

ROYALL TYLER

The CONTRAST

A Comedy in Five Acts*

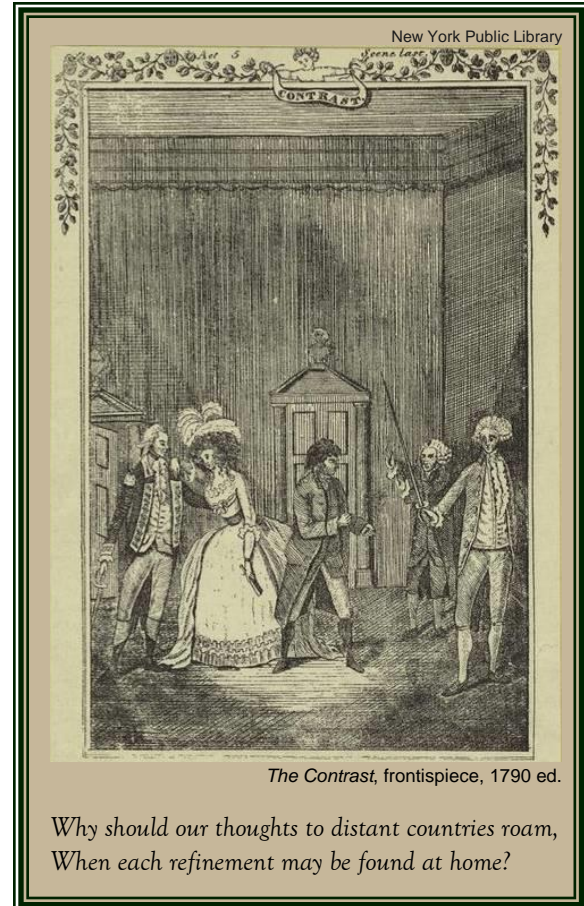
Written by a Citizen of the UNITED STATES

New York, 1787

PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY A YOUNG GENTLEMAN
OF NEW-YORK, AND SPOKEN BY MR. WIGNELL¹

EXULT, each patriot heart! — this night is shown
A piece, which we may fairly call our own,
Where the proud titles of “My Lord! Your Grace!”
To humble Mr. and plain Sir give place.
Our Author pictures not from foreign climes
The fashions or the follies of the times,
But has confin’d the subject of his work
To the gay scenes — the circles of New York.
On native themes his Muse displays her powers,
If ours the faults, the virtues too are ours.
Why should our thoughts to distant countries roam,
When each refinement may be found at home?
Who travels now to ape [copy] the rich or great,
To deck an equipage [decorate a carriage] and roll in state,
To court the graces, or to dance with ease,
Or by hypocrisy to strive to please?
Our free-born ancestors such arts despis’d,
Genuine sincerity alone they priz’d,
Their minds, with honest emulation fir’d,
To solid good — not ornament — aspir’d,
Or, if ambition rous’d a bolder flame,
Stern virtue throve, where indolence [laziness] was shame.
But modern youths, with imitative sense,
Deem taste in dress the proof of excellence,
And spurn the meanness of your homespun arts,
Since homespun habits would obscure their parts [features],
Whilst all, which aims at splendor and parade,
Must come from Europe, and be ready made.
Strange! we should thus our native worth disclaim,
And check the progress of our rising fame.
Yet one, whilst imitation bears the sway,
Aspires to nobler heights, and points the way.
Be rous’d, my friends! his bold example view,
Let your own Bards be proud to copy you!



Should rigid critics reprobate [condemn] our play,
At least the patriotic heart will say,
“Glorious our fall, since in a noble cause.
“The bold attempt alone demands applause.”
Still may the wisdom of the Comic Muse
Exalt your merits, or your faults accuse.
But think not ’tis her aim to be severe,
We all are mortals, and as mortals err.
If candor pleases, we are truly blest,
Vice trembles when compell’d to stand confess’d.
Let not light Censure on your faults offend,
Which aims not to expose them, but amend.
Thus does our Author to your candor trust,
Conscious the free are generous, as just.

SCENE: NEW YORK.

—ACT I—

Scene I.

An Apartment at CHARLOTTE's. CHARLOTTE and LETITIA discovered [are seen onstage].

LETITIA. And so, Charlotte, you really think the pocket-hoop unbecoming.

CHARLOTTE. No, I don't say so. It may be very becoming to saunter round the house of a rainy day, to visit my grand-mamma or to go to Quakers' meeting — but to swim in a minuet with the eyes of fifty well-dressed beaux² upon me, to trip it in the Mall or walk on the battery,³ give me the luxurious, jaunty, flowing, bell-hoop. It would have delighted you to have seen me the last evening, my charming girl! I was dangling o'er the battery with Billy Dimple. A knot of young fellows were upon the platform. As I passed them I faltered with one of the most bewitching false steps you ever saw and then recovered myself with such a pretty confusion, flirting my hoop to discover [reveal] a jet black shoe and brilliant buckle. Gad! how my little heart thrilled to hear the confused raptures of — "*Demme, Jack, what a delicate foot!*" "*Ha! General, what a well-turned —*"

LETITIA. Fie! fie! Charlotte [*stopping her mouth*], I protest you are quite a libertine.⁴

CHARLOTTE. Why, my dear little prude, are we not all such libertines? Do you think when I sat tortured two hours under the hands of my friseur and an hour more at my toilet,⁵ that I had any thoughts of my aunt Susan or my cousin Betsey? though they are both allowed to be critical judges of dress.

LETITIA. Why, who should we dress to please, but those who are judges of its merit?

CHARLOTTE. Why, a creature who does not know *Buffon* from *Soufflee*⁶ — Man! — my Letitia — Man! for whom we dress, walk, dance, talk, lisp, languish, and smile. Does not the grave *Spectator*⁷ assure us that even our much bepraised diffidence [reservedness/self-effacement], modesty, and blushes are all directed to make ourselves good wives and mothers as fast as we can? Why, I'll undertake with one flirt of this hoop to bring more beaux to my feet in one week than the grave Maria and her sentimental circle can do by sighing sentiment till their hairs are grey.

LETITIA. Well, I won't argue with you. You always outtalk me. Let us change the subject. I hear that Mr. Dimple and Maria are soon to be married.

CHARLOTTE. You hear true. I was consulted in the choice of the wedding clothes. She is to be married in a delicate white satin, and has a monstrous pretty brocaded lutestring [glossy silk] for the second day. It would have done you good to have seen with what an affected [assumed/insincere] indifference the dear sentimentalist turned over a thousand pretty things, just as if her heart did not palpitate with her approaching happiness, and at last made her choice and arranged her dress with such apathy [indifference] as if she did not know that plain white satin and a simple blond lace would show her clear skin and dark hair to the greatest advantage.



² *Beaux*: men, young gentlemen, suitors [French].

³ Parks in New York City. The *Mall* was tree-lined walk in what is now Central Park. The *Battery* is at the southern tip of Manhattan island.

⁴ *Libertine*: self-indulgent, unrestrained person pursuing material and sensual pleasures.

⁵ *Friseur*: hairdresser. *Toilet* (*toilette*): the process of grooming and dressing oneself [French].

⁶ Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) was a French naturalist. *Soufflé*: French egg dish.

⁷ British daily paper created by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele that eschewed news for topics of literary and social interest. Despite its short run of two years (1711-1712), it was highly influential and remained widely read throughout the century by men and women alike.

LETITIA. But they say her indifference to dress, and even to the gentleman himself, is not entirely affected.

CHARLOTTE. How?

LETITIA. It is whispered that if Maria gives her hand to Mr. Dimple, it will be without her heart.

CHARLOTTE. Though the giving the heart is one of the last of all laughable considerations in the marriage of a girl of spirit, yet I should like to hear what antiquated notions the dear little piece of old-fashioned prudery has got in her head.

LETITIA. Why, you know that old Mr. John-Richard-Robert-Jacob-Isaac-Abraham-Cornelius Van Dumpling, Billy Dimple's father (for he has thought fit to soften his name, as well as manners, during his English tour) was the most intimate friend of Maria's father. The old folks, about a year before Mr. Van Dumpling's death, proposed this match. The young folks were accordingly introduced and told they must love one another. Billy was then a good-natured, decent-dressing young fellow with a little dash of the coxcomb,⁸ such as our young fellows of fortune usually have. At this time, I really believe she thought she loved him, and had they then been married, I doubt not they might have jogged on to the end of the chapter, a good kind of a sing-song lack-a-daysaical life, as other honest married folks do.

CHARLOTTE. Why did they not then marry?

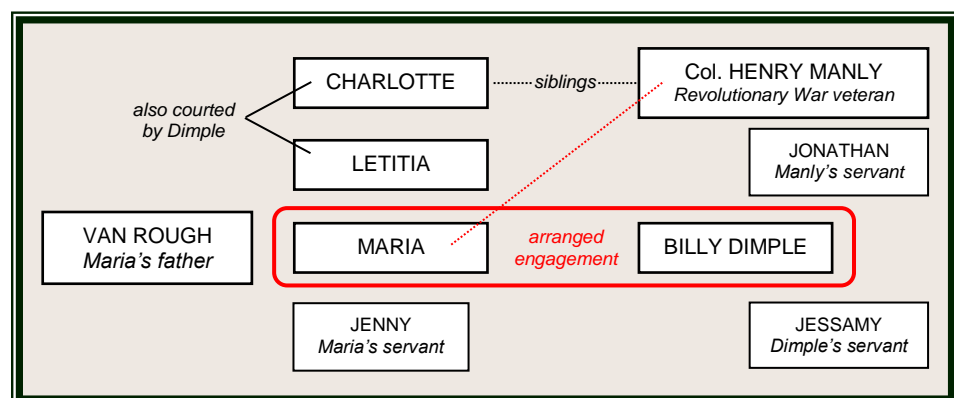
LETITIA. Upon the death of his father, Billy went to England to see the world and rub off a little of the patroon rust.⁹ During his absence, Maria, like a good girl, to keep herself constant to her own true love, avoided company and betook herself for her amusement to her books and her dear Billy's letters. But, alas! how many ways has the mischievous demon of inconstancy of stealing into a woman's heart! Her love was destroyed by the very means she took to support it.

CHARLOTTE. How? — Oh! I have it — some likely young beau found the way to her study.

LETITIA. Be patient, Charlotte, your head so runs upon beaux. Why, she read Sir Charles Grandison, *Clarissa Harlow*, Shenstone, and *The Sentimental Journey*,¹⁰ and between whiles, as I said, Billy's letters. But, as her taste improved, her love declined. The contrast was so striking betwixt the good sense of her books and the flimsiness of her love-letters, that she discovered she had unthinkingly engaged her hand without her heart, and then the whole transaction, managed by the old folks, now appeared so unsentimental and looked so like bargaining for a bale of goods that she found she ought to have rejected, according to every rule of romance, even the man of her choice if imposed upon her in that manner — Clary Harlow would have scorned such a match.

CHARLOTTE. Well, how was it on Mr. Dimple's return? Did he meet a more favorable reception than his letters?

LETITIA. Much the same. She spoke of him with respect abroad and with contempt in her



⁸ *Coxcomb*: a conceited person, a dandy.

⁹ *Patroons*: Dutch immigrant landholders in New York state from the 1600s. Removing "patroon rust" would be to acquire more sophisticated European manners and conversation.

¹⁰ The English writers Charles Grandison and William Shenstone produced popular sentimental novels in the late 18th century. Samuel Richardson, author of the epistolary novel *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1748) also wrote the epistolary novels *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) and *Clarissa [Harlow]: Or, The History of a Young Lady* (1748)—which featured a heroine in a plight similar to Maria's. *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) was a popular travel novel by the Irishman Laurence Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*.

closet.¹¹ She watched his conduct and conversation and found that he had by travelling acquired the wickedness of Lovelace¹² without his wit, and the politeness of Sir Charles Grandison without his generosity. The ruddy youth, who washed his face at the cistern every morning and swore and looked eternal love and constancy, was now metamorphosed [changed] into a flippant, pallid, polite beau [shallow unmotivated, socially correct young man] who devotes the morning to his toilet [washing and dressing], reads a few pages of Chesterfield's letters,¹³ and then minces out to put the infamous principles in practice upon every woman he meets.

CHARLOTTE. But, if she is so apt at conjuring up these sentimental bugbears [childish imaginary monsters], why does she not discard him at once?

LETITIA. Why, she thinks her word too sacred to be trifled with.¹⁴ Besides, her father, who has a great respect for the memory of his deceased friend, is ever telling her how he shall renew his years in their union, and repeating the dying injunctions of old Van Dumpling.

CHARLOTTE. A mighty pretty story! And so you would make me believe that the sensible Maria would give up Dumpling manor and the all-accomplished Dimple as a husband for the absurd, ridiculous reason, forsooth, because she despises and abhors him. Just as if a lady could not be privileged to spend a man's fortune, ride in his carriage, be called after his name, and call him her *own dear love* when she wants money, without loving and respecting the great he-creature. Oh! my dear girl, you are a monstrous prude.

LETITIA. I don't say what I would do, I only intimate [suggest] how I suppose she wishes to act.

CHARLOTTE. No, no, no! A fig for sentiment. If she breaks, or wishes to break, with Mr. Dimple, depend upon it, she has some other man in her eye. A woman rarely discards one lover until she is sure of another. Letitia little thinks what a clue I have to Dimple's conduct. The generous man submits to render himself disgusting to Maria in order that she may leave him at liberty to address [court] me. I must change the subject. [*Aside, and rings a bell.*]

Enter SERVANT.

Frank, order the horses to. — Talking of marriage, did you hear that Sally Bloomsbury is going to be married next week to Mr. Indigo, the rich Carolinian?

LETITIA. Sally Bloomsbury married! — why, she is not yet in her teens

CHARLOTTE. I do not know how that is, but you may depend upon it, 'tis a done affair. I have it from the best authority. There is my aunt Wyerly's Hannah. You know Hannah, though a black, she is a wench that was never caught in a lie in her life. Now, Hannah has a brother who courts Sarah, Mrs. Catgut the milliner's girl, and she told Hannah's brother, and Hannah, who, as I said before, is a girl of undoubted veracity, told it directly to me, that Mrs. Catgut was making a new cap for Miss Bloomsbury, which, as it was very dressy, it is very probable is designed for a wedding cap. Now, as she is to be married, who can it be to but to Mr. Indigo? Why, there is no other gentleman that visits at her papa's.

LETITIA. Say not a word more, Charlotte. Your intelligence [news] is so direct and well grounded, it is almost a pity that it is not a piece of scandal.

"The contrast was so striking betwixt the good sense of her books and the flimsiness of her love-letters, . . ."

Act I, Scene I

"How sweet will the contrast be between the blundering Jonathan and the courtly and accomplished Jessamy!"

Act II, last line

"... the contrast between a gentleman who has read Chesterfield and received the polish of Europe and an unpolished, untravelled American."

