where's Charles Dudley? Run down, dear girl, and be ready to let him in; I think he's as long in coming as she was in going.

Lucy. Why, indeed, madam, you seem the more alert of the two, I must say. [*Exit.*

Miss R. Now the deuce take the girl, for putting that notion into my head: I am sadly afraid Dudley does not like me; so much encouragement as I have given him to declare himself, I never could get a word from him on the subject! This may be very honourable, but upon my life it's very provoking. By the way, I wonder how I look to-day: Oh! shockingly! hideously pale! like a witch!—This is the old lady's glass, and she has left some of her wrinkles on it.—How frightfully have I put on my cap! all awry! and my hair dressed so unbecoming! altogether, I'm a most complete fright—

Enter CHARLES, unobserved,

Charles. That I deny.

Miss R. Ah!

Charles. Quarrelling with your glass, cousin? Make it up, make it up, and be friends; it cannot compliment you more than by reflecting you as you are.

Miss R. Well, I vow, my dear Charles, that is delightfully said, and deserves my very best courtesy: your flattery, like a rich jewel, has a value, not only from its superior lustre, but from its extraordinary scarceness: I verily think, this is the only civil speech you ever directed to my person in your life.

Charles. And I ought to ask pardon of your good sense, for having done it now.

Miss R. Nay, now you relapse again: don't you know, if you keep well with a woman on the great score of beauty, she'll never quarrel with you on the trifling article of good sense!—But any thing serves to fill up a dull, yawning, hour, with an insipid cousin; you have brighter moments, and warmer spirits, for the dear girl of your heart.

Charles. Oh, fie upon you! fie upon you!

Miss R. You blush, and the reason is apparent:—you are a novice at hypocrisy; but no practice can make a visit of ceremony pass for a visit of choice: love is ever before its time; friendship is apt to lag a little after it.—Pray, Charles, did you make any extraordinary haste hither?

Charles. By your question, I see, you acquit me of the impertinence of being in love.

Miss R. But why impertinence? Why the impertinence of being in love?—You have one language for me, Charles, and another for the woman of your affection.

Charles. You are mistaken—the woman of my affection shall never hear any other language from me, than what I use to you.

Miss R. I am afraid, then, you'll never make yourself understood by her.

Charles. It is not fit I should; there is no need of love to make me miserable; 'tis wretchedness enough to be a beggar

Miss R. A beggar do you call yourself! O Charles, Charles, rich in every merit and accomplishment, whom may you not aspire to? And why think you so unworthily of our sex, as to conclude there is not one to be found with sense to discern your virtue, and generosity to reward it?

Charles. You distress me;—I must beg to hear no more.

Miss R. Well, I can be silent.—Thus does he always serve me, whenever I am about to disclose myself to him. [Aside,

Charles. Why do you not banish me and my misfortunes for ever from your thoughts?

Miss R. Ay, wherefore do I not, since you never allowed me a place in yours?—But, go, sir; I have no right to stay you; go where your heart directs you; go to the happy, the distinguished, fair one.

Charles. Now, by all that's good, you do me wrong; there is no such fair one for me to go to, nor have I an acquaintance among the sex, yourself excepted, which answers to that description.

Miss R. Indeed!

Charles. In very truth—there, then, let us drop the subject.—May you be happy, though I never can!

Miss R. O Charles! give me your hand; if I have offended you, I ask your pardon: you have been long acquainted with my temper, and know how to bear with its infirmities.

Charles. Thus, my dear Charlotte, let us seal our reconciliation!—[Kissing her Hand.] Bear with thy infirmities! By Heaven, I know not any one failing in thy whole composition, except, that of too great a partiality for an undeserving man.

Miss R. And you are now taking the very course to augment that failing.—A thought strikes me;—I

have a commission that you must absolutely execute for me;—I have immediate occasion for the sum of two hundred pounds; you know my fortune is shut up till I am of age; take this paltry box, (it contains my ear-rings, and some other baubles I have no use for) carry it to our opposite neighbour, Mr. Stockwell, (I don't know where else to apply) leave it as a deposit in his hands, and beg him to accommodate me with the sum.

Charles. Dear Charlotte, what are you about to do? How can you possibly want two hundred pounds?

Miss R. How can I possibly do without it, you mean? Doesn't every lady want two hundred pounds? Perhaps, I have lost it at play—perhaps, I mean to win as much to it—perhaps, I want it for two hundred different uses.

Charles. Pooh! pooh! all this is nothing; don't I know you never play?

Miss R. You mistake; I have a spirit to set, not only this trifle but my whole fortune upon a stake; therefore make no wry faces, but do as I bid you. You will find Mr. Stockwell a very honourable gentleman.

Enter LUCY, in Haste.

Lucy. Dear madam, as I live, here comes the old lady in a hackney coach.

Miss R. The old chariot has given her a second tumble:—away with you! you know your way out, without meeting her. Take the box, and do as I desire you.

Charles. I must not dispute your orders. Farewell!

[*Exeunt CHARLES and MISS RUSPORT.*]

Enter LADY RUSPORT, leaning on MAJOR O'FLAHERTY'S Arm.

O'Fla. Rest yourself upon my arm: never spare it; 'tis strong enough; it has stood harder service than you can put it to.

Lucy. Mercy upon me, what is the matter? I am frightened out of my wits—Has your ladyship had an accident?

Lady R. O Lucy, the most untoward one in nature. I know not how I shall repair it.

O'Fla. Never go about to repair it, my lady; even build a new one; 'twas but a crazy piece of business at best.

Lucy. Bless me, is the old chariot broke down with you again?

Lady R. Broke, child! I don't know what might have been broke, if by great good fortune, this obliging gentleman had not been at hand to assist me.

Lucy. Dear madam, let me run and fetch you a cup of the cordial drops.

Lady R. Do, Lucy. [*Exit LUCY.*] Alas, sir! ever since I lost my husband, my poor nerves have been shook to pieces:—there hangs his beloved picture; that precious relic, and a plentiful jointure, is all that remains to console me for the best of men.

O'Fla. Let me see—i'faith a comely personage; by his fur cloak, I suppose, he was in the Russian service; and by the gold chain round his neck, I should guess, he had been honoured with the order of St. Catharine.

Lady R. No, no; he meddled with no St. Catharines—that's the habit he wore in his mayoralty; Sir Stephen was Lord Mayor of London—but he is gone, and has left me, a poor, weak, solitary, widow, behind him.

O'Fla. By all means, then, take a strong, able, hearty, man, to repair his loss:—if such a plain fellow as one Dennis O'Flaherty can please you, I think I may venture to say, without any disparagement to the gentleman in the fur gown there—

Lady R. What are you going to say? Don't shock my ears with any comparisons, I desire.

O'Fla. Not I, by my soul; I don't believe there's any comparison in the case.

Enter LUCY.

Lady R. Oh, are you come? Give me the drops—I'm all in a flutter.

O' Fla. Harkye, sweetheart, what are those same drops? Have you any more left in the bottle? I didn't care if I took a little sip of them myself.

Lucy. Oh, sir, they are called the cordial restorative elixir, or the nervous golden drops; they are only for ladies' cases.

O' Fla. Yes, yes, my dear, there are gentlemen as well as ladies, that stand in need of those same golden drops; they'd suit my case to a tittle.

Lady R. Well, Major, did you give old Dudley my letter, and will the silly man do as I bid him, and be gone?

O' Fla. You are obeyed—he's on his march.

Lady R. That's well; you have managed this matter to perfection; I didn't think he would have been so easily prevailed upon.

O' Fla. At the first word: no difficulty in life; 'twas the very thing he was determined to do, before I came; I never met a more obliging gentleman.

Lady R. Well, 'tis no matter; so I am but rid of him, and his distresses: would you believe it, Major O'Flaherty, it was but this morning he sent a-begging to me for money to fit him out upon some wild-goose expedition to the coast of Africa, I know not where.

O' Fla. Well, you sent him what he wanted?

Lady R. I sent him what he deserved, a flat refusal.

O' Fla. You refused him?

Lady R. Most undoubtedly.

O' Fla. You sent him nothing!

Lady R. Not a shilling.

O' Fla. Good morning to you—Your servant—

[*Going.*

Lady R. Hey day! what ails the man? Where are you going?

O'Fla. Out of your house, before the roof falls on my head—to poor Dudley, to share the little modicum, that thirty years hard service has left me; I wish it was more, for his sake.

Lady R. Very well, sir; take your course; I sha'n't attempt to stop you; I shall survive it; it will not break my heart, if I never see you more.

O'Fla. Break your heart! No, o'my conscience will it not.—You preach, and y u pray, and you turn up your eyes, and all the while you are as hard-hearted as a hyena—A hyena, truly! by my soul, there isn't in the whole creation so savage an animal as a human creature without pity! [Exit.

Lady R. A hyena, truly! Where did the fellow blunder upon that word? Now the deuce take him for using it, and the Macaronies for inventing it. [Exit.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

A Room in STOCKWELL'S House.

STOCKWELL and BELCOUR.

Stock. Gratify me so far, however, Mr. Belcour, as to see Miss Rusport; carry her the sum she wants, and return the poor girl her box of diamonds, which Dudley left in my hands: you know what to say on the occasion better than I do; that part of your com-

mission I leave to your own discretion, and you may season it with what gallantry you think fit.

Bel. You could not have pitched upon a greater bungler at gallantry than myself, if you had rummaged every company in the city, and the whole court of aldermen into the bargain:—part of your errand, however, I will do; but whether it shall be with an ill grace or a good one, depends upon the caprice of a moment, the humour of the lady, the mode of our meeting, and a thousand undefinable small circumstances, that, nevertheless, determine us upon all the great occasions of life.

Stock. I persuade myself you will find Miss Rusport an ingenious, worthy, animated, girl.

Bel. Why, I like her the better, as a woman; but name her not to me as a wife! No, if ever I marry, it must be a stayed, sober, considerate, damsel, with blood in her veins as cold as a turtle's: quick of scent as a vulture when danger's in the wind; wary and sharp-sighted as a hawk when treachery is on foot: with such a companion at my elbow, for ever whispering in my ear—Have a care of this man, he's a cheat; don't go near that woman, she's a jilt; overhead there's a scaffold, underfoot there's a well. Oh, sir! such a woman might lead me up and down this great city without difficulty or danger; but with a girl of Miss Rusport's complexion, heaven and earth, sir! we should be duped, undone, and distracted, in a fortnight.

Stock. Ha! ha! ha! Why, you are become wonderful circumspect of a sudden, pupil: and if you can find such a prudent damsel as you describe, you have my consent—only beware how you chuse: discretion is not the reigning quality amongst the fine ladies of the present time; and, I think, in Miss Rusport's particular, I have given you no bad counsel.

Bel. Well, well, if you'll fetch me the jewels, I believe, I can undertake to carry them to her: but

as for the money, I'll have nothing to do with that: Dudley would be your fittest ambassador on that occasion; and, if I mistake not, the most agreeable to the lady.

Stock. Why, indeed, from what I know of the matter, it may not improbably be destined to find its way into his pockets. [Exit.]