Act V, Scene II

¹¹ I.e., with respect when in public and with contempt when speaking privately.

¹² Richard Lovelace was an English cavalier poet of the 1600s, imprisoned twice for his political activities.

¹³ Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope, was the British author of *Letters to His Son* (1774), a widely read "advice" book on manners, society, and success.

¹⁴ I.e., she felt too duty-bound by her promise of marriage to renounce it.

CHARLOTTE. Oh! I am the pink of prudence. Though I cannot charge myself with ever having discredited a tea party by my silence, yet I take care never to report anything of my acquaintance, especially if it is to their credit — *discredit*, I mean — until I have searched to the bottom of it. It is true, there is infinite pleasure in this charitable pursuit. Oh! how delicious to go and condole [grieve] with the friends of some backsliding sister, or to retire with some old dowager [rich widow] or maiden aunt of the family, who love scandal so well that they cannot forbear [resist] gratifying their appetite at the expense of the reputation of their nearest relations! And then to return full fraught [loaded] with a rich collection of circumstances [gossip] to retail [relate] to the next circle of our acquaintance under the strongest injunctions [orders] of secrecy — ha, ha, ha! — interlarding [embellishing] the melancholy tale with so many doleful [sorrowful] shakes of the head, and more doleful “Ah! who would have thought it! so amiable [likeable], so prudent a young lady, as we all thought her, what a monstrous pity! Well, I have nothing to charge myself with [fault myself for]. I acted the part of a friend, I warned her of the principles of that rake [unprincipled man of society], I told her what would be the consequence. I told her so, I told her so.” — Ha, ha, ha!

LETITIA. Ha, ha, ha! Well, but, Charlotte, you don’t tell me what you think of Miss Bloomsbury’s match.

CHARLOTTE. Think! why I think it is probable she cried for a plaything, and they have given her a husband. Well, well, well, the puling chit [whining childish girl] shall not be deprived of her plaything: ’tis only exchanging London dolls for American babies. — Apropos [on the topic] of babies, have you heard what Mrs. Affable’s high-flying notions of delicacy have come to?

LETITIA. Who, she that was Miss Lovely?

CHARLOTTE. The same, she married Bob Affable of Schenectady. Don’t you remember?

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT. Madam, the carriage is ready.

LETITIA. Shall we go to the stores first, or visiting?

CHARLOTTE. I should think it rather too early to visit, especially Mrs. Prim, you know she is so particular.

LETITIA. Well, but what of Mrs. Affable?

CHARLOTTE. Oh, I’ll tell you as we go. Come, come, let us hasten. I hear Mrs. Catgut has some of the prettiest caps arrived you ever saw. I shall die if I have not the first sight of them. [*Exeunt.*]



Act I. Scene II.

A Room in VAN ROUGH’s house. MARIA sitting disconsolate at a Table, with Books, &c.

SONG.¹⁵

I.

The sun sets in night, and the stars shun the day,
But glory remains when the light fades away!
Begin, ye tormenters! your threats are in vain,
For the son of Alknomook shall never complain.

II.

Remember the arrows he shot from his bow,
Remember your chiefs by his hatchet laid low:
Why so slow?—do you wait ’till I shrink from the pain?
No—the son of Alknomook shall never complain.

III.

Remember the wood where in ambush we lay,
And the scalps which we bore from your nation away:
Now the flame rises fast, you exult in my pain,
But the son of Alknomook can never complain.

IV.

I go to the land where my father has gone,
His ghost shall rejoice in the fame of his son:
Death comes like a friend, he relieves me from pain,
And thy son, Oh Alknomook! has scorn’d to complain.

¹⁵ Composed by Tyler for the play and later known as “The Death Song of the Cherokee Indian,” the poem lauds the courage and silence of Alknomook while being tortured to death. In her monologue Maria expresses her attraction to the “manly virtue of courage.”

There is something in this song which ever calls forth my affections. The manly virtue of courage, that fortitude which steels the heart against the keenest misfortunes, which interweaves the laurel of glory amidst the instruments of torture and death, displays something so noble, so exalted, that in despite of the prejudices of education I cannot but admire it, even in a savage. The prepossession [favorable bias] which our sex is supposed to entertain for the character of a soldier is, I know, a standing piece of raillery [standard source of teasing humor] among the wits. A cockade, a lapell'd coat, and a feather, they will tell you, are irresistible by a female heart. Let it be so. — Who is it that considers the helpless situation of our sex that does not see that we each moment stand in need of a protector, and that a brave one too. “Formed of the more delicate materials of nature, endowed only with the softer passions, incapable from our ignorance of the world to guard against the wiles of mankind, our security for happiness often depends upon their generosity and courage. Alas! how little of the former do we find!”¹⁶ How inconsistent! that man should be leagued to destroy that honor upon which solely rests his respect and esteem. Ten thousand temptations allure us, ten thousand passions betray us, yet the smallest deviation from the path of rectitude [righteousness] is followed by the contempt and insult of man and the more remorseless pity of woman. Years of penitence and tears cannot wash away the stain, nor a life of virtue obliterate its remembrance. “Reputation is the life of woman, yet courage to protect it is masculine and disgusting, and the only safe asylum a woman of delicacy can find is in the arms of a man of honor. How naturally, then, should we love the brave and the generous, how gratefully should we bless the arm raised for our protection when nerv'd by virtue and directed by honor!” Heaven grant that the man with whom I may be connected — may be connected! — Whither has my imagination transported me — whither does it now lead me? — Am I not indissolubly engaged by every obligation of honor which my own consent and my father's approbation [approval] can give to a man who can never share my affections, and whom a few days hence it will be criminal for me to disapprove — to disapprove! would to heaven that were all — to despise. For, can the most frivolous manners, actuated by the most depraved heart, meet or merit anything but contempt from every woman of delicacy and sentiment?

[VAN ROUGH *without [offstage]*. Mary!]

Ha! my father's voice — Sir!

Enter VAN ROUGH.

VAN ROUGH. What, Mary, always singing doleful ditties and moping over these plaguy [disagreeable] books.

MARIA. I hope, Sir, that it is not criminal to improve my mind with books or to divert my melancholy with singing at my leisure hours.

VAN ROUGH. Why, I don't know that, child, I don't know that. They used to say when I was a young man that if a woman knew how to make a pudding and to keep herself out of fire and water, she knew enough for a wife. Now, what good have these books done you? Have they not made you melancholy? as you call it. Pray, what right has a girl of your age to be in the dumps? Haven't you everything your heart can wish? An't [aren't] you going to be married to a young man of great fortune? An't you going to have the quit-rent¹⁷ of twenty miles square?

MARIA. One-hundredth part of the land, and a lease for life of the heart of a man I could love would satisfy me.

VAN ROUGH. Pho, pho, pho! child — nonsense, downright nonsense, child. This comes of your reading your story books — your Charles Grandisons, your Sentimental Journals, and your Robinson Crusoes, and such other trumpery.¹⁸ No, no, no! child. It is money makes the mare go. Keep your eye upon the main chance, Mary.¹⁹

MARIA. Marriage, Sir, is, indeed, a very serious affair.

¹⁶ The quotation marks in the script indicate that Maria is reading from the books on the table. The quoted material is fictitious.

¹⁷ Van Rough is reminding Maria of the 256,000-acre estate she will live on (twenty miles square=400 square miles=256,000 acres, about the size of Suffolk, Virginia). *Quitrent* was a form of land tax payable to the landowner or the government, based in feudal law.

¹⁸ Van Rough is mis-stating the title of Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. Daniel Defoe's adventure *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719. See footnote 10.

¹⁹ *Keep an eye on the main chance*: be ambitious and alert to opportunities for social and economic advancement.

VAN ROUGH. You are right, child, you are right. I am sure I found it so, to my cost.

MARIA. I mean, Sir, that as marriage is a portion for life and so intimately involves our happiness, we cannot be too considerate in the choice of our companion.

VAN ROUGH. Right, child, very right. A young woman should be very sober when she is making her choice, but when she has once made it, as you have done, I don't see why she should not be as merry as a grig²⁰ — I am sure she has reason enough to be so. Solomon says that “there is a time to laugh, and a time to weep.”²¹ Now, a time for a young woman to laugh is when she has made sure of a good rich husband. Now, a time to cry, according to you, Mary, is when she is making choice of him, but I should think that a young woman's time to cry was when she despaired of *getting* one. Why, there was your mother, now, to be sure, When I popp'd the question to her she did look a little silly. but when she had once looked down on her apron-strings, as all modest young women us'd to do, and drawled out ye-s, she was as brisk and as merry as a bee.

MARIA. My honored mother, Sir, had no motive to melancholy. She married the man of her choice.

VAN ROUGH. The man of her choice! And pray, Mary, an't you going to marry the man of your choice — what trumpery [nonsense] notion is this? — It is these vile books [*throwing them away*]. I'd have you to know, Mary, if you won't make young Van Dumpling [Dimple] the man of *your* choice, you shall marry him as the man of *my* choice.

MARIA. You terrify me, Sir. Indeed, Sir, I am all submission. My will is yours.

VAN ROUGH. Why, that is the way your mother us'd to talk. “My will is yours, my dear Mr. Van Rough, my will is yours,” but she took special care to have her own way, though, for all that.

MARIA. Do not reflect upon [discredit] my mother's memory, Sir —

VAN ROUGH. Why not, Mary, why not? She kept me from speaking my mind all her *life*, and do you think she shall henpeck me now she is *dead* too? Come, come, don't go to sniveling. Be a good girl and mind the main chance.²² I'll see you well settled in the world.

MARIA. I do not doubt your love, Sir, and it is my duty to obey you. — I will endeavor to make my duty and inclination go hand in hand.

VAN ROUGH. Well, well, Mary, do you be a good girl, mind the main chance and never mind inclination [i.e., personal whim]. — Why, do you know that I have been down in the cellar this very morning to examine a pipe of Madeira [wine] which I purchased the week you were born and mean to tap on your wedding day? — That pipe cost me fifty pounds sterling. It was well worth sixty pounds, but I overreach'd Ben Bulkhead, the supercargo²³ I'll tell you the whole story. You must know that —

— Act I —

Sc. 1: New York socialites Charlotte & Letitia discuss fashions, young men, and the engagement of Maria Van Rough to Billy Dimple, who, Charlotte reveals (to the audience), hopes to lead Maria to break the engagement so he can court Charlotte.

Sc. 2: Maria bemoans her engagement to Billy, whom she does not love or respect, while her pragmatic father, Van Rough, insists on the arranged marriage to his deceased business partner's son.

— Act II —

Sc. 1: Charlotte and Letitia return from shopping to learn that Charlotte's brother, Col. Henry Manly, is in town. A Revolutionary War veteran, Manly is an officer in the Massachusetts militia suppressing Shays's Rebellion, in which debt-ridden farmers rebelled against economic enactments supported by influential urban merchants. (The uprising ended in January 1787.) Manly personifies American patriotic virtue and unpretentious self-possession, but his lack of European manners distresses Charlotte. At his arrival, the sharp contrast between the Manly siblings is apparent, especially as they discuss his regimental coat from the Revolution. Letitia reveals (to the audience) that Dimple has hinted to her too that he hopes to break his engagement with Maria and court her.

Sc. 2: Jessamy and Jonathan, the servants of Billy Dimple and Col. Manly, meet while walking in a city park. The pretentious Jessamy is contrasted with the naïve country-boy Jonathan as they discuss social class and Shays's Rebellion. Jessamy instructs Jonathan how to court Jenny, a servant to Maria.

²⁰ *Grig*: a lively, light-hearted person.

²¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 [Old Testament], traditionally ascribed to King Solomon.

²² *Mind the main chance*: See footnote 19.

²³ *Supercargo*: officer in charge of cargo on a merchant ship.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT. Sir, Mr. Transfer, the [financial] broker, is below. [*Exit.*]

VAN ROUGH. Well, Mary, I must go. — Remember, and be a good girl, and mind the main chance. [*Exit.*]

MARIA, *alone*. How deplorable is my situation! How distressing for a daughter to find her heart militating with her filial duty!²⁴ I know my father loves me tenderly, why then do I reluctantly obey him? Heaven knows! with what reluctance I should oppose the will of a parent or set an example of filial disobedience. At a parent's command, I could wed awkwardness and deformity. Were the heart of my husband good, I would so magnify his good qualities with the eye of conjugal [married] affection that the defects of his person and manners should be lost in the emanation [flowing forth] of his virtues. At a father's command, I could embrace poverty. Were the poor man my husband, I would learn resignation to my lot [acceptance of my situation in life]. I would enliven our frugal meal with good humor and chase away misfortune from our cottage with a smile. At a father's command, I could almost submit to what every female heart knows to be the most mortifying — to marry a weak man and blush at my husband's folly in every company [group of people] I visited. But to marry a depraved wretch whose only virtue is a polished exterior — who is actuated [motivated] by the unmanly ambition of conquering the defenseless — whose heart, insensible to the emotions of patriotism, dilates at the plaudits [expands at the praise/applause] of every unthinking girl — whose laurels [wreaths of glory] are the sighs and tears of the miserable victims of his specious [deceptively pleasing] behavior — Can he who has no regard for the peace and happiness of other families ever have a due regard for the peace and happiness of his own? Would to heaven that my father were not so hasty in his temper? Surely, if I were to state my reasons for declining this match, he would not compel me to marry a man whom, though my lips may solemnly promise to honor, I find my heart must ever despise. [*Exit.*]



__ACT II__

Scene I.

Enter CHARLOTTE and LETITIA.

CHARLOTTE [*at entering*]. Betty, take those things out of the carriage and carry them to my chamber. See that you don't tumble them. — My dear, I protest, I think it was the homeliest [dress] of the whole. I declare I was almost tempted to return and change it.

LETITIA. Why would you take it?

CHARLOTTE. Didn't Mrs. Catgut say it was the most fashionable?

LETITIA. But, my dear, it will never fit becomingly on you.

CHARLOTTE. I know that, but did not you hear Mrs. Catgut say it was fashionable?

LETITIA. Did you see that sweet airy cap with the white sprig?

CHARLOTTE. Yes, and I longed to take it, but, my dear, what could I do? — Did not Mrs. Catgut say it was the most fashionable, and if I had not taken it, was not that awkward gawky, Sally Slender, ready to purchase it immediately?

LETITIA. Did you observe how she tumbled over the things at the next shop and then went off without purchasing anything, nor even thanking the poor man for his trouble? — But of all the awkward creatures, did you see Miss Blouze endeavoring to thrust her unmerciful arm into those small kid gloves?

CHARLOTTE. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

²⁴ I.e., her heart conflicting with her duty as a daughter.

LETITIA. Then did you take notice with what an affected warmth of friendship she and Miss Wasp met? when all their acquaintance [all who know them] know how much pleasure they take in abusing each other in every company.