Bel. Then, depend upon it, these are not the only trinkets she means to dedicate to Captain Dudley.—As for me, Stockwell, indeed, wants me to marry; but till I can get this bewitching girl, this incognita, out of my head, I can never think of any other woman.

Enter a SERVANT, and delivers a Letter.

Hey day! Where can I have picked up a correspondent already? 'Tis a most execrable manuscript—Let me see—*Martha Fulmer*—Who is Martha Fulmer?—Pshaw! I won't be at the trouble of decyphering her damned pothooks.—Hold, hold, hold; what have we got here?

DEAR SIR,

I have discovered the lady, you was so much smitten with, and can procure you an interview with her; if you can be as generous to a pretty girl, as you was to a paltry old captain,—How did she find that out?—you need not despair; come to me immediately; the lady is now in my house, and expects you.

Yours,

MARTHA FULMER.

O thou dear, lovely, and enchanting paper! which I was about to tear into a thousand scraps, devoutly I entreat thy pardon: I have slighted thy contents, which are delicious; slandered thy characters, which are divine; and all the atonement I can make, is implicitly to obey thy mandates.

Enter STOCKWELL.

Stock. Mr. Belcour, here are the jewels; this letter encloses bills for the money; and if you will deliver it to Miss Rusport, you'll have no further trouble on that score.

Bel. Ah! sir the letter, which I have been reading, disqualifies me for delivering the letter, which you have been writing; I have other game on foot; the loveliest girl my eyes ever feasted upon is started in view, and the world cannot now divert me from pursuing her.

Stock. Hey day! What has turned you thus on a sudden?

Bel. A woman; one that can turn, and overturn, me and my tottering resolutions every way she will. Oh, sir, if this is folly in me, you must rail at nature: you must chide the sun, that was vertical at my birth, and would not wink upon my nakedness, but swaddled me in the broadest, hottest glare of his meridian beams.

Stock. Mere rhapsody: mere childish rhapsody: the libertine's familiar plea—Nature made us, 'tis true, but we are the responsible creatures of our own faults and follies.

Bel. Sir!

Stock. Slave of every face you meet, some hussy has inveigled you; some handsome profligate (the town is full of them); and, when once fairly bankrupt in constitution as well as fortune, nature no longer serves as your excuse for being vicious, necessity, perhaps, will stand your friend, and you'll reform.

Bel. You are severe.

Stock. It fits me to be so—it well becomes a father—I would say, a friend—How strangely I forgot myself!—How difficult it is to counterfeit indifference,

and put a mask upon the heart!—I've struck him hard, he reddens.

Bel. How could you tempt me so? Had you not inadvertently dropped the name of father, I fear, our friendship, short as it has been, would scarce have held me—But even your mistake I reverence—Give me your hand—'tis over.

Stock. Generous young man!—Let me embrace you—How shall I hide my tears? I have been to blame; because I bore you the affection of a father, I rashly took up the authority of one. I ask your pardon—pursue your course; I have no right to stop it—What would you have me do with these things?

Bel. This, if I might advise; carry the money to Miss Rusport immediately; never let generosity wait for its materials; that part of the business presses. Give me the jewels: I'll find an opportunity of delivering them into her hands: and your visit **may** pave the way for my reception. [Exit.

Stock. Be it so; good morning to you. Farewell, advice! Away goes he, upon the wing for pleasure. What various passions he awakens in me! He pains, yet pleases me; affrights, offends, yet grows upon my heart. His very failings set him **off**—for ever trespassing, for ever atoning, I almost think he would not be so perfect, were he free from fault: I must dissemble longer; and yet how painful the experiment!—Even now he's gone upon some wild adventure; and who can tell what mischief may befall him: O Nature, what it is to be a father! just such a thoughtless, headlong thing was I, when I beguiled his mother into love. [Exit.

SCENE II.

FULMER'S *House.*

Enter FULMER and MRS. FULMER.

Ful. I tell you, Patty, you are a fool, to think of bringing him and Miss Dudley together: 'twill ruin every thing, and blow your whole scheme up to the moon at once.

Mrs. Ful. Why, sure, Mr. Fulmer, I may be allowed to rear a chicken of my own hatching, as they say. Who first sprung the thought, but I, pray? Who first contrived the plot? Who proposed the letter, but I, I?

Ful. And who dogged the gentleman home? Who found out his name, fortune, connexion: that he was a West Indian, fresh landed, and full of cash; a gull to our heart's content; a hot-brained, head-long, spark, that would run into our trap, like a wheatear under a turf?

Mrs. Ful. Hark! he's come; disappear, march; and leave the field open to my machination.

[*Exit FULMER.*

Enter BELCOUR.

Bel. O, thou dear minister to my happiness, let me embrace thee! Why, thou art my polar star, my propitious constellation, by which I navigate my impatient bark into the port of pleasure and delight.

Mrs. Ful. Oh, you men are sly creatures! Do you remember now, you cruel, what you said to me this morning?

Bel. All a jest, a frolic; never think on't; bury it

for ever in oblivion: thou! why, thou art all over nectar and ambrosia, powder of pearl and odour of roses thou hast the youth of Hebe, the beauty of Venus, and the pen of Sappho; but, in the name of all that's lovely, where's the lady! I expected to find her with you.

Mrs. Ful. No doubt you did, and these raptures were designed for her: but where have you loitered? the lady's gone you are too late; girls, of her sort, are not to be kept waiting, like negro slaves in your sugar plantations.

Bel. Gone! whither is she gone? tell me, that I may follow her.

Mrs. Ful. Hold, hold, not so fast, young gentleman, this is a case of some delicacy; should Captain Dudley know that I introduced you to his daughter, he is a man of such scrupulous honour——

Bel. What do you tell me! is she daughter to the old gentleman I met here this morning?

Mrs. Ful. The same; him you was so generous to.

Bel. There's an end of the matter then at once; it shall never be said of me, that I took advantage of the father's necessities to trepan the daughter.

[*Going.*
Mrs. Ful. So, so, I've made a wrong cast; he's one of your conscientious sinners, I find; but I won't lose him thus——Ha! ha! ha!

Bel. What is it you laugh at?

Mrs. Ful. Your absolute inexperience; have you lived so very little time in this country, as not to know that, between young people of equal ages, the term of sister often is a cover for that of mistress? This young lady is, in that sense of the word, sister to young Dudley, and consequently daughter to my old lodger.

Bel. Indeed! are you serious?

Mrs. Ful. Can you doubt it? I must have been

pretty well assured of that, before I invited you hither.

Bel. That's true; she cannot be a woman of honour, and Dudley is an unconscionable young rogue, to think of keeping one fine girl in pay, by raising contributions on another; he shall therefore give her up: she is a dear, bewitching, mischievous little devil, and he shall positively give her up.

Mrs. Ful. Ay, now the freak has taken you again; I say give her up; there's one way, indeed, and certain of success.

Bel. What's that?

Mrs. Ful. Out-bid him, never dream of out-blustering him; buy out his lease of possession, and leave her to manage his ejection.

Bel. Is she so venal? Never fear me then; when beauty is the purchase, I shan't think much of the price.

Mrs. F. All things, then, will be made easy enough; let me see; some little genteel present to begin with: what have you got, about you? Ay, search; I can bestow it to advantage, there's no time to be lost.

Bel. Hang it, confound it; a plague upon't, say I! I hav'n't a guinea left in my pocket; I parted from my whole stock here this morning, and have forgot to supply myself since.

Mrs. Ful. Mighty well; let it pass, then: there's an end; think no more of the lady, that's all.

Bel. Distraction! think no more of her? let me only step home, and provide myself; I'll be back with you in an instant.

Mrs. Ful. Pooh, pooh! that's a wretched shift; have you nothing of value about you? Money's a coarse slovenly vehicle, fit only to bribe electors in a borough; there are more graceful ways of purchasing a lady's favours; rings, trinkets, jewels!

Bel. Jewels! Gadso, I protest, I had forgot: I

have a case of jewels: but they won't do, I must not part from them: no, no, they are appropriated; they are none of my own.

Mrs. Ful. Let me see, let me see! Ay, now, this were something like: pretty creatures, how they sparkle! these would ensure success.

Bel. Indeed!

Mrs. Ful. These would make her your own for ever.

Bel. Then the deuce take them, for belonging to another person; I could find in my heart to give them the girl, and swear I've lost them.

Mrs. Ful. Ay, do, say, they were stolen out of your pocket.

Bel. No, hang it, that's dishonourable; here, give me the paltry things, I'll write you an order on my merchant, for double their value.

Mrs. Ful. An order! No order for me! no order upon merchants, with their value received, and three days grace; their noting, protesting, and indorsing, and all their counting-house formalities; I'll have nothing to do with them; leave your diamonds with me, and give your order for the value of them to the owner; the money would be as good as the trinkets, I warrant you.

Bel. Hey! how! I never thought of that; but a breach of trust; 'tis impossible: I never can consent, therefore give me the jewels back again.

Mrs. Ful. Take them; I am now to tell you, the lady is in this house.

Bel. In this house?

Mrs. Ful. Yes, sir, in this very house; but what of that? you have got what you like better: your toys, your trinkets; go, go; Oh! you are a man of notable spirit, are you not?

Bel. Provoking creature! bring me to the sight of the dear girl, and dispose of me as you think fit.

Mrs. Ful. And of the diamonds too?

Bel. Damn them, I would there was not such a bauble in nature! But, come, come, despatch; if I had the throne of Delhi, I should give it to her.

Mrs. Ful. Swear to me then, that you will keep within bounds; remember, she passes for the sister of young Dudley. Oh! if you come to your flights and your rhapsodies, she'll be off in an instant.

Bel. Never fear me.

Mrs. Ful. You must expect to hear her talk of her father, as she calls him, and her brother, and your bounty to her family.

Bel. Ay, ay, never mind what she talks of, only bring her.

Mrs. Ful. You'll be prepared upon that head?

Bel. I shall be prepared, never fear: away with you.

Mrs. Ful. But, hold, I had forgot: not a word of the diamonds; leave that matter to my management.

Bel. Hell and vexation! Get out of the room, or I shall run distracted. [*Exit MRS. FULMER.*] Of a certain, Belcour, thou art born to be the fool of woman! sure no man sins with so much repentance, or repents with so little amendment, as I do. I cannot give away another person's property, honour forbids me; and I positively cannot give up the girl; love, passion, constitution, every thing protests against that. How shall I decide? I cannot bring myself to break a trust, and I am not at present in the humour to baulk my inclinations. Is there no middle way? Let me consider—There is, there is: my good genius has presented me with one: apt, obvious, honourable, the girl shall not go without her baubles: I'll not go without the girl, Miss Rusport shan't lose her diamonds; I'll save Dudley from destruction, and every party shall be a gainer by the project.

Enter MRS. FULMER, introducing MISS DUDLEY.

Mrs. Ful. Miss Dudley, this is the worthy gentleman you wish to see: this is Mr. Belcour.