CHARLOTTE. Lud [Lord]! Letitia, is that so extraordinary? Why, my dear, I hope you are not going to turn sentimentalist. — Scandal, you know, is but amusing ourselves with the faults, foibles, follies, and reputations of our friends — Indeed, I don't know why we should have friends if we are not at liberty to make use of them. But no person is so ignorant of the world as to suppose — because I amuse myself with a lady's faults — that I am obliged to quarrel with her person every time we meet. Believe me, my dear, we should have very few acquaintance at that rate.

SERVANT *enters and delivers a letter to CHARLOTTE, and — [Exit.]*

CHARLOTTE. You'll excuse me, my dear. [*Opens and reads to herself.*]

LETITIA. Oh, quite excusable.

CHARLOTTE. As I hope to be married, my brother Henry is in the city.

LETITIA. What, your brother, Colonel Manly?

CHARLOTTE. Yes, my dear, the only brother I have in the world.

LETITIA. Was he never in this city?

CHARLOTTE. Never nearer than Harlem Heights, where he lay with his regiment [during the Revolutionary War].

LETITIA. What sort of a being is this brother of yours? If he is as chatty, as pretty, as sprightly as you, half the belles in the city will be pulling caps for him.

CHARLOTTE. My brother is the very counterpart and reverse of me. I am gay, he is grave. I am airy, he is solid. I am ever selecting the most pleasing objects for my laughter. He has a tear for every pitiful one. And thus, whilst he is plucking the briars and thorns from the path of the unfortunate, I am strewing my own path with roses.

LETITIA. My sweet friend, not quite so poetical, and a little more particular.

CHARLOTTE. Hands off, Letitia. I feel the rage of simile upon me, I can't talk to you in any other way. My brother has a heart replete with the noblest sentiments, but then, it is like — it is like — Oh! you provoking girl, you have deranged all my ideas — it is like — Oh! I have it — his heart is like an old maiden lady's band-box — it contains many costly things arranged with the most scrupulous nicety, yet the misfortune is that they are too delicate, costly, and antiquated for common use.

LETITIA. By what I can pick out of your flowery description, your brother is no beau.²⁵

CHARLOTTE. No, indeed, he makes no pretension to the character. He'd ride, or rather fly, a hundred miles to relieve a distressed object or to do a gallant act in the service of his country, but should you drop your fan or bouquet in his presence, it is ten to one that some beau at the farther end of the room would have the honor of presenting it to you before he had observed that it fell. I'll tell you

American Antiquarian Society

Murray and Sanfom.

Have imported in the ship Betsey, Captain Wat-
son, from London, a neat and general assort-
ment of seasonable DRY GOODS, amongst
which are the following articles ;

BROAD Cloths, Cammies, Pammies, Du-
rants, Shalloons, Everlastings, Sattinets,
Cattimancoes, Futtians, Jeans, Jeanets, Cordu-
roys, Vелverets, Cotton Stripes, Cotton Checks,
Bed Ticks, mens brown and black Hats, womens
Shoes, quality and shoe binding, Ribbons, black
and white Gauzes, Modes, Sattins, India per-
fians, Silk and Linen Hankerchiefs, Hosiery,
Stationary, London and Bristol Pewter, Brals
Cocks, tea Kettles, Brals Kettles, Frying Pans,
Shovels, Spades, Sad Irons, Nails, Sickles,
Crowley and Bristol Steel, Gilt and Hair Trunks,
a Variety of Hardware and Cutlery, Earthen
Ware in crates, white Lead ground in Oil, Cop-
peras, Gun Powder and Shot.

THEY HAVE ALSO FOR SALE,
Chocolate, Snuff in Bladders, Connecticut
Pork and Beef, Jamaica Spirits, Madeira and
Fayal Wines, Dutch Mantles, Sugar Moulds, a
Variety of Iron Castings, such as Pots, Kettles,
tea Kettles, Chimney Backs, Stoves, &c. and
Wool cards of the very best quality, formerly
marked P. Sanfom, but now M. S. & Co. which
they will sell at 40s per dozen by the hoghead.

New-York, April 30, 1787. 57

Independent Journal (New York), 15 August 1787

²⁵ I.e., no handsome catch for a young lady.

one of his antiquated, antigallant notions. — He said once in my presence, in a room full of company — would you believe it — in a large circle of ladies, that the best evidence a gentleman could give a young lady of his respect and affection was to endeavor in a friendly manner to rectify her foibles [correct her social errors]. I protest I was crimson to the eyes upon reflecting that I was known as his sister.

LETITIA. Insupportable creature! tell a lady of her faults! If he is so grave, I fear I have no chance of captivating him.

CHARLOTTE. His conversation is like a rich, old-fashioned brocade — it will stand alone, every sentence is a sentiment. Now you may judge what a time I had with him, in my twelve months' visit to my father. He read me such lectures, out of pure brotherly affection, against the extremes of fashion, dress, flirting, and coquetry, and all the other dear things which he knows I dote upon, that I protest his conversation made me as melancholy as if I had been at church, and heaven knows, though I never prayed to go there but on one occasion, yet I would have exchanged his conversation for a psalm and a sermon. Church is rather melancholy, to be sure, but then I can ogle the beaux [young men] and be regaled with "here endeth the first lesson," but his brotherly *here*, you would think had no end. You captivate him! Why, my dear, he would as soon fall in love with a box of Italian flowers. There is Maria, now. If she were not engaged, she might do something. — Oh! how I should like to see that pair of penserosos [melancholy ones] together, looking as grave as two sailors' wives of a stormy night, with a flow of sentiment meandering through their conversation like purling streams in modern poetry.

LETITIA. Oh! my dear fanciful ——

CHARLOTTE. Hush! I hear some person coming through the entry.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT. Madam, there's a gentleman below who calls himself Colonel Manly. Do you choose to be at home?

CHARLOTTE. Show him in. [*Exit Servant.*] Now for a sober face.

Enter Colonel MANLY.

MANLY. My dear Charlotte, I am happy that I once more enfold you within the arms of fraternal affection. I know you are going to ask (amiable impatience!) how our parents do — the venerable pair transmit you their blessing by me. — They totter on the verge of a well-spent life, and wish only to see their children settled in the world, to depart in peace.

CHARLOTTE. I am very happy to hear that they are well. [*cooly.*] Brother, will you give me leave to introduce you to our uncle's ward, one of my most intimate friends.

MANLY [*saluting Letitia*]. I ought to regard your friends as my own.

CHARLOTTE. Come, Letitia, do give us a little dash of your vivacity [liveliness]. My brother is so sentimental and so grave, that I protest he'll give us the vapors [make us light-headed].

MANLY. Though sentiment and gravity [seriousness], I know, are banished [in] the polite world, yet I hoped they might find some countenance [approval] in the meeting of such near connections as brother and sister.

CHARLOTTE. Positively? brother, if you go one step further in this strain, you will set me crying and that, you know, would spoil my eyes, and then I should never get the husband which our good papa and mamma have so kindly wished me — never be established in the world.

MANLY. Forgive me, my sister — I am no enemy to mirth. I love your sprightliness, and I hope it will one day enliven the hours of some worthy man, but when I mention the respectable authors of my existence — the cherishers and protectors of my helpless infancy, whose hearts glow with such fondness and attachment that they would willingly lay down their lives for my welfare — you will excuse me if I am so unfashionable as to speak of them with some degree of respect and reverence.

CHARLOTTE. Well, well, brother, if you won't be gay, we'll not differ. I will be as grave as you wish. [*Affects gravity.*] And so, brother, you have come to the city to exchange some of your commutation notes²⁶ for a little pleasure?

MANLY. Indeed you are mistaken. My errand is not of amusement but business, and as I neither drink nor game [gamble], my expenses will be so trivial, I shall have no occasion to sell my notes.

CHARLOTTE. Then you won't have occasion to do a very good thing. Why, here was the Vermont General — he came down some time since, sold all his musty notes at one stroke, and then laid the cash out in trinkets for his dear Fanny.²⁷ I want a dozen pretty things myself. Have you got the notes with you?

MANLY. I shall be ever willing to contribute, as far as it is in my power, to adorn or in any way to please my sister, yet I hope I shall never be obliged for this to sell my notes. I may be romantic, but I preserve them as a sacred deposit. Their full amount is justly due to me, but as embarrassments, the natural consequences of a long war, disable my country from supporting its credit, I shall wait with patience until it is rich enough to discharge them. If that is not in my day, they shall be transmitted as an honorable certificate to posterity [descendants] that I have humbly imitated our illustrious WASHINGTON in having exposed my health and life in the service of my country without reaping any other reward than the glory of conquering in so arduous [difficult] a contest.

CHARLOTTE. Well said heroics. Why, my dear Henry, you have such a lofty way of saying things that I protest I almost tremble at the thought of introducing you to the polite circles in the city. The belles [young ladies] would think you were a player run mad, with your head filled with old scraps of tragedy, and as to the beaux [young men], they might admire because they would not understand you. But, however, I must, I believe, introduce you to two or three ladies of my acquaintance.

LETITIA. And that will make him acquainted with thirty or forty beaux.

CHARLOTTE. Oh! brother, you don't know what a fund of happiness you have in store.

MANLY. I fear, sister, I have not refinement sufficient to enjoy it.

CHARLOTTE. Oh! you cannot fail being pleased.

LETITIA. Our ladies are so delicate and dressy.

CHARLOTTE. And our beaux so dressy and delicate.

LETITIA. Our ladies chat and flirt so agreeably.

CHARLOTTE. And our beaux simper and bow so gracefully.

LETITIA. With their hair so trim and neat.

CHARLOTTE. And their faces so soft and sleek.

LETITIA. Their buckles so tonish and bright.

CHARLOTTE. And their hands so slender and white.

LETITIA. I vow, Charlotte, we are quite poetical.

CHARLOTTE. And then, brother, the faces of the beaux are of such a lily-white hue! None of that horrid robustness of constitution [physical body], that vulgar corn-fed glow of health,²⁸ which can only serve to alarm an unmarried lady with apprehension and prove a melancholy memento to a married one, that she can never hope for the happiness of being a widow. I will say this to the credit of our city beaux, that such is the delicacy of their complexion, dress, and address [mode of speaking] that, even had I no reliance upon the honor of the dear Adonises,²⁹ I would trust myself in any possible situation with them without the least apprehensions of rudeness.

MANLY. Sister Charlotte!

²⁶ Congress had agreed to pay Revolutionary War officers a lump-sum payment in government bonds [commutation notes] instead of a life pension (after the Newburgh Conspiracy of 1782-83). Due to the postwar depression and lack of money, Manly has kept his bonds.

²⁷ Referring to Ethan Allen, whose second wife was Fanny Buchanan Allen.

²⁸ I.e., none of the qualities of a hardy American man of the country.

²⁹ *Adonis*: in Greek mythology, the lover of Venus; referring to a young attractive man.

CHARLOTTE. Now, now, now, brother [*interrupting him*], now don't go to spoil my mirth with a dash of your gravity. I am so glad to see you, I am in tiptop spirits. Oh! that you could be with us at a little snug party. There is Billy Simper, Jack Chaffe, and Colonel Van Titter, Miss Promonade, and the two Miss Tambours, sometimes make a party with some other ladies in a side-box at the play. Everything is conducted with such decorum. — First we bow round to the company in general, then to each one in particular, then we have so many inquiries after each other's health, and we are so happy to meet each other, and it is so many ages since we last had that pleasure, and if a married lady is in company, we have such a sweet dissertation upon her son Bobby's chin-cough. Then the curtain rises, then our sensibility is all awake, and then, by the mere force of apprehension, we torture some harmless expression into a double meaning which the poor author never dreamt of and then we have recourse to our fans, and then we blush, and then the gentlemen jog one another, peep under the fan, and make the prettiest remarks, and then we giggle and they simper, and they giggle and we simper, and then the curtain drops, and then for nuts and oranges [served in the side-box], and then we bow, and it's pray [please], Ma'am, take it, and pray, Sir, keep it, and oh! not for the world, Sir, and then the curtain rises again, and then we blush and giggle and simper and bow all over again. Oh! the sentimental charms of a side-box conversation! [*All laugh.*]

MANLY. Well, sister, I join heartily with you in the laugh, for, in my opinion, it is as justifiable to laugh at folly as it is reprehensible to ridicule misfortune.

CHARLOTTE. Well, but, brother, positively I can't introduce you in these clothes — why, your coat looks as if it were calculated for the vulgar purpose of keeping yourself comfortable.

MANLY. This coat was my regimental coat in the late war [Revolution]. The public tumults of our state [Shays's Rebellion] have induced me to buckle on the sword in support of that government which I once fought to establish. I can only say, sister, that there was a time when this coat was respectable, and some people even thought that those men who had endured so many winter campaigns in the service of their country, without bread, clothing, or pay, at least deserved that the poverty of their appearance should not be ridiculed.

CHARLOTTE. We agree in opinion entirely, brother, though it would not have done for me to have said it — it is the coat makes the man respectable. In the time of the war, when we were almost frightened to death, why, your coat was respectable, that is, fashionable. Now another kind of coat is fashionable, that is, respectable. And pray direct the tailor to make yours the height of the fashion.

MANLY. Though it is of little consequence to me of what shape my coat is, yet, as to the height of the fashion, there you will please to excuse me, sister. You know my sentiments on that subject. I have often lamented the advantage which the French have over us in that particular. In Paris, the fashions have their dawns, their routine, and declensions, and depend as much upon the caprice of the day as in other countries, but there every lady assumes a right to deviate from the general *ton* [fashion] as far as will be of advantage to her own appearance. In America, the cry is, what is the fashion? and we follow it indiscriminately because it is so.

CHARLOTTE. Therefore it is that when large hoops are in fashion, we often see many a plump girl lost in the immensity of a hoop-petticoat, whose want [lack] of height and *en-bon-point* [plumpness] would



never have been remarked in any other dress. When the high head-dress is the mode [fashion], how then do we see a lofty cushion with a profusion of gauze, feathers, and ribband [ribbons] supported by a face no bigger than an apple! whilst a broad full-faced lady, who really would have appeared tolerably handsome in a large head-dress, looks with her smart chapeau [hat] as masculine as a soldier.

MANLY. But remember, my dear sister, and I wish all my fair country-women would recollect, that the only excuse a young lady can have for going extravagantly into a fashion is because it makes her look extravagantly handsome. — Ladies, I must wish you a good morning.

CHARLOTTE. But, brother, you are going to make home with us.

MANLY. Indeed I cannot. I have seen my uncle and explained that matter.

CHARLOTTE. Come and dine with us then. We have a family dinner about half-past four o'clock.

MANLY. I am engaged to dine with the Spanish ambassador. I was introduced to him by an old brother officer, and instead of freezing me with a cold card of compliment to dine with him ten days hence, he, with the true old Castilian frankness, in a friendly manner, asked me to dine with him today — an honor I could not refuse. Sister, adieu — Madam, your most obedient [servant] — [Exit.]

CHARLOTTE. I will wait upon you to the door, brother, I have something particular to say to you. [Exit.]

LETITIA, *alone*. What a pair! — She the pink of flirtation, he the essence of everything that is *outré* [out of fashion] and gloomy. — I think I have completely deceived Charlotte by my manner of speaking of Mr. Dimple; she's too much the friend of Maria to be confided in. He is certainly rendering himself disagreeable to Maria in order to break with her and proffer [offer] his hand to me. This is what the delicate fellow hinted in our last conversation. [Exit.]



Act II. Scene II.

The Mall [city park]

Enter JESSAMY [Dimple's servant]. Positively this Mall is a very pretty place. I hope the cits³⁰ won't ruin it by repairs. To be sure, it won't do to speak of in the same day with Ranelagh or Vauxhall,³¹ however, it's a fine place for a young fellow to display his person to advantage. Indeed, nothing is lost here, the girls have taste, and I am very happy to find they have adopted the elegant London fashion of looking back after a genteel fellow like me has passed them. Ah! who comes here? This, by his awkwardness, must be the Yankee colonel's servant. I'll accost [stop and address] him.

Enter JONATHAN [Manly's servant].

JESSAMY. Votre très-humble serviteur, Monsieur.³² I understand Colonel Manly, the Yankee officer, has the honor of your services.

JONATHAN. Sir! —

JESSAMY. I say, Sir, I understand that Colonel Manly has the honor of having you for a servant.

JONATHAN. Servant! Sir, do you take me for a neger³³ — I am Colonel Manly's waiter.

JESSAMY. A true Yankee distinction, egad, without a difference. Why, Sir, do you not perform all the offices of a servant? do you not even blacken his boots?

JONATHAN. Yes, I do grease them a bit sometimes, but I am a true blue son of liberty, for all that. Father said I should come as Colonel Manly's waiter to see the world and all that, but no man shall master me. My father has as good a farm as the colonel.

³⁰ *Cits*: Derogatory term for city dwellers.

³¹ *Vauxhall* and *Ranelagh*: public gardens and entertainment areas of London.

³² Your very humble servant, sir [French].

³³ *Neger*: Negro, black person [Latin and other languages].

JESSAMY. Well, Sir, we will not quarrel about terms upon the eve of an acquaintance from which I promise myself so much satisfaction. — therefore, sans cérémonie³⁴ —

JONATHAN. What? —

JESSAMY. I say I am extremely happy to see Colonel Manly's waiter.

JONATHAN. Well, and I vow, too, I am pretty considerably glad to see you — but what the dogs need of all this outlandish lingo? Who may you be, Sir, if I may be so bold?

JESSAMY. I have the honor to be Mr. Dimple's servant, or, if you please, waiter. We lodge under the same roof and should be glad of the honor of your acquaintance.

JONATHAN. You a waiter! by the living jingo, you look so topping [top-flight], I took you for one of the agents to Congress.

JESSAMY. The brute has discernment, notwithstanding his appearance. — Give me leave to say I wonder then at your familiarity.³⁵

JONATHAN. Why, as to the matter of that, Mr. —, pray, what's your name?

JESSAMY. Jessamy, at your service.

JONATHAN. Why, I swear we don't make any great matter of distinction in our state [Massachusetts] between quality and other folks.

JESSAMY. This is, indeed, a levelling principle.³⁶ — I hope, Mr. Jonathan, you have not taken part with the insurgents.³⁷

JONATHAN. Why, since General Shays has sneaked off and given us the bag to hold, I don't care to give my opinion, but you'll promise not to tell — put your ear this way — you won't tell? — I vow I did think the sturgeons [insurgents] were right.

JESSAMY. I thought, Mr. Jonathan, you Massachusetts men always argued with a gun in your hand. Why didn't you join them?

JONATHAN. Why, the colonel is one of those folks called the Shin — Shin³⁸ — dang it all, I can't speak them *lignum vitae*³⁹ words — you know who I mean—there is a company of them — they wear a china goose at their button-hole — a kind of gilt thing. — Now the colonel told father and brother — you must know there are, let me see — there is Elnathan, Silas, and Barnabas, Tabitha — no, no, she's a she — tarnation, now I have it — there's Elnathan, Silas, Barnabas, Jonathan, that's I — seven of us, six went into the wars, and I stayed at home to take care of mother. Colonel said that it was a burning shame for the true blue Bunker Hill sons of liberty, who had fought Governor Hutchinson, Lord North, and the Devil, to have any hand in kicking up a cursed dust against a government which we had, every mother's son of us, a hand in making.

JESSAMY. Bravo! — Well, have you been abroad in the city since your arrival? What have you seen that is curious and entertaining?

JONATHAN. Oh! I have seen a power of fine sights. I went to see two marble-stone men and a leaden horse that stands out in doors in all weathers, and when I came where they was, one had got no head, and t'other wern't there. They said as how the leaden man was a damn'd tory [Loyalist], and that he took wit in his anger and rode off in the time of the troubles.

JESSAMY. But this was not the end of your excursion?

³⁴ *Sans cérémonie*: without ceremony; informally [French].

³⁵ I.e., speaking to me as an equal if you thought I was of a higher social standing.

³⁶ *Levelling principle*: minimizing class differences in society. A naive but sincere Yankee farmboy, Jonathan represents the simple, unpretentious American as contrasted with the pretentious Jessamy who shares the frivolous aspirations of his employer, Dimple.

³⁷ Referring to Shays's Rebellion in Massachusetts, in which debt-ridden farmers resisted legislative measures supported by eastern urban merchants that further impoverished them in the post-Revolution depression. Just months before writing *The Contrast*, Tyler had served as a major in the Massachusetts militia that defeated Shays and his men in early 1787, yet it is likely that Tyler was sympathetic to the farmer's grievances.

³⁸ Referring to the Society of the Cincinnati, an organization of Revolutionary War officers criticized as bringing European-style aristocratic privilege and class differentiation to the new nation.

³⁹ *Lignum vitae*: tropical American tree producing a very hard, heavy wood.

JONATHAN. Oh, no, I went to a place they call Holy Ground.⁴⁰ Now I counted this was a place where folks go to meeting [church], so I put my hymn-book in my pocket, and walked softly and grave as a minister, and when I came there, the dogs a bit of a meeting-house could I see. At last I spied a young gentlewoman standing by one of the seats which they have here at the doors. I took her to be the deacon's daughter, and she looked so kind and so obliging that I thought I would go and ask her the way to lecture and — would you think it? — she called me dear and sweeting and honey, just as if we were married — by the living jingo, I had a month's mind to buss [kiss] her.

JESSAMY. Well, but how did it end?

JONATHAN. Why, as I was standing talking with her, a parcel [group] of sailor men and boys got round me. The snarl-headed curs fell a-kicking and cursing of me at such a tarnal⁴¹ rate that I vow I was glad to take to my heels and split home, right off, tail on end, like a stream of chalk.

JESSAMY. Why, my dear friend, you are not acquainted with the city. That girl you saw was a —
[whispers.]

JONATHAN. Mercy on my soul! was that young woman a harlot! — Well! if this is New-York Holy Ground, what must the Holy-day Ground be!

JESSAMY. Well, you should not judge of the city too rashly. We have a number of elegant, fine girls here that make a man's leisure hours pass very agreeably. I would esteem it an honor to announce you to some of them. — Gad! that announce is a select word, I wonder where I picked it up.

JONATHAN. I don't want to know them.

JESSAMY. Come, come, my dear friend, I see that I must assume the honor of being the director of your amusements. Nature has given us passions, and youth and opportunity stimulate to gratify them. It is no shame, my dear Blueskin,⁴² for a man to amuse himself with a little gallantry.

JONATHAN. Girl huntry!⁴³ I don't altogether understand. I never played at that game. I know how to play hunt the squirrel, but I can't play anything with the girls — I am as good as married.

JESSAMY. Vulgar, horrid brute! Married, and above a hundred miles from his wife, and thinks that an objection to his making love to every woman he meets! He never can have read, no, he never can have been in a room with a volume of the divine Chesterfield.⁴⁴ — So you are married?

JONATHAN. No, I don't say so, I said I was as good as married, a kind of promise.

JESSAMY. As good as married!

JONATHAN. Why, yes, there's Tabitha Wymen, the deacon's daughter, at home. She and I have been courting a great while, and folks say as how we are to be married, and so I broke a piece of money with her when we parted, and she promised not to spark it with Solomon Dyer while I am gone. You wou'dn't have me false to my true love, would you?

JESSAMY. Maybe you have another reason for constancy — possibly the young lady has a fortune? Ha! Mr. Jonathan, the solid charms — the chains of love are never so binding as when the links are made of gold.

JONATHAN. Why, as to fortune, I must needs say her father is pretty dumb rich; he went representative for our town last year. He will give her — let me see — four times seven is — seven times four — naught [nothing/zero] and carry one — he will give her twenty acres of land — somewhat rocky though — a Bible, and a cow.

JESSAMY. Twenty acres of rock, a Bible, and a cow! Why, my dear Mr. Jonathan, we have servant-maids or, as you would more elegantly express it, waitresses, in this city who collect more in one year from their mistresses' cast [discarded] clothes.

JONATHAN. You don't say so! —

⁴⁰ The "Holy Ground" was a brothel district in Manhattan at the time.

⁴¹ *Tarnal*: darned; from "tarnation."

⁴² *Blueskin*: a fervent supporter of the American Revolution.

⁴³ Misunderstanding "gallantry" from Jessamy's previous words.

⁴⁴ See footnote 13.

JESSAMY. Yes, and I'll introduce you to one of them. There is a little lump of flesh and delicacy that lives at next door, waitress to Miss Maria. We often see her on the stoop.

JONATHAN. But are you sure she would be courted by me?

JESSAMY. Never doubt it. Remember a faint heart never — blisters on my tongue — I was going to be guilty of a vile proverb, flat against the authority of Chesterfield.⁴⁵ — I say there can be no doubt that the brilliancy of your merit will secure you a favorable reception.

JONATHAN. Well, but what must I say to her?

JESSAMY. Say to her! Why, my dear friend, though I admire your profound knowledge on every other subject, yet you will pardon my saying that your want [lack] of opportunity has made the female heart escape the poignancy of your penetration. Say to her! — Why, when a man goes a-courting and hopes for success, he must begin with doing and not saying.

JONATHAN. Well, what must I do?

JESSAMY. Why, when you are introduced you must make five or six elegant bows.

JONATHAN. Six elegant bows! I understand that, six, you say? Well —

JESSAMY. Then you must press and kiss her hand, then press and kiss, and so on to her lips and cheeks, then talk as much as you can about hearts, darts, flames, nectar, and ambrosia — the more incoherent the better.

JONATHAN. Well, but suppose she should be angry with I?

JESSAMY. Why, if she should pretend — please to observe, Mr. Jonathan — if she should pretend to be offended, you must — But I'll tell you how my master acted in such a case: he was seated by a young lady of eighteen upon a sofa, plucking with a wanton hand the blooming sweets of youth and beauty. When the lady thought it necessary to check his ardor, she called up a frown upon her lovely face, so irresistibly alluring that it would have warmed the frozen bosom of age. Remember, said she, putting her delicate arm upon his, remember your character and my honor. My master instantly dropped upon his knees with eyes swimming with love, cheeks glowing with desire, and in the gentlest modulation of voice he said — My dear Caroline, in a few months our hands will be indissolubly united at the altar. Our hearts, I feel, are already so — The favors you now grant as evidence of your affection are favors indeed, yet, when the ceremony is once past, what will now be received with rapture will then be attributed to duty.

JONATHAN. Well, and what was the consequence?

JESSAMY. The consequence! — Ah! forgive me, my dear friend, but you New England gentlemen have such a laudable curiosity of seeing the bottom of everything. — Why, to be honest, I confess I saw the blooming cherub of a consequence [i.e., baby] smiling in its angelic mother's arms about ten months afterwards.

JONATHAN. Well, if I follow all your plans, make them six bows and all that, shall I have such little cherubim consequences?

JESSAMY. Undoubtedly. — What are you musing upon?

JONATHAN. You say you'll certainly make me acquainted? — Why, I was thinking then how I should contrive to pass this broken piece of silver — won't it buy a sugar-dram [rum]?

JESSAMY. What is that, the love-token from the deacon's daughter? — You come on bravely. But I must hasten to my master. Adieu, my dear friend.

JONATHAN. Stay, Mr. Jessamy — must I buss her when I am introduced to her?⁴⁶

JESSAMY. I told you, you must kiss her.

JONATHAN. Well, but must I buss her?

JESSAMY. Why kiss and buss, and buss and kiss, is all one.

⁴⁵ See footnote 13.

⁴⁶ *Buss*: a playful or rude kiss, a kiss with a smack; not a polite or romantic kiss.

JONATHAN. Oh! my dear friend, though you have a profound knowledge of all, a pugnency of tribulation,⁴⁷ you don't know everything. [*Exit.*]

JESSAMY, *alone*. Well, certainly I improve. My master could not have insinuated himself [worked his way into] with more address into the heart of a man he despised. Now will this blundering dog sicken Jenny with his nauseous pawings until she flies into my arms for very ease. How sweet will the contrast be between the blundering Jonathan and the courtly and accomplished Jessamy!



—ACT III—

Scene I.

DIMPLE's Room. DIMPLE *discovered at a Toilet [dressing table], reading [from Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son]*

DIMPLE. "Women have in general but one object, which is their beauty." Very true, my lord, positively very true. "Nature has hardly formed a woman ugly enough to be insensible to flattery upon her person." Extremely just, my lord, every day's delightful experience confirms this. "If her face is so shocking that she must, in some degree, be conscious of it, her figure and air, she thinks, make ample amends for it." The sallow Miss Wan is a proof of this. — Upon my telling the distasteful wretch, the other day, that her countenance spoke the pensive language of sentiment, and that Lady Wortley Montague⁴⁸ declared that if the ladies were arrayed in the garb of innocence [i.e., naked], the face would be the last part which would be admired — as Monsieur Milton expresses it, she grinn'd horribly a ghastly smile.⁴⁹ "If her figure is deformed, she thinks her face counterbalances it."

Enter JESSAMY with letters.

DIMPLE. Where got you these, Jessamy?

JESSAMY. Sir, the English packet [ship delivering mail and newspapers] is arrived.

DIMPLE opens and reads a letter enclosing notes.

DIMPLE. "Sir,

I have drawn bills on you in favor of Messrs. Van Cash and Co. as per margin. I have taken up your note to Col. Piquet and discharged your debts to my Lord Lurcher and Sir Harry Rook. I herewith enclose you copies of the bills, which I have no doubt will be immediately honored. On failure, I shall empower some lawyer in your country to recover the amounts.⁵⁰

I am, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

JOHN HAZARD."