Lou. As I live, the very man that beset me in the streets! [*Aside.*

Bel. An angel, by this light! Oh, I am gone, past all retrieving! [*Aside.*

Lou. Mrs. Fulmer, sir, informs me, you are the gentleman from whom my father has received such civilities.

Bel. Oh, never name them.

Lou. Pardon me, Mr. Belcour, they must be both named and remembered; and if my father was here—

Bel. I am much better pleased with his representative.

Lou. That title is my brother's, sir; I have no claim to it.

Bel. I believe it.

Lou. But as neither he nor my father were fortunate enough to be at home, I could not resist the opportunity—

Bel. Nor I neither, by my soul, madam: let us improve it, therefore. I am in love with you to distraction; I was charmed at the first glance; I attempted to accost you; you fled; I followed; but was defeated of an interview; at length I have obtained one, and seize the opportunity of casting my person and my fortune at your feet.

Lou. You astonish me! Are you in your senses, or do you make a jest of my misfortunes? Do you ground pretences on your generosity, or do you make a practice of this folly with every woman you meet?

Bel. Upon my life, no: as you are the handsomest woman I ever met, so you are the first to whom I

ever made the like professions: as for my generosity, madam, I must refer you on that score to this good lady, who I believe has something to offer in my behalf.

Lou. Don't build upon that, sir; I must have better proofs of your generosity, than the mere divestment of a little superfluous dross, before I can credit the sincerity of professions so abruptly delivered.

[*Exit hastily.*

Bel. Oh! ye gods and goddesses, how her anger animates her beauty! [*Going out.*

Mrs. Ful. Stay, sir; if you stir a step after her, I renounce your interest for ever; why, you'll ruin every thing.

Bel. Well, I must have her, cost what it will: I see she understands her own value though; a little superfluous dross, truly! She must have better proofs of my generosity.

Mrs. Ful. 'Tis exactly as I told you; your money she calls dross; she's too proud to stain her fingers with your coin; bait your hook well with jewels; try that experiment, and she's your own.

Bel. Take them; let them go; lay them at her feet; I must get out of the scrape as I can; my propensity is irresistible: there; you have them; they are yours; they are hers; but, remember, they are a trust; I commit them to her keeping, till I can buy them off, with something she shall think more valuable; now tell me when shall I meet her?

Mrs. Ful. How can I tell that? Don't you see what an alarm you have put her into? Oh! you're a rare one! But go your ways for this while; leave her to my management, and come to me at seven this evening; but remember not to bring empty pockets with you—Ha! ha! ha! [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

LADY RUSPORT'S *House.*

Enter MISS RUSPORT, *followed by a* SERVANT.

Miss R. Desire Mr. Stockwell to walk in.

[*Exit* SERVANT.]

Enter STOCKWELL.

Stock. Madam, your most obedient servant: I am honoured with your commands, by Captain Dudley; and have brought the money with me, as you directed; I understand the sum you have occasion for is two hundred pounds.

Miss R. It is, sir; I am quite confounded at your taking this trouble upon yourself, Mr. Stockwell.

Stock. There is a Bank note, madam, to the amount: your jewels are in safe hands, and will be delivered to you directly. If I had been happy in being better known to you, I should have hoped you would not have thought it necessary to place a deposit in my hands for so trifling a sum as you have now required me to supply you with.

Miss R. The baubles I sent you may very well be spared; and, as they are the only security, in my present situation, I can give you, I could wish you would retain them in your hands: when I am of age, (which if I live a few months I shall be) I will replace your favour, with thanks

Stock. It is obvious, Miss Rusport, that your charms will suffer no impeachment by the absence of those superficial ornaments; but they should be seen in the suite of a woman of fashion, not as creditors to whom you are indebted for your appearance, but as subservient attendants, which help to make up your equipage.

Miss R. Mr. Stockwell is determined not to wrong the confidence I reposed in his politeness.

Stock. I have only to request, madam, that you will allow Mr. Belcour, a young gentleman, in whose happiness I particularly interest myself, to have the honour of delivering you the box of jewels.

Miss R. Most gladly; any friend of yours cannot fail of being welcome here.

Stock. I flatter myself you will not find him totally undeserving your good opinion; an education not of the strictest kind, and strong animal spirits, are apt sometimes to betray him into youthful irregularities; but a high principle of honour, and an uncommon benevolence, in the eye of candour, will, I hope, atone for any faults, by which these good qualities are not impaired.

Miss R. I dare say Mr. Belcour's behaviour wants no apology: we have no right to be over strict in canvassing the morals of a common acquaintance.

Stock. I wish it may be my happiness to see Mr. Belcour in the list, not of your common, but particular acquaintance—of your friends, Miss Rusport—I dare not be more explicit.

Miss R. Nor need you, Mr. Stockwell: I shall be studious to deserve his friendship; and, though I have long since unalterably placed my affections on another, I trust, I have not left myself insensible to the merits of Mr. Belcour; and hope, that neither you nor he will, for that reason, think me less worthy your good opinion and regards.

Stock. Miss Rusport, I sincerely wish you happy: I have no doubt you have placed your affection on a deserving man; and I have no right to combat your choice. [Exit.

Miss R. How honourable is that behaviour! Now, if Charles was here, I should be happy. The old lady is so fond of her new Irish acquaintance, that I have the whole house at my disposal. [Exit.

Enter BELCOUR, preceded by a SERVANT.

Serv. I ask your honour's pardon; I thought my young lady was here: who shall I inform her would speak to her?

Bel. Belcour is my name, sir; and pray beg your lady to put herself in no hurry on my account: for I'd sooner see the devil, than see her face. [*Exit SERVANT.*] In the name of all that's mischievous, why did Stockwell drive me hither in such haste? A pretty figure, truly, I shall make! an ambassador, without credentials! Blockhead that I was, to charge myself with her diamonds; officious, meddling puppy! Now they are irretrievably gone: that suspicious jade, Fulmer, would'nt part even with a sight of them, though I would have ransomed them at twice their value. Now must I trust to my poor wits, to bring me off: a lamentable dependence. Fortune be my helper: Here comes the girl—if she is noble-minded, as she is said to be, she will forgive me; if not, 'tis a lost cause; for I have not thought of one word in my excuse.

Enter MISS RUSPORT.

Miss R. Mr. Belcour, I'm proud to see you: your friend, Mr. Stockwell, prepared me to expect this honour; and I am happy in the opportunity of being known to you.

Bel. A fine girl, by my soul! Now what a cursed hang dog do I look like! [*Aside.*]

Miss R. You are newly arrived in this country, sir?

Bel. Just landed, madam; just set ashore, with a large cargo of Muscavado sugars, rum puncheons, mahogany slabs, wet sweetmeats, and green parquets.

Miss R. May I ask you how you like London, sir?

Bel. To admiration: I think the town and the

town's folk are exactly suited; 'tis a great, rich, overgrown, noisy, tumultuous place: the whole morning is a bustle to get money, and the whole afternoon is a hurry to spend it.

Miss R. Are these all the observations you have made?

Bel. No, madam; I have observed the women are very captivating, and the men very soon caught.

Miss R. Ay, indeed! Whence do you draw that conclusion?

Bel. From infallible guides; the first remark I collect from what I now see, the second from what I now feel.

Miss R. Oh, the deuce take you! But, to wave this subject; I believe, sir, this was a visit of business, not compliment; was it not?

Bel. Ay; now comes on my execution.

Miss R. You have some foolish trinkets of mine, Mr. Belcour; hav'n't you?

Bel. No, in truth; they are gone in search of a trinket, still more foolish than themselves. [*Aside.*

Miss R. Some diamonds I mean, sir; Mr. Stockwell informed me you was charged with them.

Bel. Oh, yes, madam; but I have the most treacherous memory in life—Here they are! Pray put them up; they're all right; you need not examine them. [*Gives a Box.*

Miss R. Hey day! right, sir! Why these are not my diamonds; these are quite different; and, as it should seem, of much greater value.

Bel. Upon my life I'm glad on't; for then I hope you value them more than your own.

Miss R. As a purchaser I should, but not as an owner; you mistake; these belong to somebody else.

Bel. 'Tis yours, I'm afraid, that belong to somebody else.

Miss R. What is it you mean? I must insist upon your taking them back again.

Bel. Pray, madam, don't do that; I shall infallibly lose them; I have the worst luck with diamonds of any man living.

Miss R. That you might well say, was you to give me these in the place of mine; but, pray, sir, what is the reason of all this? Why have you changed the jewels? And where have you disposed of mine?

Bel. Miss Rusport, I cannot invent a lie for my life; and, if it was to save it, I cou'dn't tell one: I am an idle, dissipated, unthinking, fellow, not worth your notice: in short, I am a West Indian; and you must try me according to the charter of my colony, not by a jury of English spinsters: the truth is, I have given away your jewels; caught with a pair of sparkling eyes, whose lustre blinded theirs, I served your property as I should my own, and lavished it away; let me not totally despair of your forgiveness; I frequently do wrong, but never with impunity; if your displeasure is added to my own, my punishment will be too severe. When I parted from the jewels, I had not the honour of knowing their owner.

Miss R. Mr. Belcour, your sincerity charms me; I enter at once into your character, and I make all the allowances for it you can desire. I take your jewels for the present, because I know there is no other way of reconciling you to yourself; but, if I give way to your spirit in one point, you must yield to mine in another: remember, I will not keep more than the value of my own jewels: there is no need to be pillaged by more than one woman at a time, sir.

Bel. Now, may every blessing that can crown your virtues, and reward your beauty, be shower'd upon you; may you meet admiration without envy, love without jealousy, and old age without malady; may the man of your heart be ever constant, and you never meet a less penitent, or less grateful offender, than myself!

Enter SERVANT, and delivers a Letter.

Miss R. Does your letter require such haste?

Serv. I was bade to give it into your own hands, madam.

Miss R. From Charles Dudley, I see—have I your permission? Good Heaven, what do I read! Mr. Belcour, you are concerned in this— [Reads.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

In the midst of our distress, Providence has cast a benefactor in our way, after the most unexpected manner: a young West Indian, rich, and with a warmth of heart peculiar to his climate, has rescued my father from his troubles, satisfied his wants, and enabled him to accomplish his exchange: when I relate to you the manner in which this was done, you will be charmed: I can only now add, that it was by chance we found out that his name is Belcour, and that he is a friend of Mr. Stockwell's. I lose not a moment's time, in making you acquainted with this fortunate event, for reasons which delicacy obliges me to suppress; but, perhaps, if you have not received the money on your jewels, you will not think it necessary now to do it. I have the honour to be,

Dear madam,

most faithfully yours,

CHARLES DUDLEY.

Is this your doing, sir? Never was generosity so worthily exerted.

Bel. Or so greatly overpaid.

Miss R. After what you have now done for this noble, but indigent family, let me not scruple to unfold the whole situation of my heart to you. Know then, sir, (and don't think the worse of me for the frankness of my declaration,) that such is my attachment to the son of that worthy officer, whom you re-

lieved, that the moment I am of age, and in possession of my fortune, I should hold myself the happiest of women to share it with young Dudley.

Bel. Say you so, madam! then let me perish if I don't love and reverence you above all womankind; and, if such is your generous resolution, never wait till you are of age; life is too short, pleasure too fugitive; the soul grows narrower every hour. I'll equip you for your escape—I'll convey you to the man of your heart, and away with you then to the first hospitable parson that will take you in.

Miss R. O blessed be the torrid zone for ever, whose rapid vegetation quickens nature into such benignity! These latitudes are made for politics and philosophy; friendship has no root in this soil. But, had I spirit to accept your offer, which is not improbable, wouldn't it be a mortifying thing, for a fond girl to find herself mistaken, and sent back to her home, like a vagrant?—and such, for what I know, might be my case.

Bel. Then he ought to be proscribed the society of mankind for ever——Ay, ay, 'tis the sham sister, that makes him thus indifferent; 'twill be a meritorious office, to take that girl out of the way.

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. Miss Dudley, to wait on you, madam.

Bel. Who?

Serv. Miss Dudley.

Miss R. What's the matter, Mr. Belcour? Are you frightened at the name of a pretty girl?—'Tis the sister of him we were speaking of——Pray admit her. [*Exit SERVANT.*

Bel. The sister!—So, so; he has imposed on her too—this is an extraordinary visit, truly. Upon my soul, the assurance of some folks is not to be accounted for.

Miss R. I insist upon your not running away;—you'll be charmed with Louisa Dudley.

Bel. Oh yes, I am charmed with her.

Miss R. You have seen her then, have you?

Bel. Yes, yes, I've seen her.

Miss R. Well, isn't she a delightful girl?

Bel. Very delightful.

Miss R. Why, you answer as if you was in a court of justice. O'my conscience, I believe you are caught; I've a notion she has tricked you out of your heart.

Bel. I believe she has, and you out of your jewels; for, to tell you the truth, she's the very person I gave them to.

Miss R. You gave her my jewels! Louisa Dudley my jewels! admirable! inimitable! Oh, the sly little jade!—but, hush! here she comes; I don't know how I shall keep my countenance.

Enter LOUISA,

My dear, I'm rejoiced to see you; how do you do?—I beg leave to introduce Mr. Belcour, a very worthy friend of mine. I believe, Louisa, you have seen him before.

Lou. I have met the gentleman.

Miss R. You have met the gentleman!—well, sir, and you have met the lady; in short, you have met each other, why, then, don't you speak to each other? How you both stand! tongue-tied and fixed as statues—Ha! ha! ha! Why, you'll fall asleep by and by.

Lou. Fie upon you, fie upon you! is this fair?

Bel. Upon my soul, I never looked so like a fool in my life—the assurance of that girl puts me quite down. [*Aside.*

Miss R. Sir—Mr. Belcour—Was it your pleasure

to advance any thing? Not a syllable. Come, Louisa, woman's wit, they say, is never at a loss—Nor you neither?—Speechless both—Why, you was merry enough before this lady came in.

Lou. I am sorry I have been any interruption to your happiness, sir.

Bel. Madam!

Miss R. Madam! Is that all you can say? But come, my dear girl, I won't tease you—apropos! I must show you what a present this dumb gentleman has made me—Are not these handsome diamonds?

Lou. Yes, indeed, they seem very fine; but I am no judge of these things.

Miss R. Oh, you wicked little hypocrite; you are no judge of these things, Louisa; you have no diamonds, not you.

Lou. You know I hav'n't, Miss Rusport: you know those things are infinitely above my reach.

Miss R. Ha! ha! ha!

Bel. She does tell a lie with an admirable countenance, that's true enough. [*Aside.*

Lou. What ails you, Charlotte?—What impertinence have I been guilty of, that you should find it necessary to humble me at such a rate?—If you are happy, long may you be so: but, surely, it can be no addition to it to make me miserable.

Miss R. So serious; there must be some mystery in this—Mr. Belcour, will you leave us together? You see I treat you with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance already.

Bel. Oh, by all means; pray command me. Miss Rusport, I am your most obedient! By your condescension in accepting these poor trifles, I am under eternal obligations to you.—To you, Miss Dudley, I shall not offer a word on that subject;—you despise finery; you have a soul above it; I adore your spirit; I was rather unprepared for meeting you here, but I

shall hope for an opportunity of making myself better known to you. [Exit.

Miss R. Louisa Dudley, you surprise me ; I never saw you act thus before : can't you bear a little innocent raillery before the man of your heart ?

Lou. The man of my heart, madam ! Be assured I never was so visionary to aspire to any man whom Miss Rusport honours with her choice.

Miss R. My choice, my dear ! Why, we are playing at cross-purposes : how entered it into your head that Mr. Belcour was the man of my choice ?

Lou. Why, didn't he present you with those diamonds ?

Miss R. Well : perhaps he did—and pray, Louisa, have you no diamonds ?

Lou. I diamonds, truly ! Who should give me diamonds ?

Miss R. Who but this very gentleman : apropos ! here comes your brother——

Enter CHARLES.

I insist upon referring our dispute to him : your sister and I, Charles, have a quarrel ; Belcour, the hero of your letter, has just left us—somehow or other, Louisa's bright eyes have caught him ; and the poor fellow's fallen desperately in love with her—(don't interrupt me, hussy)—Well, that's excusable enough, you'll say ; but the jest of the story is, that this hair-brain'd spark, who does nothing like other people, has given her the very identical jewels, which you pledged for me to Mr. Stockwell ; and will you believe that this little demure slut made up a face, and squeezed out three or four hypocritical tears, because I rallied her about it ?

Charles. I'm all astonishment ! Louisa, tell me, without reserve, has Mr. Belcour given you any diamonds ?

Lou. None, upon my honour.

Charles. Has he made any professions to you?

Lou. He has; but altogether in a style so whimsical and capricious, that the best which can be said of them is to tell you, that they seemed more the result of good spirits than good manners.

Miss R. Ay, ay, now the murder's out; he's in love with her, and she has no very great dislike to him; trust to my observations, Charles, for that: as to the diamonds, there's some mistake about them, and you must clear it up: three minutes conversation with him will put every thing in a right train: go, go, Charles, 'tis a brother's business; about it instantly; ten to one you'll find him over the way, at Mr. Stockwell's.

Charles. I confess I'm impatient to have the case cleared up; I'll take your advice, and find him out: good bye to you.

Miss R. Your servant: my life upon it, you'll find Belcour a man of honour. Come, Louisa, let us adjourn to my dressing-room; I've a little private business to transact with you, before the old lady comes up to tea, and interrupts us. [*Exeunt.*

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

A Room in FULMER'S House.

Enter FULMER and MRS. FULMER.

Ful. Patty, wasn't Mr. Belcour with you?

Mrs. Ful. He was; and is now shut up in my chamber, in high expectation of an interview with

Miss Dudley : she's at present with her brother, and 'twas with some difficulty I persuaded my hot-headed spark to wait till he has left her.

Ful. Well, child, and what then ?

Mrs. Ful. Why, then, Mr. Fulmer, I think it will be time for you and me to steal a march, and be gone.

Ful. So this is all the fruit of your ingenious project ; a shameful overthrow, or a sudden flight.

Mrs. Ful. Why, my project was a mere impromptu, and can at worst but quicken our departure a few days ; you know we had fairly outliv'd our credit here, and a trip to Boulogne is no ways unseasonable. Nay, never droop, man—Hark ! hark ! here's enough to bear charges. [*Shewing a purse.*]

Ful. Let me see, let me see : this weighs well ; this is of the right sort : why your West Indian bled freely.

Mrs. Ful. But that's not all : look here ! Here are the sparklers ! [*Shewing the jewels.*] Now what d'ye think of my performances ? Heh ! a foolish scheme, isn't it—a silly woman— !

Ful. Thou art a Judith, a Joan of Arc, and I'll march under thy banners, girl, to the world's end : come, let's begone ; I've little to regret ; my creditors may share the old books amongst them ; they'll have occasion for philosophy to support their loss ; they'll find enough upon my shelves : the world is my library ; I read mankind—Now, Patty, lead the way.

Mrs. Ful. Adieu, Belcour. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter CHARLES DUDLEY and LOUISA.

Charles. Well, Louisa, I confess the force of what you say : I accept Miss Rusport's bounty ; and when you see my generous Charlotte, tell her—but have a care, there is a selfishness even in gratitude, when

it is too profuse; to be overthankful for any one favour, is in effect to lay out for another; the best return I could make my benefactress would be, never to see her more.

Lou. I understand you.

Charles. We, that are poor, Louisa, should be cautious: for this reason, I would guard you against Belcour: at least, till I can unravel the mystery of Miss Rusport's diamonds; I was disappointed of finding him at Mr. Stockwell's, and am now going in search of him again: he may intend honourably; but, I confess to you, I am staggered; think no more of him, therefore, for the present: of this be sure while I have life and you have honour, I will protect you, or perish in your defence. [*Exit.*]

Lou. Think of him no more! Well, I'll obey; but if a wandering uninvited thought should creep by chance into my bosom, must I not give the harmless wretch a shelter? Oh yes; the great Artificer of the human heart knows every thread he wove into its fabric, nor puts his work to harder uses than it was made to bear: my wishes then, my guiltless ones, I mean, are free: how fast they spring within me at that sentence! Down, down, ye busy creatures! Whither wou'd you carry me? Ah! there is one amongst you, a forward, new intruder, that, in the likeness of an offending generous man, grows into favour with my heart. Fye, fye upon it! Belcour pursues, insults me; yet, such is the fatality of my condition, that what should rouse resentment, only calls up love.

Enter BELCOUR.

Bel. Alone, by all that's happy!

Lou. Ah!

Bel. Oh! shriek not, start not, stir not, loveliest

creature! but let me kneel and gaze upon your beauties.

Lou. Sir! Mr. Belcour, rise! What is it you do?

Bel. See, I obey you; mould me as you will, behold your ready servant! New to your country, ignorant of your manners, habits, and desires, I put myself into your hands for instruction; make me only such as you can like yourself, and I shall be happy.

Lou. I must not hear this, Mr. Belcour: go, should he, that parted from me but this minute, now return, I tremble for the consequence.

Bel. Fear nothing; let him come: I love you, madam; he'll find it hard to make me unsay that.

Lou. You terrify me; your impetuous temper frightens me; you know my situation; it is not generous to pursue me thus.

Bel. True; I do know your situation, your real one, Miss Dudley, and am resolved to snatch you from it; 'twill be a meritorious act; the old Captain shall rejoice; Miss Rusport shall be made happy; and even he, even your beloved brother, with whose resentment you threaten me, shall in the end applaud and thank me. Come, thou art a dear enchanting girl, and I'm determined not to live a minute longer without thee.

Lou. Hold! are you mad? I see you are a bold assuming man; and know not where to stop.

Bel. Who that beholds such beauty can? By Heaven, you put my blood into a flame. Provoking girl! is it within the stretch of my fortune to content you? What is it you can further ask, that I am not ready to grant?

Lou. Yes, with the same facility, that you bestowed upon me Miss Rusport's diamonds. For shame! for shame! was that a manly story?