Now, did not my lord expressly say that it was unbecoming a well-bred man to be in a passion, I confess I should be ruffled. [*Reads.*] "There is no accident so unfortunate which a wise man may not turn to his advantage, nor any accident so fortunate which a fool will not turn to his disadvantage." True, my lord, but how advantage can be derived from this, I can't see. Chesterfield himself, who made, however, the worst practice of the most excellent precepts, was never in so embarrassing a situation. I love the person of Charlotte, and it is necessary I should command the fortune of Letitia. As to Maria! — I doubt not by my *sang-froid* [cool composure] behavior I shall compel her to decline the match, but the blame must not fall upon me. A prudent man, as my lord says, should take

⁴⁷ *Pugnency of tribulation*: dislike of troubles [repugnance: strong dislike].

⁴⁸ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu[e] was a wealthy English socialite whose letters about her travels in Turkey with her diplomat husband were widely read (*Turkish Embassy Letters*, publ. 1762). "I was here convinced of the truth of a reflection I had often made, that if it was the fashion to go naked, the face would be hardly observed." See footnote 66.

⁴⁹ John Milton was an English poet and author of *Paradise Lost*, 1667: "He ceased, for both seemed highly pleased, and Death / Grinned horrible a ghastly smile, to hear / His famine should be filled; . . ."

⁵⁰ Having accumulated gambling debts, Dimple decides he must marry wealthy Letitia to maintain his lifestyle.

all the credit of a good action to himself and throw the discredit of a bad one upon others. I must break with Maria, marry Letitia, and as for Charlotte — why, Charlotte must be a companion to my wife. — Here, Jessamy!

Enter JESSAMY.

DIMPLE *folds and seals two letters.*

DIMPLE. Here, Jessamy, take this letter to my love.
[*Gives one.*]

JESSAMY. To which of your honor's loves? — Oh!
[*reading*] to Miss Letitia, your honor's rich love.

DIMPLE. And this [*delivers another*] to Miss Charlotte Manly. See that you deliver them privately.

JESSAMY. Yes, your honor. [*Going.*]

DIMPLE. Jessamy, who are these strange lodgers that came to the house last night?

JESSAMY. Why, the master is a Yankee colonel. I have not seen much of him, but the man is the most unpolished animal your honor ever disgraced your eyes by looking upon. I have had one of the most outré [*bizarre*] conversations with him! — He really has a most prodigious [*huge*] effect upon my risibility [*sense of humor*].

DIMPLE. I ought, according to every rule of Chesterfield, to wait on him and insinuate myself into his good graces. — Jessamy, wait on the colonel with my compliments, and if he is disengaged [*not busy*] I will do myself the honor of paying him my respects. — Some ignorant, unpolished boor.

JESSAMY goes out and returns.

JESSAMY. Sir, the colonel is gone out, and Jonathan his servant says that he is gone to stretch his legs upon the Mall. — Stretch his legs! what an indelicacy of diction!

DIMPLE. Very well. Reach me my hat and sword. I'll accost [*speak to*] him there, in my way to Letitia's as by accident, pretend to be struck [*impressed*] by his person and address [*mode of speaking*], and endeavor to steal into his confidence. Jessamy, I have no business for you at present. [*Exit.*]

JESSAMY [*taking up the book*]. My master and I obtain our knowledge from the same source — though, gad! I think myself much the prettier fellow of the two. [*Surveying himself in the glass.*] That was a brilliant thought, to insinuate that I folded my master's letters for him. The folding is so neat that it does honor to the operator. I once intended to have insinuated that I wrote his letters too, but that was before I saw them. It won't do now, no honor there, positively. — “Nothing looks more vulgar,

— Act III —

Sc. 1: Dimple learns the extent of his gambling debts and vows to marry rich Letitia. He send separate letters to Letitia and Charlotte to arrange early evening meetings. Learning that Manly is staying in the same lodging house, Dimple resolves to get into “his good graces” and leaves to find him in the park. Jessamy introduces Jenny to Jonathan, having instructed her to polish his country manners. Jonathan relates his previous evening's mishap when, in search of a street magician, he finds himself in a group spying on the private life of a family—actually a theatrical play, as Jenny explains. Jenny and Jonathan converse, Jenny hoping to determine if his master is the stranger who won Maria's heart that morning. Jonathan is sternly repulsed by Jenny when he tries to court her as instructed by Jessamy.

Sc. 2: Walking in the park, Manly voices his concern that luxury will seep the political virtue and energy of the young nation. Dimple meets Manly “by chance” and flatters him with insincere admiration of his military service. When offering to introduce Manly to young women, Dimple learns to his chagrin that Manly is the brother of Charlotte and the nephew of Letitia's guardian. His machinations are being foiled.

— Act IV —

Sc. 1: Maria confesses to Charlotte her dread of marrying Dimple, an attitude Charlotte encourages since she wishes Dimple to court her. Maria reveals what Jenny alluded to in Act III, Sc. 1—that she met a man that morning who captured her heart but does not know his identity and assumes he is married. Letitia arrives, as do Dimple and Manly, who Maria realizes is the man she met that morning. Manly and Dimple disagree about American culture, with Manly defending honest patriotism and civic commitment while Dimple continues to disparage America and insist on European superiority. Manly escorts Maria home. In separate conversations, Dimple confirms the evening meetings with Charlotte (at six) and Letitia (at eight).

Sc. 2: Through his broker Van Rough had learned of Dimple's gambling debts and is resolved to end his daughter's engagement. He hides in a closet when he hears the approaching voices of Maria and a man (Manly). Manly and Maria express their attraction for each other, but Maria affirms she cannot oppose the will of her father, an act of filial duty that Manly respects and retracts his offer of marriage.

[reading affectedly] ordinary, and illiberal than ugly, uneven, and ragged nails, the ends of which should be kept even and clean, not tipped with black, and cut in small segments of circles.” — Segments of circles! surely my lord did not consider that he wrote for the beaux. Segments of circles, what a crabbed term! Now I dare answer that my master, with all his learning, does not know that this means, according to the present mode, let the nails grow long and then cut them off even at top. [Laughing without.] Ha! that’s Jenny’s titter. I protest I despair of ever teaching that girl to laugh. She has something so execrably [deplorably/of poor quality] natural in her laugh that I declare it absolutely discomposes my nerves. How came she into our house! — [Calls.] Jenny!

Enter JENNY [Maria’s servant].

JESSAMY. Prythee [please/I ask you], Jenny, don’t spoil your fine face with laughing.

JENNY. Why, mustn’t I laugh, Mr. Jessamy?

JESSAMY. You may smile, but, as my lord says [as Chesterfield advises⁵¹], nothing can authorize a laugh.

JENNY. Well, but I can’t help laughing. — Have you seen him, Mr. Jessamy? ha, ha, ha!

JESSAMY. Seen whom?

JENNY. Why, Jonathan, the New England colonel’s servant. Do you know he was at the play last night, and the stupid creature don’t know where he has been. He would not go to a play for the world. He thinks it was a show, as he calls it.

JESSAMY. As ignorant and unpolished as he is, do you know, Miss Jenny, that I propose to introduce him to the honor of your acquaintance?

JENNY. Introduce him to me! for what?

JESSAMY. Why, my lovely girl, that you may take him under your protection, as Madame Rambouillet did young Stanhope,⁵² that you may, by your plastic hand, mold this uncouth cub into a gentleman. He is to make love to you [court you].

JENNY. Make love to me!

JESSAMY. Yes, Mistress Jenny, make love to you, and, I doubt not when he shall become domesticated in your kitchen that this boor, under your auspices, will soon become *un aimable petit Jonathan*.⁵³

JENNY. I must say, Mr. Jessamy, if he copies after me, he will be vastly, monstrously polite.

JESSAMY. Stay here one moment and I will call him. — Jonathan! — Mr. Jonathan! — [Calls.]

JONATHAN [within]. Holla! there. — [Enters.] You promise to stand by me — six bows you say. [Bows.]

JESSAMY. Mrs. Jenny, I have the honor of presenting Mr. Jonathan, Colonel Manly’s waiter, to you. I am extremely happy that I have it in my power to make two worthy people acquainted with each other’s merits.

JENNY. So, Mr. Jonathan, I hear you were at the play last night.

JONATHAN. At the play! Why, did you think I went to the devil’s drawing-room?

JENNY. The devil’s drawing-room!

JONATHAN. Yes, why an’t cards and dice the devil’s device, and the play-house the shop where the devil hangs out the vanities of the world upon the tenter-hooks of temptation? I believe you have not heard how they were acting the old boy one night, and the wicked one came among them sure enough, and went right off in a storm and carried one quarter of the play-house with him. Oh! no, no, no! you won’t catch me at a play-house, I warrant you.

JENNY. Well, Mr. Jonathan, though I don’t scruple your veracity [question your truthfulness], I have some reasons for believing you were there. Pray, where were you about six o’clock?

JONATHAN. Why, I went to see one Mr. Morrison, the *hocus pocus* man [a street magician]. They said as how he could eat a case knife.

⁵¹ See footnote 13.

⁵² Mme. Rambouillet was a figure in 17th-century French society, managing an elite hotel that became a literary salon for the elite and intelligentsia of Paris. Lord Stanhope was Lord Chesterfield (Fourth Earl of Chesterfield), Philip Dormer Stanhope; see footnote 13.

⁵³ “A likeable little Jonathan” [French], i.e., one who has been taught the correct social graces.

JENNY. Well, and how did you find the place?

JONATHAN. As I was going about here and there, to and again, to find it, I saw a great crowd of folks going into a long entry that had lanterns over the door, so I asked a man whether that was not the place where they played *hocus pocus*. He was a very civil, kind man, though he did speak like the Hessians.⁵⁴ He lifted up his eyes and said, “They play *hocus pocus* tricks enough there, Got [God] knows, mine friend.”

JENNY. Well —

JONATHAN. So I went right in, and they showed me away, clean up to the garret, just like meeting-house [church] gallery. And so I saw a bower of topping folks [an alcove of spirited people], all sitting round in little cabins “just like father’s corncribs” — and then there was such a squeaking with the fiddles and such a tarnal blaze with the lights, my head was near turned. At last the people that sat near me set up such a hissing — hiss — like so many mad cats, and then they went thump, thump, thump, just like our Peleg threshing wheat, and stamped away, just like the nation, and called out for one Mr. Langolee — I suppose he helps act the tricks.

JENNY. Well, and what did you do all this time?

JONATHAN. Gor, I — I liked the fun, and so I thumped away and hiss’d as lustily as the best of ’em. One sailor-looking man that sat by me, seeing me stamp and knowing I was a cute fellow because I could make a roaring noise, clapped me on the shoulder and said, “You are a d——d hearty cock, smite my timbers!” I told him so I was, but I thought he need not swear so and make use of such naughty words.

JESSAMY. The savage! — Well, and did you see the man with his tricks?

JONATHAN. Why, I vow, as I was looking out for him, they lifted up a great green cloth and let us look right into the next neighbor’s house.⁵⁵ Have you a good many houses in New York made so in that ’ere way?

JENNY. Not many, but did you see the family?

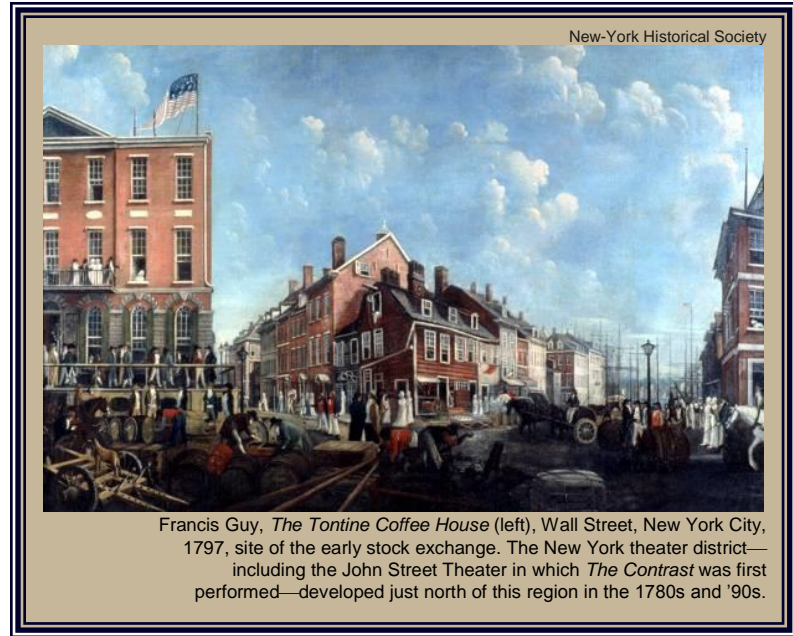
JONATHAN. Yes, swamp it, I see’d the family.

JENNY. Well, and how did you like them?

JONATHAN. Why, I vow they were pretty much like other families. — There was a poor, good-natured curse of a husband and a sad rantipole [wild, rakish person] of a wife.

JENNY. But did you see no other folks?

JONATHAN. Yes. There was one youngster, they called him Mr. Joseph. He talked as sober and as pious as a minister, but like some ministers that I know, he was a sly tyke in his heart for all that. He was going to ask a young woman to spark it with him, and — the Lord have mercy on my soul! — she was another man’s wife.



⁵⁴ Hessian soldiers from a region of Germany had been contracted to fight with the British in the Revolutionary War.

⁵⁵ Jonathan does not realize that he is attending a play in a theater. The curtain has risen, revealing the actors on the stage.

JESSAMY. The Wabash!⁵⁶

JENNY. And did you see any more folks?

JONATHAN. Why, they came on as thick as mustard. For my part, I thought the house was haunted. There was a soldier fellow who talked about his row de dow, dow,⁵⁷ and courted a young woman, but, of all the cute folk I saw, I liked one little fellow —

JENNY. Aye! who was he?

JONATHAN. Why, he had red hair and a little round plump face like mine, only not altogether so handsome. His name was — Darby — that was his baptizing name, his other name I forgot. Oh! it was Wig — Wag — Wag-all, Darby Wag-all.⁵⁸ — Pray, do you know him? — I should like to take a sling with him, or a drap of cider with a pepper-pod in it, to make it warm and comfortable.

JENNY. I can't say I have that pleasure.

JONATHAN. I wish you did; he is a cute fellow. But there was one thing I didn't like in that Mr. Darby, and that was he was afraid of some of them 'ere shooting irons, such as your troopers wear on training days. Now, I'm a true born Yankee American son of liberty,⁵⁹ and I never was afraid of a gun yet in all my life.

JENNY. Well, Mr. Jonathan, you were certainly at the playhouse.

JONATHAN. I at the play-house! — Why didn't I see the play then?

JENNY. Why, the people you saw were players.

JONATHAN. Mercy on my soul! did I see the wicked players? — Mayhap that 'ere Darby that I liked so was the old serpent himself and had his cloven foot in his pocket. Why, I vow, now I come to think on't, the candles seemed to burn blue, and I am sure where I sat it smelt tarnally of brimstone.

JESSAMY. Well, Mr. Jonathan, from your account, which I confess is very accurate, you must have been at the play-house.

JONATHAN. Why, I vow, I began to smell a rat. When I came away, I went to the man for my money again. You want your money? says he. Yes, says I. For what? says he. Why, says I, no man shall jockey me out of my money. I paid my money to see sights, and the dogs a bit of a sight have I seen, unless you call listening to people's private business a sight. Why, says he, it is the School for Scandalization. — The School for Scandalization!⁶⁰ — Oh! ho! no wonder you New York folks are so cute at it when you go to school to learn it, and so I jogged off.

JESSAMY. My dear Jenny, my master's business drags me from you. Would to heaven I knew no other servitude than to your charms.

JONATHAN. Well, but don't go; you won't leave me so —

JESSAMY. Excuse me. — Remember the cash. [*Aside to him, and — Exit.*]

JENNY. Mr. Jonathan, won't you please to sit down? Mr. Jessamy tells me you wanted to have some conversation with me. [*Having brought forward two chairs, they sit.*]

JONATHAN. Ma'am. —

JENNY. Sir! —

JONATHAN. Ma'am! —

JENNY. Pray, how do you like the city, Sir?

JONATHAN. Ma'am! —

JENNY. I say, Sir, how do you like New York?

⁵⁶ Realizing that Jonathan has attended the theater, she calls out the name of the fictional playhouse.

⁵⁷ From the chorus of "How Happy the Soldier," a popular song of British soldiers during the American Revolution: "With a row de dow, / Row de dow, Row de dow, / And he pays all his debts with a roll of his drums."

⁵⁸ Darby Wag-All was a popular character of the British comedian-actor Thomas Wignell, who played Jonathan in the initial production of *The Contrast*. See footnote 1.

⁵⁹ Royall Tyler's father, who died in 1771, had been a member of the Sons of Liberty in Massachusetts.

⁶⁰ *The School for Scandal* was a 1777 comedy of manners by the Irish playwright Richard Sheridan that was popular in England. Tyler had seen it performed in New York City several weeks before he premiered *The Contrast*.

JONATHAN. Ma'am! —

JENNY. The stupid creature! but I must pass some little time with him, if it is only to endeavor to learn whether it was his master that made such an abrupt entrance into our house, and my young mistress's heart, this morning. [*Aside.*]⁶¹ As you don't seem to like to talk, Mr. Jonathan — do you sing?

JONATHAN. Gor, I — I am glad she asked that, for I forgot what Mr. Jessamy bid me say, and I dare as well be hanged as act what he bid me do, I'm so ashamed. [*Aside.*] Yes, Ma'am, I can sing — I can sing Mear, Old Hundred, and Bangor.

JENNY. Oh! I don't mean psalm tunes. Have you no little song to please the ladies, such as Roslin Castle, or the Maid of the Mill?

JONATHAN. Why, all my tunes go to meeting [church] tunes, save one, and I count you won't altogether like that 'ere.

JENNY. What is it called?

JONATHAN. I am sure you have heard folks talk about it. It is called Yankee Doodle.

JENNY. Oh! it is the tune I am fond of, and if I know anything of my mistress, she would be glad to dance to it. Pray, sing!

JONATHAN [*Sings*].

Father and I went up to camp,
Along with Captain Goodwin,⁶²
And there we saw the men and boys,
As thick as hasty-pudding.

Yankee doodle do, &c.

And there we saw a swamping gun,
Big as log of maple,
On a little deuced cart,
A load for father's cattle.

Yankee Doodle do, &c.

And every time they fired it off
It took a horn of powder,
It made a noise — like father's gun,
Only a nation louder.

Yankee doodle do, &c.

There was a man in our town,
His name was—

No, no, that won't do. Now, if I was with Tabitha Wymen and Jemima Cawley down at father Chase's, I shouldn't mind singing this all out before them — You should be affronted [insulted] if I was to sing that, though that's a lucky thought. If you should be affronted, I have something dang'd cute which Jessamy told me to say to you.

JENNY. Is that all! I assure you I like it of all things.

JONATHAN. No, no, I can sing more, some other time, when you and I are better acquainted. I'll sing the whole of it — no, no— that's a fib — I can't sing but a hundred and ninety verses. Our Tabitha at home can sing it all. [*Sings*].

Marblehead's a rocky place,
And Cape Cod is sandy,
Charlestown is burnt down,⁶³
Boston is the dandy.

Yankee doodle do, &c.

⁶¹ An *aside* is addressed to the audience, out of hearing of other characters on stage. In this text, the designation [*Aside.*] appears after the sentence(s) addressed to the audience.

⁶² Perhaps Capt. Nathaniel Goodwin of Connecticut.

⁶³ Charlestown, near Boston, was destroyed by fire during the Battle of Bunker Hill, 17 June 1775. The four sites in this stanza are in Massachusetts.

I vow, my own town song has put me into such topping spirits that I believe I'll begin to do a little, as Jessamy says we must when we go a-courting. — [*Runs and kisses her.*] Burning rivers! cooling flames! red-hot roses! pig-nuts! hasty-pudding and ambrosia!

JENNY. What means this freedom? you insulting wretch. [*Strikes him.*]

JONATHAN. Are you affronted?

JENNY. Affronted! With what looks shall I express my anger?

JONATHAN. Looks! Why as to the matter of looks, you look as cross as a witch.

JENNY. Have you no feeling for the delicacy of my sex?

JONATHAN. Feeling! Gor, I — I feel the delicacy of your sex pretty smartly [*rubbing his cheek*], though I vow, I thought when you city ladies courted and married and all that, you put feeling out of the question. But I want to know whether you are really affronted or only pretend to be so? 'Cause if you are certainly right down affronted, I am at the end of my tether. — Jessamy didn't tell me what to say to you.

JENNY. Pretend to be affronted!

JONATHAN. Aye, aye, if you only pretend, you shall hear how I'll go to work to make cherubim consequences.⁶⁴ [*Runs up to her.*]

JENNY. Begone, you brute!

JONATHAN. That looks like mad, but I won't lose my speech. My dearest Jenny — your name is Jenny, I think? — My dearest Jenny, though I have the highest esteem for the sweet favors you have just now granted me — Gor, that's a fib, though, but Jessamy says it is not wicked to tell lies to the women. [*Aside.*] I say, though I have the highest esteem for the favors you have just now granted me, yet you will consider that as soon as the dissolvable knot is tied, they will no longer be favors but only matters of duty and matters of course.

JENNY. Marry you! you audacious monster! Get out of my sight, or, rather, let me fly from you. [*Exit hastily.*]

JONATHAN. Gor! she's gone off in a swinging passion, before I had time to think of consequences. If this is the way with your city ladies, give me the twenty acres of rock, the Bible, the cow, and Tabitha, and a little peaceable bundling.⁶⁵



Act III. Scene II.

The Mall.

Enter MANLY. It must be so, Montague!⁶⁶ And it is not all the tribe of Mandevilles⁶⁷ that shall convince me that a nation, to become great, must first become dissipated.⁶⁸ Luxury is surely the bane⁶⁹ of a nation. Luxury! which enervates [weakens] both soul and body by opening a thousand new sources of enjoyment, opens also a thousand new sources of contention and want. Luxury! which renders a people weak at home and accessible [vulnerable] to bribery, corruption, and force from abroad.

⁶⁴ *Cherubim consequences*: a baby. See p. 16.

⁶⁵ *Bundling*: courtship custom allowing unmarried couples to share the same bed (usually in the young woman's home with parental supervision) as part of developing intimacy without sexual contact. Generally, each person would be wrapped in a blanket, a "bundling board" might be placed between them, and the couple was expected to talk through the night and become more acquainted.

⁶⁶ Tyler begins Manly's monologue on the dangers of luxury for the young nation by referring to two English writers who argued the benefits of luxury and materialistic ambition for society. Lady Wortley Montagu[e], in her collection of travel letters from Turkey (1762; see footnote 48), came to admire the luxurious lifestyles she witnessed: "I am almost of opinion they have a right notion of life; while they consume it in music, gardens, wine and delicate eating, while we are tormenting our brains with some scheme of politics or studying some science to which we can never attain, . . . We die or grow old and decrepit before we can reap the fruit of our labors. Considering what short lived, weak animals men are, is there any study so beneficial as the study of present pleasure?"

⁶⁷ Bernard Mandeville, an English economist and philosopher, published *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Public Virtues* in 1714, in which he argued that the "private vices" of luxury and the pursuit of wealth translated into "public virtues" by promoting economic growth for all.

⁶⁸ *Become dissipated*: become weakened by the pursuit of pleasure.

⁶⁹ *Bane*: that which causes misery or death.

When the Grecian states knew no other tools than the axe and the saw, the Grecians were a great, a free, and a happy people. The kings of Greece devoted their lives to the service of their country, and

her senators knew no other superiority over their fellow-citizens than a glorious pre-eminence in danger and virtue. They exhibited to the world a noble spectacle — a number of independent states united by a similarity of language, sentiment, manners, common interest, and common consent, in one grand mutual league of protection. And, thus united, long might they have continued the cherishers of arts and sciences, the protectors of the oppressed, the scourge of tyrants, and the safe asylum of liberty. But when foreign gold, and still more pernicious [harmful] foreign luxury, had crept among them, they sapped the vitals of their virtue. The virtues of their ancestors were only found in their writings. Envy and suspicion, the vices of little minds, possessed them. The various states engendered jealousies [suspicions] of each other, and, more unfortunately, growing jealous of their great federal council, the Amphictyons,⁷⁰ they forgot that their common safety had existed, and would exist, in giving them an honorable extensive prerogative. The common good was lost in the pursuit of private interest, and that people who, by uniting, might have stood against the world in arms, by dividing, crumbled into ruin — their name is now only known in the page of the historian, and what they once were is all we have left to admire. Oh! that America! Oh! that my country, would, in this her day, learn the things which belong to her peace!

“Oh! that America! Oh! that my country, would, in this her day, learn the things which belong to her peace!”

Enter DIMPLE.

DIMPLE. You are Colonel Manly, I presume?

MANLY. At your service, Sir.

DIMPLE. My name is Dimple, Sir. I have the honor to be a lodger in the same house with you and, hearing you were in the Mall, came hither to take the liberty of joining you.

MANLY. You are very obliging, Sir.

DIMPLE. As I understand you are a stranger here, Sir, I have taken the liberty to introduce myself to your acquaintance as possibly I may have it in my power to point out some things in this city worthy your notice.

MANLY. An attention to strangers is worthy a liberal [generous] mind and must ever be gratefully received. But to a soldier who has no fixed abode [lodging], such attentions are particularly pleasing.

DIMPLE. Sir, there is no character so respectable as that of a soldier. And, indeed, when we reflect how much we owe to those brave men who have suffered so much in the service of their country and secured to us those inestimable blessings that we now enjoy, our liberty and independence, they demand every attention which gratitude can pay. For my own part, I never meet an officer but I embrace him as my friend, nor a private in distress but I insensibly extend my charity to him. — I have hit the Bumkin⁷¹ off very tolerably. [*Aside.*]⁷²

MANLY. Give me your hand, Sir! I do not proffer [offer] this hand to everybody, but you steal into my heart. I hope I am as insensible to flattery as most men, but I declare (it may be my weak side) that I never hear the name of soldier mentioned with respect but I experience a thrill of pleasure which I never feel on any other occasion.

DIMPLE. Will you give me leave [permission], my dear Colonel, to confer an obligation on myself by showing you some civilities [courtesies] during your stay here and giving a similar opportunity to some of my friends?

MANLY. Sir, I thank you, but I believe my stay in this city will be very short.

⁷⁰ Tyler is likening the ancient Greek “league of neighbors” (Amphictyonic League) to the American states under the Articles of Confederation. (*The Contrast* premiered one month before the opening of the 1787 Constitution Convention.)

⁷¹ I.e., country bumpkin, rube, simpleton.

⁷² Dimple’s final sentence is addressed in a low voice toward the audience (an “aside”) to signal his intentional manipulation of Col. Manly.

DIMPLE. I can introduce you to some men of excellent sense in whose company you will esteem yourself happy, and, by way of amusement, to some fine girls who will listen to your soft things with pleasure.

MANLY. Sir, I should be proud of the honor of being acquainted with those gentlemen — but, as for the ladies, I don't understand you.

DIMPLE. Why, Sir, I need not tell you that when a young gentleman is alone with a young lady he must say some soft things to her fair cheek — indeed, the lady will expect it. To be sure, there is not much pleasure when a man of the world and a finished coquette⁷³ meet, who perfectly know each other, but how delicious is it to excite the emotions of joy, hope, expectation, and delight in the bosom of a lovely girl who believes every tittle of what you say to be serious!

MANLY. Serious, Sir! In my opinion, the man who, under pretensions of marriage, can plant thorns in the bosom of an innocent, unsuspecting girl is more detestable than a common robber, in the same proportion as private violence is more despicable than open force, and money of less value than happiness.

DIMPLE. How he awes me by the superiority of his sentiments. [*Aside.*] As you say, Sir, a gentleman should be cautious how he mentions marriage.

MANLY. Cautious, Sir! No person more approves of an [social] intercourse between the sexes than I do. Female conversation softens our manners whilst our discourse, from the superiority of our literary advantages, improves their minds. But, in our young country, where there is no such thing as gallantry, when a gentleman speaks of love to a lady whether he mentions marriage or not, she ought to conclude either that he meant to insult her or that his intentions are the most serious and honorable. How mean, how cruel, is it, by a thousand tender assiduities [attentions] to win the affections of an amiable girl and, though you leave her virtue unspotted, to betray her into the appearance of so many tender partialities that every man of delicacy would suppress his inclination towards her by supposing her heart engaged! Can any man, for the trivial gratification of his leisure hours, affect the happiness of a whole life! His not having spoken of marriage may add to his perfidy but can be no excuse for his conduct.

DIMPLE. Sir, I admire your sentiments — they are mine. The light observations that fell from me were only a principle of the tongue. They came not from the heart; my practice has ever disapproved these principles.

MANLY. I believe you, Sir. I should with reluctance suppose that those pernicious sentiments could find admittance into the heart of a gentleman.

DIMPLE. I am now, Sir, going to visit a family, where, if you please, I will have the honor of introducing you. Mr. Manly's ward, Miss Letitia,⁷⁴ is a young lady of immense fortune, and his niece, Miss Charlotte Manly, is a young lady of great sprightliness and beauty.

MANLY. That gentleman, Sir, is my uncle, and Miss Manly my sister.

DIMPLE. The devil she is! [*Aside.*] Miss Manly your sister, Sir? I rejoice to hear it, and feel a double pleasure in being known to you. — Plague on him! I wish he was at Boston again, with all my soul. [*Aside.*]

MANLY. Come, Sir, will you go?