Bel. So! so! these devilish diamonds meet me every where. Let me perish if I meant you any

harm: Oh! I could tear my tongue out for saying a word about the matter.

Lou. Go to her then, and contradict it; till that is done, my reputation is at stake.

Bel. Her reputation!—Now she has got upon that, she'll go on for ever.—What is there I will not do for your sake? I will go to Miss Rusport.

Lou. Do so; restore her own jewels to her, which I suppose you kept back for the purpose of presenting others to her of a greater value; but for the future, Mr. Belcour, when you would do a gallant action to that lady, don't let it be at my expense.

Bel. I see where she points: she is willing enough to give up Miss Rusport's diamonds, now she finds she shall be a gainer by the exchange. Be it so! 'tis what I wished.—Well, madam, I will return to Miss Rusport her own jewels, and you shall have others of tenfold their value.

Lou. No, sir, you err most widely? it is my good opinion, not my vanity, which you must bribe.

Bel. Why what the devil would she have now?—Miss Dudley, it is my wish to obey and please you; but I have some apprehension that we mistake each other.

Lou. I think we do: tell me, then, in few words, what it is you aim at.

Bel. In few words, then, and in plain honesty, I must tell you, so entirely am I captivated with you, that had you but been such as it would have become me to have called my wife, I had been happy in knowing you by that name; as it is, you are welcome to partake my fortune, give me in return your person, give me pleasure, give me love; free, disencumbered, antimatrimonial love.

Lou. Stand off, and never let me see you more.

Bel. Hold, hold, thou dear, tormenting, tantalizing, girl! Upon my knees, I swear you shall not stir till you have consented to my bliss.

Lou. Unhand me, sir : O, Charles ! protect me, rescue me, redress me. [Exit.

Enter CHARLES DUDLEY.

Charles. How's this!—Rise, villain, and defend yourself.

Bel. Villain !

Charles. The man who wrongs that lady is a villain—Draw !

Bel. Never fear me, young gentleman ; brand me for a coward if I balk you.

Charles. Yet hold ! let me not be too hasty : your name, I think, is Belcour.

Bel. Well, sir.

Charles. How is it, Mr. Belcour, you have done this mean, unmanly, wrong ; beneath the mask of generosity, to give this fatal stab to our domestic peace ? You might have had my thanks, my blessing : take my defiance now. 'Tis Dudley speaks to you ; the brother, the protector, of that injured lady.

Bel. The brother ! give yourself a truer title.

Charles. What is't you mean ?

Bel. Come, come, I know both her and you : I found you, Sir, (but how or why I know not) in the good graces of Miss Rusport—(yes, colour at that name) I gave you no disturbance there, never broke in upon you in that rich and plenteous quarter, but, when I could have blasted all your projects with a word, spared you, in foolish pity spared you, nor roused her from the fond credulity in which your artifice had lulled her.

Charles. No, sir, nor boasted to her of the splendid present you had made my poor Louisa ; the diamonds, Mr. Belcour : how was that ? What can you plead to that arraignment ?

Bel. You question me too late ; the name of Belcour and of villain never met before ; had you in-

quired of me before you uttered that rash word, you might have saved yourself or me a mortal error; now, sir, I neither give nor take an explanation; so, come on!
[They fight.]

Enter LOUISA, and afterwards O'FLAHERTY.

Lou. Hold, hold, for Heaven's sake hold! Charles! Mr. Belcour! Help! Sir, sir, make haste, they'll murder one another.

O'Fla. Hell and confusion! What's all this uproar for? Can't you leave off cutting one another's throats, and mind what the poor girl says to you? You've done a notable thing, hav'n't you both, to put her into such a flurry? I think, o'my conscience, she's the most frightened of the three.

Charles. Dear Louisa, recollect yourself; why did you interfere? 'tis in your cause.

Bel. Now could I kill him for caressing her.

O'Fla. O sir, your most obedient! You are the gentleman I had the honour of meeting here before; you was then running off at full speed, like a Calmuck, now you are tilting and driving like a bedlamite, with this lad here, that seems as mad as yourself: 'tis pity but your country had a little more employment for you both.

Bel. Mr. Dudley, when you have recovered the lady, you know where I am to be found. *[Exit.]*

O'Fla. Well, then, can't you stay where you are, and that will save the trouble of looking after you? Yon volatile fellow thinks to give a man the meeting by getting out of his way: by my soul, 'tis a round-about method that of his. But I think he called you Dudley: harkye, young man, are you son of my friend, the old Captain?

Charles. I am. Help me to convey this lady to her chamber, and I shall be more at leisure to answer your questions.

O' Fla. Ay will I: come along, pretty one; if you've had wrong done you, young man, you need look no further for a second; Dennis O'Flaherty's your man for that: but never draw your sword before a woman, Dudley; dama it, never while you live draw your sword before a woman. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

LADY RUSPORT's House.

Enter LADY RUSPORT *and* SERVANT.

Serv. An elderly gentleman, who says his name is Varland, desires leave to wait on your ladyship.

Lady R. Show him in; the very man I wish to see. Varland, he was Sir Oliver's solicitor, and privy to all his affairs: he brings some good tidings; some fresh mortgage, or another bond come to light; they start up every day.

Enter VARLAND.

Mr. Varland, I'm glad to see you; you are heartily welcome, honest Mr. Varland; you and I hav'n't met since our late irreparable loss: how have you passed your time this age?

Var. Truly, my lady, ill enough: I thought I must have followed good Sir Oliver.

Lady R. Alack-a-day, poor man! Well, Mr. Varland, you find me here overwhelmed with trouble and fatigue; torn to pieces with a multiplicity of affairs; a great fortune poured upon me, unsought for and unexpected: 'twas my good father's will and pleasure it should be so, and I must submit.

Var. Your ladyship inherits under a will made in the year forty-five, immediately after Captain Dudley's marriage with your sister.

Lady R. I do so, Mr. Varland; I do so.

Var. I well remember it; I engrossed every syllable: but I am surprised to find your ladyship set so little store by this vast accession.

Lady R. Why, you know, Mr. Varland, I am a moderate woman; I had enough before; a small matter satisfies me; and Sir Stephen Rusport (Heaven be his portion!) took care I shou'dn't want that.

Var. Very true, very true; he did so; and I am overjoyed to find your ladyship in this disposition; for, truth to say, I was not without apprehension the news I have to communicate would have been of some prejudice to your ladyship's tranquillity.

Lady R. News, sir! what news have you for me?

Var. Nay, nothing to alarm you; a trifle, in your present way of thinking: I have a will of Sir Oliver's, you have never seen.

Lady R. A will! impossible! how came you by it, pray?

Var. I drew it up, at his command, in his last illness: it will save you a world of trouble: it gives his whole estate from you to his grandson, Charles Dudley.

Lady R. To Dudley! his estate to Charles Dudley? I can't support it! I shall faint! You have killed me, you vile man! I never shall survive it!

Var. Lookye there now: I protest I thought you would have rejoiced at being clear of the incumbrance.

Lady R. 'Tis false; 'tis all a forgery, concerted between you and Dudley; why else did I never hear of it before?

Var. Have patience, my lady, and I'll tell you: By Sir Oliver's direction, I was to deliver this will into no hands but his grandson Dudley's: the young

gentleman happened to be then in Scotland; I was dispatched thither in search of him: the hurry and fatigue of my journey brought on a fever by the way, which confined me in extreme danger for several days; upon my recovery, I pursued my journey, found young Dudley had left Scotland in the interim, and am now directed hither; where, as soon as I can find him, doubtless, I shall discharge my conscience, and fulfil my commission.

Lady R. Dudley then, as yet, knows nothing of this will?

Var. Nothing: that secret rests with me.

Lady R. A thought occurs: by this fellow's talking of his conscience, I should guess it was upon sale. [*Aside.*—Come, Mr. Varland, if 'tis as you say, I must submit. I was somewhat flurried at first, and forgot myself; I ask your pardon: this is no place to talk of business; step with me into my room; we will there compare the will, and resolve accordingly—Oh! would your fever had you, and I had your paper! [*Exeunt.*

Enter MISS RUSPORT, CHARLES, and O'FLAHERTY.

Miss R. So, so! My lady and her lawyer have retired to close confabulation: now, Major, if you are the generous man I take you for, grant me one favour.

O'Fla. 'Faith will I, and not think much of my generosity neither; for, though it may not be in my power to do the favour you ask, look you, it can never be in my heart to refuse it.

Charles. Could this man's tongue do justice to his thoughts, how eloquent would he be! [*Aside.*

Miss R. Plant yourself, then, in that room: keep guard for a few moments upon the enemy's motions

in the chamber beyond; and if they should attempt a sally, stop their march a moment, till your friend here can make good his retreat down the back-stairs.

O'Fla. A word to the wise! I'm an old campaigner: make the best use of your time; and trust me for tying the old cat up to the picket.

Miss R. Hush! hush! not so loud.

Charles. 'Tis the office of a sentinel, Major, you have undertaken, rather than that of a field-officer.

O'Fla. 'Tis the office of a friend, my dear boy; and therefore no disgrace to a general. [Exit.]

Miss R. Well, Charles, will you commit yourself to me for a few minutes?

Charles. Most readily; and let me, before one goes by, tender you the only payment I can ever make for your abundant generosity.

Miss R. Hold, hold! so vile a thing as money must not come between us. What shall I say? O Charles! O Dudley! What difficulties have you thrown upon me! Familiarly as we have lived, I shrink not at what I am doing; and anxiously as I have sought this opportunity, my fears almost persuade me to abandon it.

Charles. You alarm me!

Miss R. Your looks and actions have been so distant, and at this moment are so deterring, that, was it not for the hope that delicacy, and not disgust, inspires this conduct in you, I should sink with shame and apprehension; but time presses; and I must speak, and plainly too—Was you now in possession of your grandfather's estate, as justly you ought to be, and was you inclined to seek a companion for life, should you, or should you not, in that case, honour your unworthy Charlotte with your choice?

Charles. My unworthy Charlotte! So judge me, Heaven, there is not a circumstance on earth so valuable as your happiness, so dear to me as your person; but to bring poverty disgrace reproach from

friends, ridicule from all the world, upon a generous benefactress; thievishly to steal into an open and unreserved ingenuous heart, O Charlotte! dear, unhappy girl, it is not to be done.

Miss R. Nay, now you rate too highly the poor advantages fortune alone has given me over you; how otherwise could we bring our merits to any balance? Come, my dear Charles, I have enough; make that enough still more by sharing it with me: sole heiress of my father's fortune, a short time will put it in my disposal; in the mean while you will be sent to join your regiment; let us prevent a separation, by setting out this very night for that happy country, where marriage still is free: carry me this moment to Belcour's lodgings.

Charles. Belcour's?—The name is ominous; there's murder in it: bloody, inexorable honour!

[*Aside.*

Miss R. D'ye pause? Put me into his hands, while you provide the means for our escape: he is the most generous, the most honourable of men.

Charles. Honourable! most honourable!

Miss R. Can you doubt it? Do you demur? Have you forgot your letter? Why, Belcour 'twas that prompted me to this proposal, that promised to supply the means, that nobly offered his unmasked assistance——

Enter O'FLAHERTY, hastily.

O'Fla. Run, run; for holy St. Anthony's sake, to horse, and away! The conference is broke up, and the old lady advances upon a full Piedmontese trot, within pistol-shot of your encampment.

Miss R. Here, here, down the back stairs! O Charles, remember me!

Charles. Farewell! Now, now I feel myself a coward.
[*Exit.*

Miss R. What does he mean ?

O'Fla. Ask no questions, but begone : she has cooled the lad's courage, and wonders he feels like a coward. There's a damned deal of mischief brewing between this hyena and her lawyer : egad I'll step behind this screen and listen : a good soldier must sometimes fight in ambush, as well as open field.

[Retires.]

Enter LADY RUSPORT and VARLAND.

Lady R. Sure I heard somebody. Hark ! No ; only the servants going down the back-stairs. Well, Mr. Varland, I think then we are agreed : you'll take my money ; and your conscience no longer stands in your way.

Var. Your father was my benefactor ; his will ought to be sacred ; but if I commit it to the flames, how will he be the wiser ? Dudley, 'tis true, has done me no harm ; but five thousand pounds will do me much good ; so, in short, madam, I take your offer : I will confer with my clerk, who witnessed the will, and to-morrow morning put it into your hands, upon condition you put five thousand good pounds into mine.

Lady R. 'Tis a bargain : I'll be ready for you : farewell. [Exit.]

Var. Let me consider—Five thousand pounds, prompt payment, for destroying this scrap of paper, not worth five farthings ; 'tis a fortune easily earned ; yes, and 'tis another man's fortune easily thrown away ; 'tis a good round sum, to be paid down at once for a bribe : but 'tis a damned rogue's trick in me to take it.

O'Fla. So, so ! this fellow speaks truth to himself, though he lies to other people—but hush ! [Aside.]

Var. 'Tis breaking the trust of my benefactor, that's a foul crime ; but he's dead, and can never re-

proach me with it : and 'tis robbing young Dudley of his lawful patrimony ; that's a hard case ; but he's alive, and knows nothing of the matter.

O' Fla. These lawyers are so used to bring off the rogueries of others, that they are never without an excuse for their own. [*aside.*

Var. Were I assured now that Dudley would give me half the money for producing this will, that Lady Rusport does for concealing it, I would deal with him, and be an honest man at half price ; I wish every gentlemen of my profession could lay his hand on his heart, and say the same thing.

O' Fla. A bargain, old gentleman ! Nay, never start nor stare ; you wasn't afraid of your own conscience, never be afraid of me.

Var. Of you, sir ! who are you, pray ?

O' Fla. I'll tell you who I am : you seem to wish to be honest, but want the heart to set about it ; now I am the very man in the world to make you so ; for if you do not give me up that paper this very instant, by the soul of me, fellow, I will not leave one whole bone in your skin that shan't be broken.

Var. What right have you, pray, to take this paper from me ?

O' Fla. What right have you, pray, to keep it from young Dudley ? I don't know what it contains, but I am apt to think it will be safer in my hands than in yours ; therefore give it me without more words, and save yourself a beating : do now ; you had best.

Var. Well, sir, I may as well make a grace of necessity. There ; I have acquitted my conscience, at the expense of five thousand pounds.

O' Fla. Five thousand pounds ! Mercy upon me ! When there are such temptations in the law, can we wonder if some of the corps are a disgrace to it ?

Var. Well, you have got the paper ; if you are an honest man, give it to Charles Dudley.

O' Fla. An honest man ! look at me, friend, I am

a soldier, this is not the livery of a knave ; I am an Irishman, honey ; mine is not the country of dishonour. Now, sirrah, be gone ; if you enter these doors, or give Lady Rusport the least item of what has passed, I will cut off both your ears, and rob the pillory of its due.

Var. I wish I was once fairly out of his sight.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Room in STOCKWELL'S House.

Enter STOCKWELL.

Stock. I must disclose myself to Belcour ; this noble instance of his generosity which old Dudley has been relating, allies me to him at once ; concealment becomes too painful ; I shall be proud to own him for my son——But see, he's here.

Enter BELCOUR, and throws himself upon a Sofa.

Bel. O my curs'd tropical constitution ! 'Would to Heaven I had been dropped upon the snows of Lapland, and never felt the blessed influence of the sun, so I had never burnt with these inflammatory passions !

Stock. So, so, you seem disordered, Mr. Belcour.

Bel. Disordered, sir ! Why did I ever quit the soil in which I grew ; what evil planet drew me from that warm, sunny region, where naked nature walks without disguise, into this cold, contriving, artificial country ?

Stock. Come, sir, you've met a rascal ; what o' that ? general conclusions are illiberal.

Bel. No, sir, I have met reflection by the way; I have come from folly, noise, and fury, and met a silent monitor—Well, well, a villain! 'twas not to be pardoned—pray never mind me, sir.

Stock. Alas! my heart bleeds for him.

Bel. And yet, I might have heard him: now, plague upon that blundering Irishman, for coming in as he did; the hurry of the deed might palliate the event: deliberate execution has less to plead—Mr. Stockwell, I am bad company to you.

Stock. Oh, sir, make no excuse. I think you have not found me forward to pry into the secrets of your pleasures and pursuits; 'tis not my disposition; but there are times, when want of curiosity wou'd be want of friendship.

Bel. Ah, sir, mine is a case wherein you and I shall never think alike; the punctilious rules, by which I am bound, are not to be found in your ledgers, nor will pass current in the compting-house of a trader.

Stock. 'Tis very well, sir; if you think I can render you any service, it may be worth your trial to confide in me; if not, your secret is safer in your own bosom.

Bel. That sentiment demands my confidence: pray, sit down by me. You must know, I have an affair of honour on my hands with young Dudley; and, though I put up with no man's insult, yet I wish to take away no man's life.

Stock. I know the young man, and am apprised of your generosity to his father; what can have bred a quarrel between you?

Bel. A foolish passion on my side, and a haughty provocation on his. There is a girl, Mr. Stockwell, whom I have unfortunately seen, of most uncommon beauty; she has withal an air of so much natural modesty, that, had I not had good assurance of her

being an attainable wanton, I declare I should as soon have thought of attempting the chastity of Diana.

Enter SERVANT.

Stock. Hey day, do you interrupt us?

Serv. Sir, there's an Irish gentleman will take no denial: he says he must see Mr. Belcour directly, upon business of the last consequence.

Bel. Admit him; 'tis the Irish officer that parted us, and brings me young Dudley's challenge; I should have made a long story of it, and he'll tell you in three words.

Enter O'FLAHERTY.

O'Fla. 'Save you, my dear; and you sir, I have a little bit of a word in private for you.

Bel. Pray deliver your commands: this gentleman is my intimate friend.

O'Fla. Why, then, Ensign Dudley will be glad to measure swords with you yonder, at the London Tavern, in Bishopsgate-street, at nine o'clock—you know the place.

Bel. I do, and shall observe the appointment.

O'Fla. Will you be of the party, sir? we shall want a fourth hand.

Stock. Savage as the custom is, I close with your proposal; and though I am not fully informed of the occasion of your quarrel, I shall rely on Mr. Belcour's honour for the justice of it, and willingly stake my life in his defence.

O'Fla. Sir, you are a gentleman of honour, and I shall be glad of being better known to you—But, harkye, Belcour, I had like to have forgot part of my errand: there is the money you gave old Dudley: you may tell it over, 'faith: 'tis a receipt in full; now the lad can put you to death with a safe conscience,

and when he has done that job for you, let it be a warning how you attempt the sister of a man of honour.

Bel. The sister ?

O'Fla. Ay, the sister ; 'tis English, is it not ? Or Irish ; 'tis all one ; you understand me, his sister, or Louisa Dudley, that's her name, I think, call her which you will. By St. Patrick, 'tis a foolish piece of business, Belcour, to go about to take away a poor girl's virtue from her, when there are so many to be met with in this town, who have disposed of theirs to your hands. [*Exit.*

Stock. Why, I am thunderstruck ! what is it you have done, and what is the shocking business in which I have engaged ? If I understand him right, 'tis the sister of young Dudley you've been attempting : you talked to me of a professed wanton ; the girl he speaks of has beauty enough indeed to inflame your desires, but she has honour, innocence, and simplicity, to awe the most licentious passion ; if you have done that, Mr. Belcour, I renounce you. I abandon you, I forswear all fellowship or friendship with you for ever.

Bel. Have patience for a moment ; we do indeed speak of the same person, but she is not innocent, she is not young Dudley's sister.

Stock. Astonishing ! who told you this ?

Bel. The woman, where she lodges, the person who put me on the pursuit, and contrived our meetings.

Stock. What woman ? What person ?

Bel. Fulmer her name is, I warrant you I did not proceed without good grounds.

Stock. Fulmer, Fulmer ? Who waits ?

Enter a SERVANT.

Send Mr. Stukely hither directly ; I begin to see my

way into this dark transaction. Mr. Belcour, Mr. Belcour, you are no match for the cunning and contrivances of this intriguing town.

Enter STUKELY.

Pr'ythee, Stukely, what is the name of the woman and her husband, who were stopped upon suspicion of selling stolen diamonds at our next-door neighbour's, the jeweller?

Stuke. Fulmer.

Stock. So!

Bel. Can you procure me a sight of those diamonds?

Stuke. They are now in my hand; I was desired to show them to Mr. Stockwell.

Stock. Give them to me—what do I see?—as I live, the very diamonds Miss Rusport sent hither, and which I entrusted to you to return.

Bel. Yes, but I betrayed that trust, and gave them Mrs. Fulmer, to present to Miss Dudley.

Stock. With a view, no doubt, to bribe her to compliance?

Bel. I own it.

Stock. For shame, for shame;—and 'twas this woman's intelligence you relied upon for Miss Dudley's character?

Bel. I thought she knew her;—by Heaven, I would have died, sooner than have insulted a woman of virtue or a man of honour.

Stock. I think you would; but mark the danger of licentious courses; you are betrayed, robbed, abused, and, but for this providential discovery, in a fair way of being sent out of the world, with all your follies on your head.—Dear Stukely, go to my neighbour, tell him, I have an owner for the jewels; and beg him to carry the people under custody to the London Tavern, and wait for me there.—*Exit STUKELY.*—I

fear the law does not provide a punishment to reach the villany of these people ; but how in the name of wonder could you take any thing on the word of such an informer ?

Bel. Because I had not liv'd long enough in your country to know how few informers words are to be taken ; persuaded however as I was of Miss Dudley's guilt, I must own to you I was stagger'd with the appearance of such innocence, especially when I saw her admitted into Miss Rusport's company.

Stock. Good Heaven ! did you meet her at Miss Rusport's, and could you doubt her being a woman of reputation ?

Bel. By you, perhaps, such a mistake could not have been made ; but in a perfect stranger I hope it is venial : I did not know what artifices young Dudley might have used to conceal her character ; I did not know what disgrace attended the detection of it.