DIMPLE. I will follow you in a moment, Sir. [*Exit MANLY.*] Plague on it! This is unlucky. A fighting brother is a cursed appendage to a fine girl. Egad! I just stopped in time. Had he not discovered himself, in two minutes more I should have told him how well I was with his sister. Indeed, I cannot see the satisfaction of an intrigue if one can't have the pleasure of communicating it to our friends. [*Exit.*]

⁷³ *Coquette*: a flirtatious young woman, using her "feminine wiles" to attract young men.

⁷⁴ Col. Manly's uncle is Letitia's legal guardian.

— ACT IV —

Scene I.

CHARLOTTE's Apartment.

CHARLOTTE *leading in* MARIA.

CHARLOTTE. This is so kind, my sweet friend, to come to see me at this moment. I declare, if I were going to be married in a few days, as you are, I should scarce have found time to visit my friends.

MARIA. Do you think, then, that there is an impropriety [impoliteness] in it? — How should you dispose of your time?

CHARLOTTE. Why, I should be shut up in my chamber, and my head would so run upon — upon — upon the solemn ceremony that I was to pass through! — I declare it would take me above two hours merely to learn that little monosyllable — *Yes*. Ah! my dear, your sentimental imagination does not conceive what that little tiny word implies.

MARIA. Spare me your raillery [banter], my sweet friend. I should love your agreeable vivacity at any other time.

CHARLOTTE. Why, this is the very time to amuse you. You grieve me to see you look so unhappy.

MARIA. Have I not reason to look so?

CHARLOTTE. What new grief distresses you?

MARIA. Oh! how sweet it is, when the heart is borne down with misfortune, to recline and repose on the bosom of friendship! Heaven knows that, although it is improper for a young lady to praise a gentleman, yet I have ever concealed Mr. Dimple's foibles, and spoke of him as of one whose reputation I expected would be linked with mine, but his late [recent] conduct towards me has turned my coolness into contempt. He behaves as if he meant to insult and disgust me, whilst my father, in the last conversation on the subject of our marriage, spoke of it as a matter which lay near his heart, and in which he would not bear contradiction.

CHARLOTTE. This works well: oh! the generous Dimple. I'll endeavor to excite her to discharge him. [*Aside.*] But, my dear friend, your happiness depends on yourself. Why don't you discard him? Though the match has been of long standing, I would not be forced to make myself miserable: no parent in the world should oblige me to marry the man I did not like.

MARIA. Oh! my dear, you never lived with your parents, and do not know what influence a father's frowns have upon a daughter's heart. Besides, what have I to allege against Mr. Dimple to justify myself to the world? He carries himself so smoothly that everyone would impute the blame to me and call me capricious.

Metropolitan Museum of Art



cotton American dress, 1785-95



cotton and silk French dress, 1784-87



silk slippers, probably British, ca. 1790

CHARLOTTE. And call her capricious! Did ever such an objection start into the heart of woman? For my part, I wish I had fifty lovers to discard for no other reason than because I did not fancy them. My dear Maria, you will forgive me, I know your candor and confidence in me, but I have at times, I confess, been led to suppose that some other gentleman was the cause of your aversion to Mr. Dimple.

MARIA. No, my sweet friend, you may be assured, that though I have seen many gentlemen I could prefer to Mr. Dimple, yet I never saw one that I thought I could give my hand to, until this morning.

CHARLOTTE. This morning!

MARIA. Yes — one of the strangest accidents in the world. The odious [offensive] Dimple, after disgusting me with his conversation, had just left me, when a gentleman who, it seems, boards in the same house with him,⁷⁵ saw him coming out of our door, and, the houses looking very much alike, he came into our house instead of his lodgings, nor did he discover his mistake until he got into the parlor, where I was, he then bowed so gracefully, made such a genteel apology, and looked so manly and noble! —

CHARLOTTE. I see some folks, though it is so great an impropriety, can praise a gentleman when he happens to be the man of their fancy. [*Aside.*]

MARIA. I don't know how it was — I hope he did not think me indelicate [impolite] — but I asked him, I believe, to sit down, or pointed to a chair. He sat down, and, instead of having recourse to observations upon the weather or hackneyed [clichéd/commonplace] criticisms upon the theatre, he entered readily into a conversation worthy a man of sense to speak, and a lady of delicacy and sentiment to hear. He was not strictly handsome, but he spoke the language of sentiment, and his eyes looked tenderness and honor.

CHARLOTTE. Oh! [*eagerly*] you sentimental, grave girls, when your hearts are once touched, beat us rattles a bar's length.⁷⁶ And so, you are quite in love with this he-angel?

MARIA. In love with him! How can you rattle so, Charlotte? Am I not going to be miserable? [*Sighs.*] In love with a gentleman I never saw but one hour in my life, and don't know his name! — No, I only wished that the man I shall marry may look, and talk, and act, just like him. Besides, my dear, he is a married man.

CHARLOTTE. Why, that was good-natured — He told you so, I suppose, in mere charity, to prevent you falling in love with him?

MARIA. He didn't tell me so [*peevishly*]. He looked as if he was married.

CHARLOTTE. How, my dear, did he look sheepish?

MARIA. I am sure he has a susceptible heart, and the ladies of his acquaintance must be very stupid not to

CHARLOTTE. Hush! I hear some person coming.

Enter LETITIA.

LETITIA. My dear Maria, I am happy to see you. Lud! what a pity it is that you have purchased your wedding clothes.

MARIA. I think so. [*Sighing.*]

LETITIA. Why, my dear, there is the sweetest parcel of silks come over you ever saw! Nancy Brilliant has a full suit come. She sent over her measure[ments], and it fits her to a hair. It is immensely dressy and made for a court-hoop. I thought they said the large hoops were going out of fashion.

CHARLOTTE. Did you see the hat? — Is it a fact that the deep laces round the border is still the fashion?

[*DIMPLE within.*] Upon my honor, Sir.

MARIA. Ha! Dimple's voice! My dear, I must take leave of you. There are some things necessary to be done at our house. — Can't I go through the other room?

⁷⁵ Col. Henry Manly.

⁷⁶ *Rattles*: talkers; i.e., once you serious girls are in love, you talk even more than us normally talkative ones.

Enter DIMPLE and MANLY.

DIMPLE. Ladies, your most obedient.⁷⁷

CHARLOTTE. Miss Van Rough, shall I present my brother Henry to you? Colonel Manly, Maria — Miss Van Rough, brother.

MARIA. Her brother! [*turns and sees Manly.*] Oh! my heart! the very gentleman I have been praising.

MANLY. The same amiable girl I saw this morning!

CHARLOTTE. Why, you look as if you were acquainted.

MANLY. I unintentionally intruded into this lady's presence this morning, for which she was so good as to promise me her forgiveness.

CHARLOTTE. Oh! ho! is that the case! Have these two penserosos [melancholy ones] been together? Were they Henry's eyes that looked so tenderly? [*Aside.*] And so you promised to pardon him? and could you be so good-natured? — have you really forgiven him? I beg you would do it for my sake [*whispering loud to Maria*]. But, my dear, as you are in such haste, it would be cruel to detain you. I can show you the way through the other room.

MARIA. Spare me, my sprightly friend.

MANLY. The lady does not, I hope, intend to deprive us of the pleasure of her company so soon.

CHARLOTTE. She has only a mantua-maker [gown-maker] who waits for her at home. But, as I am to give my opinion of the dress, I think she cannot go yet. We were talking of the fashions when you came in, but I suppose the subject must be changed to something of more importance now. Mr. Dimple, will you favor us with an account of the public entertainments?

DIMPLE. Why, really, Miss Manly, you could not have asked me a question more *mal-apropos* [inappropriate]. For my part, I must confess that, to a man who has travelled, there is nothing that is worthy the name of amusement to be found in this city.

CHARLOTTE. Except visiting the ladies.

DIMPLE. Pardon me, Madam, that is the avocation [leisure] of a man of taste. But for amusement, I positively know of nothing that can be called so, unless you dignify with that title the hopping once a fortnight to the sound of two or three squeaking fiddles, and the clattering of the old tavern windows, or sitting to see the miserable mummers [mimes], whom you call actors, murder comedy and make a farce of tragedy.

MANLY. Do you never attend the theatre, Sir?

DIMPLE. I was tortured there once.

CHARLOTTE. Pray, Mr. Dimple, was it a tragedy or a comedy?

DIMPLE. Faith [honestly], Madam, I cannot tell, for I sat with my back to the stage all the time, admiring a much better actress than any there — a lady who played the fine woman to perfection, though, by the laugh of the horrid creatures round me, I suppose it was comedy. Yet, on second thoughts, it might be some hero in a tragedy, dying so comically as to set the whole house in an uproar. — Colonel, I presume you have been in Europe?

MANLY. Indeed, Sir, I was never ten leagues from the continent.

DIMPLE. Believe me, Colonel, you have an immense pleasure to come, and when you shall have seen the brilliant exhibitions of Europe, you will learn to despise the amusements of this country as much as I do.

MANLY. Therefore I do not wish to see them, for I can never esteem that knowledge valuable which tends to give me a distaste for my native country.

DIMPLE. Well, Colonel, though you have not travelled, you have read.

MANLY. I have, a little, and by it have discovered that there is a laudable partiality [favoritism] which ignorant, untravelled men entertain for everything that belongs to their native country. I call it

⁷⁷ "Your most obedient [servant]" as a greeting.

laudable. — It injures no one, adds to their own happiness, and, when extended, becomes the noble principle of patriotism. Travelled gentlemen rise superior, in their own opinion, to this, but if the contempt which they contract for their country is the most valuable acquisition of their travels, I am far from thinking that their time and money are well spent.

“ . . . if our country has its errors in common with other countries, I am proud to say America — I mean the United States — have displayed virtues and achievements which modern nations may admire but of which they have seldom set us the example.”

MARIA. What noble sentiments!

CHARLOTTE. Let my brother set out where he will in the fields of conversation, he is sure to end his tour in the temple of gravity [seriousness].

MANLY. Forgive me, my sister. I love my country. It has its foibles undoubtedly — some foreigners will with pleasure remark them — but such remarks fall very ungracefully from the lips of her citizens.

DIMPLE. You are perfectly in the right, Colonel — America has her faults.

MANLY. Yes, Sir, and we, her children, should blush for them in private, and endeavor as individuals to reform them. But, if our country has its errors in common with other countries, I am proud to say America — I mean the United States — have displayed virtues and achievements which modern nations may admire but of which they have seldom set us the example.

CHARLOTTE. But, brother, we must introduce you to some of our gay folks and let you see the city, such as it is. Mr. Dimple is known to almost every family in town. He will doubtless take a pleasure in introducing you.

DIMPLE. I shall esteem every service I can render your brother an honor.

MANLY. I fear the business I am upon will take up all my time, and my family will be anxious to hear from me.

MARIA. His family! but what is it to me that he is married! [*Aside.*] Pray, how did you leave your lady, Sir?

CHARLOTTE. My brother is not married [*observing her anxiety*]. It is only an odd way he has of expressing himself. — Pray, brother, is this business, which you make your continual excuse, a secret?

MANLY. No, sister, I came hither to solicit the honorable Congress⁷⁸ that a number of my brave old soldiers may be put upon the pension list, who were at first not judged to be so materially [seriously] wounded as to need the public assistance. — My sister says true [*to Maria*]. I call my late soldiers [recent fellow soldiers] my family. — Those who were not in the field in the late glorious contest and those who were have their respective merits, but, I confess, my old brother-soldiers are dearer to me than the former description. Friendships made in adversity are lasting. Our countrymen may forget us, but that is no reason why we should forget one another. But I must leave you, my time of engagement approaches.

CHARLOTTE. Well, but, brother, if you will go, will you please to conduct my fair friend home? You live in the same street. — I was to have gone with her myself — [*Aside*]. A lucky thought.

MARIA. I am obliged to your sister, Sir, and was just intending to go. [*Going.*]

MANLY. I shall attend her with pleasure. [*Exit with Maria, followed by Dimple and Charlotte.*]

MARIA. Now, pray, don't betray me to your brother.

CHARLOTTE. [*Just as she sees him make a motion to take his leave.*] One word with you, brother, if you please. [*Follows them out.*]

⁷⁸ Referring to the Continental Congress which met in New York City.

[*Manent*⁷⁹ DIMPLE and LETITIA.]

DIMPLE. You received the billet [letter] I sent you, I presume?

LETITIA. Hush! — Yes.

DIMPLE. When shall I pay my respects to you?

LETITIA. At eight I shall be unengaged [free/unscheduled].

Re-enter CHARLOTTE.

DIMPLE. Did my lovely angel receive my billet? [*to Charlotte.*]

CHARLOTTE. Yes.

DIMPLE. What hour shall I expect with impatience?

CHARLOTTE. At eight I shall be at home unengaged.

DIMPLE. Unfortunate! I have a horrid engagement of business at that hour. — Can't you finish your visit earlier and let six be the happy hour?

CHARLOTTE. You know your influence over me. [*Exeunt severally.*] [*All leave.*]



Act IV. Scene II.

VAN ROUGH's *House*.

VAN ROUGH [*alone*]. It cannot possibly be true! The son of my old friend can't have acted so unadvisedly. Seventeen thousand pounds! in bills! — Mr. Transfer must have been mistaken. He always appeared so prudent and talked so well upon money matters, and even assured me that he intended to change his dress for a suit of clothes which would not cost so much and look more substantial as soon as he married. No, no, no! it can't be, it cannot be. But, however, I must look out sharp. I did not care what his principles or his actions were, so long as he minded the main chance.⁸⁰ Seventeen thousand pounds! — If he had lost it in trade, why the best men may have ill-luck, but to game [gamble] it away, as Transfer says — why, at this rate, his whole estate [economic assets] may go in one night, and, what is ten times worse, mine into the bargain. No, no; Mary is right. Leave women to look out in these matters, for all they look as if they didn't know a journal [diary] from a [accounting] ledger, when their interest is concerned they know what's what, they mind the main chance as well as the best of us. — I wonder Mary did not tell me she knew of his spending his money so foolishly. Seventeen thousand pounds! Why, if my daughter was standing up to be married, I would forbid the banns⁸¹ if I found it was to a man who did not mind the main chance. — Hush! I hear somebody coming. 'Tis Mary's voice, a man with her too! I shouldn't be surprised if this should be the other string to her bow. — Aye, aye, let them alone; women understand the main chance. — Though, i' faith, I'll listen a little. [*Retires into a closet.*]

MANLY *leading in* MARIA.

MANLY. I hope you will excuse my speaking upon so important a subject so abruptly, but, the moment I entered your room, you struck me as the lady whom I had long loved in imagination, and never hoped to see.

MARIA. Indeed, Sir, I have been led to hear more upon this subject than I ought.

MANLY. Do you, then, disapprove my suit [appeal], Madam, or the abruptness of my introducing it? If the latter, my peculiar situation, being obliged to leave the city in a few days, will, I hope, be my excuse. If the former, I will retire, for I am sure I would not give a moment's inquietude [concern] to her whom I could devote my life to please. I am not so indelicate as to seek your immediate approbation

⁷⁹ *Manent*: two or more characters remaining on the stage; *manet* if one character [Latin].