Stock. I see it was a trap laid for you, which you have narrowly escaped : you addressed a woman of honour with all the loose incense of a profane admirer, and you have drawn upon you the resentment of a man of honour, who thinks himself bound to protect her. Well, sir, you must atone for this mistake.

Bel. To the lady, the most penitent submission I can make is justly due ; but in the execution of an act of justice, it never shall be said my soul was swayed by the least particle of fear. I have received a challenge from her brother ; now, though I would give my fortune, almost my life itself, to purchase her happiness, yet I cannot abate her one scruple of my honour ;—I have been branded with the name of villain.

Stock. Ay, sir, you mistook her character, and he mistook yours : error begets error.

Bel. Villain, Mr. Stockwell, is a harsh word.

Stock. It is a harsh word, and should be unsaid.

Bel. Come, come, it shall be unsaid.

Stock. Or else, what follows? Why, the sword is drawn; and to heal the wrongs you have done to the reputation of the sister, you make an honourable amends by murdering the brother.

Bel. Murdering!

Stock. 'Tis thus religion writes and speaks the word; in the vocabulary of modern honour, there is no such term.—But, come, I don't despair of satisfying the one, without alarming the other; that done, I have a discovery to unfold, that you will then, I hope, be fitted to receive.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

The London Tavern.

Enter O'FLAHERTY, STOCKWELL, CHARLES, and BELCOUR.

O'Fla. Gentlemen, well met! you understand each other's minds, and as I see you have brought nothing but your swords, you may set to without any further ceremony.

Stock. You will not find us backward in any worthy cause; but before we proceed any further, I would ask this young gentleman, whether he has any explanation to require of Mr. Belcour?

Charles. Of Mr. Belcour none; his actions speak

for themselves: but to you, sir, I would fain propose one question.

Stock. Name it.

Charles. How is it, Mr. Stockwell, that I meet a man of your character on this ground?

Stock. I will answer you directly, and my answer shall not displease you. I come hither in defence of the reputation of Miss Dudley, to redress the injuries of an innocent young lady.

O'Fla. By my soul the man knows he's to fight, only he mistakes which side he's to be of.

Stock. You are about to draw your sword to refute a charge against your sister's honour; you would do well, if there were no better means within reach; but the proofs of her innocence are lodged in our bosoms, and if we fall, you destroy the evidence that most effectually can clear her fame.

Charles. How's that, sir?

Stock. This gentleman could best explain it to you, but you have given him an undeserved name that seals his lips against you: I am not under the same inhibition, and if your anger can keep cool for a few minutes, I desire I may call in two witnesses, who will solve all difficulties at once. Here, waiter! bring those people in that are without.

O'Fla. Out upon it! what need is there for so much talking about the matter; can't you settle your differences first, and dispute about 'em afterwards?

[FULMER and MRS. FULMER brought in.

Charles. Fulmer and his wife in custody?

Stock. Yes, sir, these are your honest landlord and landlady, now in custody for defrauding this gentleman of certain diamonds intended to have been presented to your sister. Be so good, Mrs. Fulmer, to inform the company why you so grossly scandalized the reputation of an innocent lady, by persuading Mr. Belcour that Miss Dudley was not the sister, but the mistress of this gentlemen.

Mrs. Ful. Sir, I don't know what right you have to question me, and I shall not answer till I see occasion.

Stock. Had you been as silent heretofore, madam it would have saved you some trouble; but we don't want your confession. This letter, which you wrote to Mr. Belcour, will explain your design; and these diamonds, which of right belong to Miss Rusport, will confirm your guilt: the law, Mrs. Fulmer, will make you speak, though I can't. Constable, take charge of your prisoners.

Ful. Hold a moment: Mr. Stockwell, you are a gentleman that knows the world, and a member of parliament; we shall not attempt to impose upon you: we know we are open to the law, and we know the utmost it can do against us. Mr. Belcour has been ill used to be sure, and so has Miss Dudley; and, for my own part, I always condemned the plot as a very foolish plot, but it was a child of Mrs. Fulmer's brain, and she would not be put out of conceit with it.

Mrs. Ful. You are a foolish man, Mr. Fulmer, so pry'thee hold your tongue.

Ful. Therefore, as I was saying, if you send her to Bridewell, it won't be amiss; and if you give her a little wholesome discipline, she may be the better for that too: but for me, Mr. Stockwell, who am a man of letters, I must beseech you, sir, not to bring any disgrace upon my profession.

Stock. 'Tis you, Mr. Fulmer, not I, that disgrace your profession; therefore begone, nor expect that I will betray the interests of mankind so far as to shew favour to such incendiaries. Take 'em away; I blush to think such wretches should have the power to set two honest men at variance. [*Exeunt FULMER, &c.*]

Charles. Mr. Belcour, we have mistaken each other; let us exchange forgiveness. I am convinced you intended no affront to my sister, and ask your pardon for the expression I was betrayed into.

Bel. 'Tis enough, sir ; the error began on my side, and was Miss Dudley here, I would be first to atone.

Stock. Let us all adjourn to my house, and conclude the evening like friends ; you will find a little entertainment ready for you ; and if I am not mistaken, Miss Dudley and her father will make part of our company, Come, Major, do you consent ?

O'Fla. Most readily, Mr. Stockwell ; a quarrel well made up, is better than a victory hardly earned. Give me your hand, Belcour ; o' my conscience you are too honest for the country you live in. And now, my dear lad, since peace is concluded on all sides, I have a discovery to make to you, which you must find out for yourself, for deuce take me if I rightly comprehend it, only that your aunt Rusport is in a conspiracy against you, and a vile rogue of a lawyer, whose name I forget, at the bottom of it.

Charles. What conspiracy ? Dear Major, recollect yourself.

O'Fla. By my soul, I've no faculty at recollecting myself ; but I've a paper somewhere about me, that will tell you more of the matter than I can. When I get to the merchant's, I will endeavour, to find it.

Charles. Well, it must be in your own way ; but I confess you have thoroughly roused my curiosity.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

STOCKWELL'S *House.*

CAPTAIN DUDLEY, LOUISA, and STUKELY.

Dud. And are those wretches, Fulmer and his wife, in safe custody ?

Stuke. They are in good hands ; I accompanied

them to the tavern, where your son was to be, and then went in search of you. You may be sure, Mr. Stockwell will enforce the law against them as far as it will go.

Dud. What mischief might their cursed machinations have produced, but for this timely discovery!

Lou. Still I am terrified; I tremble with apprehension, lest Mr. Belcour's impetuosity, and Charles's spirit, should not wait for an explanation, but drive them both to extremes, before the mistake can be unravelled.

Stuke. Mr. Stockwell is with them, madam, and you have nothing to fear;—you cannot suppose he would ask you hither, for any other purpose, but to celebrate their reconciliation, and to receive Mr Belcour's atonement.

Dud. No, no, Louisa, Mr. Stockwell's honour and discretion guard you against all danger or offence. He well knows we will endure no imputation on the honour of our family; and he certainly has invited us to receive satisfaction on that score in an amicable way.

Lou. Wou'd to Heaven they were returned!

Stuke. You may expect them every minute;—and see, madam, agreeably to your wish, they are here.

[*Exit.*]

Enter CHARLES; afterwards STOCKWELL and O'FLAHERTY.

Lou. O Charles, O brother! how could you serve me so? how could you tell me, you was going to Lady Rusport's, and then set out with design of fighting Mr. Belcour? But where is he; where is your antagonist?

Stock. Captain, I am proud to see you; and you, Miss Dudley, do me particular honour. We have been adjusting, sir, a very extraordinary and danger-

ous mistake, which, I take for granted, my friend Stukely has explained to you.

Dud. He has—I have too good an opinion of Mr. Belcour, to believe he could be guilty of a designed affront to an innocent girl; and I am much too well acquainted with your character, to suppose you could abet him in such design; I have no doubt, therefore, all things will be set to rights in a very few words, when we have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Belcour.

Stock. He has only stepped into the compting-house, and will wait upon you directly. You will not be over strict, madam, in weighing Mr. Belcour's conduct to the minutest scruple;—his manners, passions, and opinions, are not as yet assimilated to this climate; he comes amongst you a new character, an inhabitant of a new world, and both hospitality, as well as pity, recommend him to our indulgence.

Enter BELCOUR—bows to MISS DUDLEY.

Bel. I am happy, and ashamed, to see you;—no man in his senses would offend you; I forfeited mine, and erred against the light of the sun, when I overlooked your virtues; but your beauty was predominant, and hid them from my sight;—I now perceive, I was the dupe of a most improbable report, and humbly entreat your pardon.

Lou. Think no more of it; 'twas a mistake.

Bel. My life has been composed of little else; 'twas founded in mystery, and has continued in error:—I was once given to hope, Mr Stockwell, that you was to have delivered me from these difficulties, but either I do not deserve your confidence, or I was deceived in my expectations.

Stock. When this lady has confirmed your pardon, I shall hold you deserving of my confidence.

Lou. That was granted the moment it was asked.

Bel. To prove my title to his confidence, honour

me so far with yours, as to allow me a few minutes' conversation in private with you.

[*She turns to her Father,*

Dud. By all means, Louisa;—come, Mr. Stockwell, let us go into another room.

Charles. And now, Major O'Flaherty, I claim your promise, of a sight of the paper. that is to unravel this conspiracy of my aunt Rusport's. I think I have waited with great patience.

O' Fla. I have been endeavouring to call to mind what it was I overheard; I have got the paper, and will give you the best account I can of the whole transaction. [Exeunt.]

Bel. Miss Dudley, I have solicited this audience, to repeat to you my penitence and confusion: How shall I atone? What reparation can I make to you and virtue?

Lou. To me there's nothing due, nor any thing demanded of you but your more favourable opinion for the future, if you should chance to think of me. Upon the part of virtue, I am not empowered to speak; but if hereafter, as you range through life, you should surprise her in the person of some wretched female, poor as myself, and not so well protected, enforce not your advantage, complete not your licentious triumph; but raise her, rescue her from shame and sorrow, and reconcile her to herself again.

Bel. I will, I will; by bearing your idea ever present in my thoughts, virtue shall keep an advocate within me: but tell me, loveliest, when you pardon the offence, can you, all perfect as you are, approve of the offender? As I now cease to view you in that false light I lately did, can you, and in the fulness of your bounty will you, cease also to reflect upon the libertine addresses I have paid you, and look upon me as your reformed, your rational admirer?

Lou. Are sudden reformations apt to last? and how can I be sure the first fair face you meet will not ensnare affections so unsteady, and that I shall not lose you lightly as I gained you?

Bel. Because though you conquered me by surprise, I have no inclination to rebel; because since the first moment that I saw you, every instant has improved you in my eyes; because by principle as well as passion I am unalterably yours; in short, there are ten thousand causes for my love to you, would to Heaven I could plant one in your soft bosom that might move you to return it!

Lou. Nay, Mr. Belcour—

Bel. I know I am not worthy your regard; I know I am tainted with a thousand faults, sick of a thousand follies; but there's a healing virtue in your eyes, that makes recovery certain; I cannot be a villain in your arms.

Lou. That you can never be: whomever you shall honour with your choice, my life upon't, that woman will be happy: it is not from suspicion that I hesitate, it is from honour; 'tis the severity of my condition, it is the world that never will interpret fairly in our case.

Bel. Oh, what am I, and who in this wide world concerns himself for such a nameless, such a friendless thing as I am? I see, Miss Dudley, I've not yet obtained your pardon.

Lou. Nay, that you are in full possession of.

Bel. Oh, seal it with your hand, then, loveliest of women; confirm it with your heart: make me honourably happy, and crown your penitent, not with your pardon only, but your love.

Lou. My love!—

Bel. By Heaven my soul is conquered with your virtues more than my eyes are ravished with your beauty: Oh, may this soft, this sensitive alarm be

happy, be auspicious! Doubt not, deliberate not, delay not: If happiness be the end of life, why do we slip a moment?

Enter O'FLAHERTY; afterwards DUDLEY and CHARLES, with STOCKWELL.

O'Fla. Joy, joy! sing, dance, leap, laugh for joy. Ha' done making love, and fall down on your knees, to every saint in the calendar, for they are all on your side, and honest St. Patrick at the head of them.

Charles. O Louisa, such an event! by the luckiest chance in life, we have discovered a will of my grandfather's made in his last illness, by which he cuts off my aunt Rusport, with a small annuity, and leaves me heir to his whole estate, with a fortune of fifteen thousand pounds to yourself.

Lou. What is it you tell me? O sir, instruct me to support this unexpected turn of fortune.

[*To her* FATHER.

Dud. Name not fortune, 'tis the work of Providence; 'tis the justice of Heaven, that would not suffer innocence to be oppressed, nor your base aunt to prosper in her cruelty and cunning.

[*A SERVANT whispers BELCOUR, and he goes out.*

O'Fla. You shall pardon me, Captain Dudley, but you must not overlook St. Patrick neither, for, by my soul, if he had not put it into my head to slip behind the screen, when your righteous aunt and the lawyer were plotting together, I don't see how you would ever have come at the paper there, that Master Stockwell is reading.

Dud. True, my good friend, you are the father of this discovery: but how did you contrive to get this will from the lawyer?

O'Fla. By force, my dear, the only way of getting any thing from a lawyer's clutches.

Stock. Well, Major, when he brings his action of assault and battery against you, the least Dudley can do is to defend you with the weapons you have put into his hands.

Charles. That I am bound to do; and after the happiness I shall have in sheltering a father's age from the vicissitudes of life, my next delight will be in offering you an asylum in the bosom of your country.

O'Fla. And upon my soul, my dear, 'tis high time I was there, for 'tis now thirty long years since I sat foot in my native country, and by the power of St. Patrick I swear I think it's worth all the rest of the world put together.

Dud. Ay, Major, much about that time have I been beating the round of service, and 'twere well for us both to give over; we have stood many a tough gale, and abundance of hard blows, but Charles shall lay us up in a little private, but safe harbour, where we'll rest from our labours, and peacefully wind up the remainder of our days.

O'Fla. Agreed, and you may take it as a proof of my esteem, young man, that Major O'Flaherty accepts a favour at your hands, for, by Heaven, I'd sooner starve, than say I thank you, to the man I despise: but I believe you are an honest lad, and I'm glad you've trounc'd the old cat, for, on my conscience, I believe I must otherwise have married her myself, to have let you in for a share of her fortune.

Stock. Hey day, what's become of Belcour?

Lou. One of your servants called him out just now, and seemingly on some earnest occasion.

Stock. I hope, Miss Dudley, he has atoned to you as a gentleman ought.

Lou. Mr. Belcour, sir, will always do what a gen-

tleman ought, and in my case I fear only you will think he has done too much.

Stock. What has he done? and what can be too much? Pray Heaven it may be as I wish! [*Aside.*

Dud. Let us hear it, child.

Lou. With confusion for my own unworthiness, I confess he has offered me——

Stock. Himself.

Lou. 'Tis true.

Stock. Then I am happy; all my doubts, my cares, are over, and I may own him for my son.—Why, these are joyful tidings; come, my good friend, assist me in disposing your lovely daughter to accept this returning prodigal; he is no unprincipled, no hardened libertine: his love for you and virtue is the same.

Dud. 'Twere vile ingratitude in me to doubt his merit—What says my child?

O'Fla. Begging your pardon now, 'tis a frivolous sort of a question, that of yours, for you may see plainly enough by the young lady's looks, that she says a great deal, though she speaks never a word.

Charles. Well, sister, I believe the Major has fairly interpreted the state of your heart.

Lou. I own it; and what must that heart be, which love, honour, and beneficence, like Mr. Belcour's, can make no impression on?

Stock. I thank you: What happiness has this hour brought to pass!

O'Fla. Why don't we all sit down to supper, then, and make a night on't.,

Stock. Hold, here comes Belcour.

Enter BELCOUR, introducing MISS RUSPORT.

Bel. Mr. Dudley, here is a fair refugee, who properly comes under your protection; she is equipped for Scotland, but your good fortune, which I have re-

lated to her, seems inclined to save you both the journey—Nay, madam, never go back! you are amongst friends.

Charles. Charlotte!

Miss R. The same; that fond, officious girl, that haunts you every where: that persecuting spirit—

Charles. Say rather, that protecting angel; such you have been to me.

Miss R. O, Charles, you have an honest, but proud heart.

Charles. Nay, chide me not, dear Charlotte.

Bel. Seal up her lips, then; she is an adorable girl; her arms are open to you; and love and happiness are ready to receive you.

Charles. Thus, then, I claim my dear, my destined wife. [Embracing her.]

Enter LADY RUSPORT.

Lady R. Hey day! mighty fine! wife, truly! mighty well! kissing, embracing—did ever any thing equal this? Why, you shameless hussy!—But I won't condescend to waste a word upon you.—You, sir, you, Mr. Stockwell; you fine, sanctified, fair-dealing man of conscience; is this the principle you trade upon? is this your neighbourly system, to keep a house of reception for runaway daughters, and young beggarly fortune hunters?

O'Fla. Be advised now, and don't put yourself in such a passion; we were all very happy till you came.

Lady R. Stand away, sir; hav'n't I a reason to be in a passion?

O'Fla. Indeed, honey, and you have, if you knew all.

Lady R. Come, madam, I have found out your haunts; dispose yourself to return home with me. Young man, let me never see you within my doors again: Mr. Stockwell, I shall report your behaviour, depend on it.

Stock. Hold, madam, I cannot consent to lose Miss Rusport's company this evening, and I am persuaded you won't insist upon it; 'tis an unmotherly action to interrupt your daughter's happiness in this manner, believe me it is.

Lady R. Her happiness truly! upon my word! and I suppose it's an unmotherly action to interrupt her ruin; for what but ruin must it be to marry a beggar? I think my sister had a proof of that, sir, when she made choice of you.

[To CAPTAIN DUDLEY.]

Dud. Don't be too lavish of your spirits, Lady Rusport.

O'Fla. By my soul, you'll have occasion for a sip of the cordial elixir by and by.

Stock. It don't appear to me, madam, that Mr. Dudley can be called a beggar.

Lady R. But it appears to me, Mr. Stockwell; I am apt to think a pair of colours cannot furnish settlement quite sufficient for the heiress of Sir Stephen Rusport.

Miss R. But a good estate, in aid of a commission, may do something.

Lady R. A good estate, truly! where should he get a good estate, pray?

Stock. Why, suppose now a worthy old gentleman, on his death-bed, should have taken it in mind to leave him one——

Lady R. Hah! what's that you say?

O'Fla. O ho! you begin to smell a plot, do you?

Stock. Suppose there should be a paper in the world, that runs thus—"I do hereby give and bequeath all my estates, real and personal, to Charles Dudley, son of my late daughter Louisa, &c. &c. &c."

Lady R. Why, I am thunderstruck! by what contrivance, what villany, did you get possession of that paper?

Stock. There was no villany, madam, in getting possession of it; the crime was in concealing it, none in bringing it to light.

Lady R. Oh, that cursed lawyer, Varland!

O'Fla. You may say that, 'faith; he is a cursed lawyer; and a cursed piece of work I had to get the paper from him; your ladyship now was to have paid him five thousand pounds for it: I forced him to give it me of his own accord, for nothing at all, at all.

Lady R. Is it you that have done this? am I foiled by your blundering contrivances, after all?

O'Fla. 'Twas a blunder, 'faith, but as natural a one as if I had made it o'purpose.

Charles. Come, let us not oppress the fallen; do right even now, and you shall have no cause to complain.

Lady R. Am I become an object of your pity, then? Insufferable! confusion light amongst you! marry, and be wretched: let me never see you more.

[*Exit.*

Miss R. She is outrageous; I suffer for her, and blush to see her thus exposed.

Charles. Come, Charlotte, don't let this angry woman disturb our happiness: we will save her, in spite of herself; your father's memory shall not be stained by the discredit of his second choice.

Miss R. I trust implicitly to your discretion, and am in all things yours.

Bel. Now, lovely, but obdurate, does not this example soften?

Lou. What can you ask for more? Accept my hand, accept my willing heart.

Bel. O, bliss unutterable! brother, father, friend, and you, the author of this general joy——

O'Fla. Blessing of St. Patrick upon us all! 'tis a night of wonderful and surprising ups and downs:

I wish we were all fairly set down to supper, and there was an end on't.

Stock. Hold for a moment! I have yet one word to interpose—Entitled by my friendship to a voice in your disposal, I have approved your match; there yet remains a father's consent to be obtained.

Bel. Have I a father?

Stock. You have a father; did not I tell you I had a discovery to make?—Compose yourself—you have a father, who observes, who knows, who loves you.

Bel. Keep me no longer in suspense; my heart is softened for the affecting discovery, and nature fits me to receive his blessing.

Stock. I am your father.

Bel. My father!—Do I live?

Stock. I am your father.

Bel. It is too much—my happiness overpowers me—to gain a friend, and find a father, is too much: I blush to think how little I deserve you.

[*They embrace.*]

Dud. See, children, how many new relations spring from this night's unforeseen events, to endear us to each other.

O'Fla. O' my conscience, I think we shall be all related by and by.

Stock. How happily has this evening concluded, and yet, how threatening was its approach!—Let us repair to the supper room, where I will unfold to you every circumstance of my mysterious story.—Yes, Belcour, I have watched you with a patient, but inquiring, eye, and I have discovered, through the veil of some irregularities, a heart beaming with benevolence, and animated nature, fallible indeed, but not incorrigible; and your election of this excellent young lady makes me glory in acknowledging you to be my son.

Bel. I thank you, and in my turn, glory in the father I have gained. Sensibly impressed with gratitude for such extraordinary dispensations, I beseech you, amiable Louisa, for the time to come, whenever you perceive me deviating into error or offence, bring only to my mind the Providence of this night, and I will turn to reason, and obey.

THE END.