⁸⁰ *Minded the main chance*: was economically ambitious through business and other legitimate means. See footnotes 19 and 22.

⁸¹ *Banns*: public announcement, usually in a church, or a proposed marriage.

[approval]. Permit me only to be near you, and by a thousand tender assiduities to endeavor to excite a grateful return.

MARIA. I have a father whom I would die to make happy — he will disapprove —

MANLY. Do you think me so ungenerous as to seek a place in your esteem without his consent? You must — you ever ought to consider that man as unworthy of you who seeks an interest in your heart contrary to a father's approbation. A young lady should reflect that the loss of a lover may be supplied [replaced], but nothing can compensate for the loss of a parent's affection. Yet, why do you suppose your father would disapprove? In our country, the affections are not sacrificed to riches or family aggrandizement [accumulation of wealth] — Should you approve, my family is decent, and my rank honorable.

MARIA. You distress me, Sir.

MANLY. Then I will sincerely beg your excuse for obtruding [imposing] so disagreeable a subject, and retire. *[Going.]*

MARIA. Stay, Sir! your generosity and good opinion of me deserve a return, but why must I declare what, for these few hours, I have scarce suffered [allowed] myself to think? — I am —

MANLY. What? —

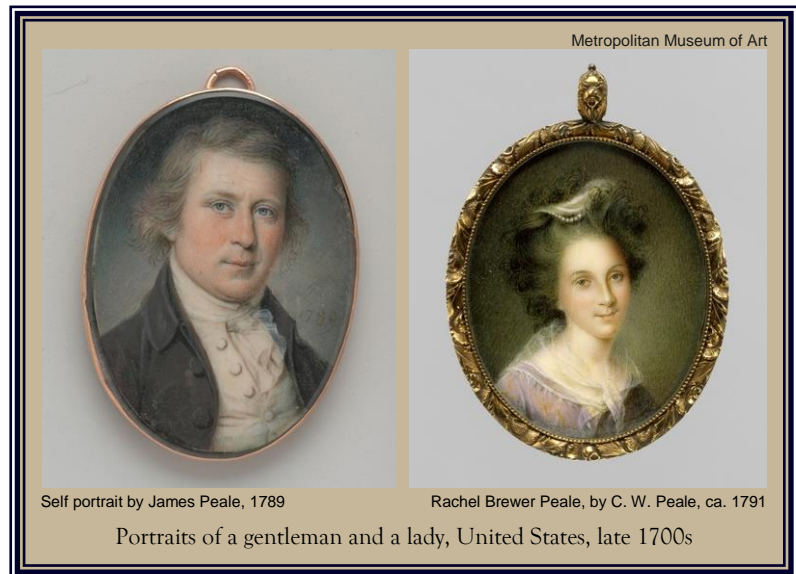
MARIA. Engaged, Sir, and in a few days to be married to the gentleman you saw at your sister's.

MANLY. Engaged to be married! And have I been basely invading the rights of another? Why have you permitted this? — Is this the return for the partiality I declared for you?

MARIA. You distress me, Sir. What would you have me say? You are too generous to wish the truth. Ought I to say that I dared not suffer myself to think of my engagement, and that I am going to give my hand without my heart? — Would you have me confess a partiality for you? If so, your triumph is complete and can be only more so when days of misery with the man I cannot love will make me think of him whom I could prefer.

MANLY *[after a pause]*. We are both unhappy, but it is your duty to obey your parent — mine to obey my honor. Let us, therefore, both follow the path of rectitude [moral integrity] and of this we may be assured, that if we are not happy, we shall, at least, deserve to be so. Adieu! I dare not trust myself longer with you. *[Exeunt severally.]*

“In our country, the affections are not sacrificed to riches or family aggrandizement — Should you approve, my family is decent, and my rank honorable.”



— ACT V —

Scene I.

DIMPLE's *Lodgings*. JESSAMY *meeting* JONATHAN.

JESSAMY. Well, Mr. Jonathan, what success with the fair?⁸²

JONATHAN. Why, such a tarnal cross tyke⁸³ you never saw! You would have counted she had lived upon crab-apples and vinegar for a fortnight. But what the rattle makes you look so tarnation glum?

JESSAMY. I was thinking, Mr. Jonathan, what could be the reason of her carrying herself so coolly to you.

JONATHAN. Coolly, do you call it? Why, I vow, she was firehot angry. May be it was because I buss'd her.

JESSAMY. No, no, Mr. Jonathan, there must be some other cause. I never yet knew a lady angry at being kissed.

JONATHAN. Well, if it is not the young woman's bashfulness, I vow I can't conceive why she shouldn't like me.

JESSAMY. Maybe it is because you have not the Graces, Mr. Jonathan.

JONATHAN. Grace! Why, does the young woman expect I must be converted before I court her?

JESSAMY. I mean graces of person [social manners]. For instance, my lord tells us that we must cut off our nails even at top, in small segments of circles — though you won't understand that — In the next place, you must regulate your laugh.

JONATHAN. Maple-log seize it! don't I laugh natural?

JESSAMY. That's the very fault, Mr. Jonathan. Besides, you absolutely misplace it [i.e., laugh at inappropriate times]. I was told by a friend of mine that you laughed outright at the play the other night when you ought only to have tittered.

JONATHAN. Gor! I — what does one go to see fun for if they can't laugh?

JESSAMY. You may laugh — but you must laugh by rule.

JONATHAN. Swamp it — laugh by rule! Well, I should like that tarnally [i.e., damnably well].

JESSAMY. Why, you know, Mr. Jonathan, that to dance, a lady to play with her fan, or a gentleman with his cane, and all other natural motions, are regulated by art. My master has composed an immensely pretty gamut⁸⁴ by which any lady or gentleman, with a few years' close application, may learn to laugh as gracefully as if they were born and bred to it.

JONATHAN. Mercy on my soul! A gamut for laughing — just like fa, la, sol?⁸⁵

— Act V —

Sc. 1: Jonathan reports to Jessamy on his ill-fated attempt to court Jenny. Jessamy begins to teach Jonathan how to laugh correctly at theater comedy, providing another scene in which Jonathan is portrayed as the sincere but uncouth Yankee bumpkin.

Sc. 2: Manly enters Charlotte's apartment, surprised that no one is home. Entering a closet that she uses as a library (he assumes), he overhears Dimple and Letitia discuss their relationship. Dimple affirms his intention to break his engagement to Maria (who adores him, he claims ingenuously) and to marry Letitia—and denies that he is also attracted to Charlotte, which Letitia suspects. Charlotte arrives and Letitia leaves, ostensibly to make social visits, but listens at the door. She overhears Dimple disparage her while expressing affection for Charlotte. When he tries to kiss Charlotte, she rebuffs him as Manly comes out of the closet to defend her with his sword. Van Rough enters and blocks the impending duel, demanding to know the cause of the fray. Letitia enters and explains Dimple's plan to break with Maria and marry her for her money. She tells Charlotte that Dimple has disparaged each woman to the other in his deceitful wooing of both. Van Rough confronts Dimple with his knowledge of the gambling debts. Dimple, claiming his superiority to the end—that he manifests the “polish of Europe” in contrast to Manly, the “unpolished, untravelled American”—leaves for good. Maria enters, and Manly asks Van Rough for her hand in marriage. Van Rough reveals that he had overheard their honorable conversation earlier in the day, had investigated Manly's reputation, and approves of their marriage. Charlotte asks forgiveness for her conduct and vows to reform her behavior. In the last line of the comedy, Manly states its theme—that simple American virtue will triumph over insincere European “polish.”

⁸² The fair lady, Jenny, Maria's servant.

⁸³ *Tarnal cross tyke*: darned angry mongrel dog. Jonathan is referring to his attempt at a romantic encounter with Jenny.

⁸⁴ *Gamut*: full musical scale; also, full extent or range; here meaning Dimple's guide to the full range of appropriate laughter, with instructions.

⁸⁵ Musical notation: *do re mi . . .*; referring to the earliest meaning of *gamut* as the full musical scale.

JESSAMY. Yes. It comprises every possible display of jocularly, from an *affettuoso* smile to a *piano* titter, or full chorus *fortissimo* ha, ha, ha!⁸⁶ My master employs his leisure hours in marking out the plays, like a cathedral chanting-book, that the ignorant may know where to laugh — and that pit, box, and gallery⁸⁷ may keep time together and not have a snigger in one part of the house, a broad grin in the other, and a d—d grum look in the third. How delightful to see the audience all smile together, then look on their books, then twist their mouths into an agreeable simper, then altogether shake the house with a general ha, ha, ha! loud as a full chorus of Handel's at an Abbey commemoration.⁸⁸

JONATHAN. Ha, ha, ha! that's dang'd cute, I swear.

JESSAMY. The gentlemen, you see, will laugh the tenor, the ladies will play the counter-tenor, the beaux will squeak the treble, and our jolly friends in the gallery a thorough base, ho, ho, ho!

JONATHAN. Well, can't you let me see that gamut?

JESSAMY. Oh! yes, Mr. Jonathan, here it is. [*Takes out a book.*] Oh! no, this is only a titter with its variations. Ah, here it is. [*Takes out another.*] Now, you must know, Mr. Jonathan, this is a piece written by Ben Jonson,⁸⁹ which I have set to my master's gamut. The places where you must smile, look grave, or laugh outright, are marked below the line. Now look over me. "There was a certain man" — now you must smile.

JONATHAN. Well, read it again, I warrant I'll mind my eye.

JESSAMY. "There was a certain man, who had a sad scolding wife" — now you must laugh.

JONATHAN. Tarnation! That's no laughing matter though.

JESSAMY. "And she lay sick a-dying" — now you must titter.

JONATHAN. What, snigger when the good woman's a-dying! Gor, I —

JESSAMY. Yes, the notes say you must — "and she asked her husband leave [permission] to make a will" — now you must begin to look grave — "and her husband said" —

JONATHAN. Ay, what did her husband say? Something dang'd cute, I reckon.

JESSAMY. "And her husband said, you have had your will all your lifetime, and would you have it after you are dead, too?"

JONATHAN. Ho, ho, ho! There the old man was even with her; he was up to the notch — ha, ha, ha!

JESSAMY. But, Mr. Jonathan, you must not laugh so. Why you ought to have tittered *piano*, and you have laughed *fortissimo*. Look here, you see these marks, A, B, C, and so on. These are the references to the other part of the book. Let us turn to it, and you will see the directions how to manage the muscles. This [*turns over*] was note D you blundered at. — "You must purse the mouth into a smile, then titter, discovering [revealing] the lower part of the three front upper teeth."

JONATHAN. How? Read it again.

JESSAMY. "There was a certain man" — very well! — "who had a sad scolding wife" — why don't you laugh?

JONATHAN. Now, that scolding wife sticks in my gizzard so pluckily that I can't laugh for the blood and nouns⁹⁰ of me. Let me look grave here, and I'll laugh your belly full, where the old creature's a-dying —

JESSAMY. "And she asked her husband" — [*Bell rings.*] My master's bell! he's returned, I fear. — Here, Mr. Jonathan, take this gamut, and I make no doubt but with a few years' close application, you may be able to smile gracefully." [*Exeunt severally.*]



⁸⁶ Musical directions [Italian]: *affettuoso*: tender and passionate; *piano*: soft; *fortissimo*: very loud.

⁸⁷ *Pit, box, gallery*: seating areas in a theater, ranked by cost and therefore class.

⁸⁸ Royal ceremony in Westminster Abbey, London.

⁸⁹ Ben Jonson was 17th-century English poet and playwright who wrote many popular comedies.

⁹⁰ From a common oath of medieval origin, "God's blood and wounds" (referring to the crucified Jesus), which evolved to "blood and wounds" to "blood an' ouns" to "blood-nouns." Charles P. G. Scott, "English Words which hav Gained or Lost an Initial Consonant by Attraction," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 24 (1894), 119-120.

Act V. Scene II.

CHARLOTTE's Apartment.

Enter MANLY.

MANLY. What, no one at home? How unfortunate to meet the only lady my heart was ever moved by, to find her engaged to another and confessing her partiality for me! Yet engaged to a man who, by her intimation, and his libertine [debauched] conversation with me, I fear does not merit her. Aye! there's the sting, for were I assured that Maria was happy, my heart is not so selfish but that it would dilate [fill] in knowing it, even though it were with another. — But to know she is unhappy! — I must drive these thoughts from me. Charlotte has some books, and this is what I believe she calls her little library. [*Enters a closet.*]

Enter DIMPLE *leading* LETITIA.

LETITIA. And will you pretend to say now, Mr. Dimple, that you propose to break with Maria? Are not the banns published? Are not the clothes purchased? Are not the friends invited? In short, is it not a done affair?

DIMPLE. Believe me, my dear Letitia, I would not marry her.

LETITIA. Why have you not broke with her before this, as you all along deluded me by saying you would?

DIMPLE. Because I was in hopes she would, ere [before] this, have broke with me.

LETITIA. You could not expect it.

DIMPLE. Nay, but be calm a moment; 'twas from my regard to you that I did not discard her.

LETITIA. Regard to me!

DIMPLE. Yes. I have done everything in my power to break with her, but the foolish girl is so fond of me that nothing can accomplish it. Besides, how can I offer her my hand when my heart is indissolubly engaged to you? —

LETITIA. There may be reason in this, but why so attentive to Miss Manly?

DIMPLE. Attentive to Miss Manly! For heaven's sake, if you have no better opinion of my constancy, pay not so ill a compliment to my taste.

LETITIA. Did I not see you whisper her today?

DIMPLE. Possibly I might — but something of so very trifling a nature that I have already forgot what it was.

LETITIA. I believe she has not forgot it.

DIMPLE. My dear creature, how can you for a moment suppose I should have any serious thoughts of that trifling, gay, flighty coquette, that disagreeable —

Enter CHARLOTTE.

DIMPLE. My dear Miss Manly, I rejoice to see you. There is a charm in your conversation that always marks your entrance into company as fortunate.

LETITIA. Where have you been, my dear?

CHARLOTTE. Why, I have been about to twenty shops, turning over pretty things, and so have left twenty visits unpaid. I wish you would step into the carriage and whisk round, make my apology, and leave my [calling] cards where our friends are not at home, that, you know, will serve as a visit. Come, do go.

LETITIA. So anxious to get me out! but I'll watch you. [*Aside.*] Oh! yes, I'll go. I want a little exercise. — Positively. [*Dimple offering to accompany her.*] Mr. Dimple, you shall not go. Why, half my visits are cake and caudle [hot drink] visits. It won't do, you know, for you to go. — [*Exit, but returns to the door in the back scene and listens.*]

DIMPLE. This attachment of your brother to Maria is fortunate.

CHARLOTTE. How did you come to the knowledge of it?

DIMPLE. I read it in their eyes.

CHARLOTTE. And I had it from her mouth. It would have amused you to have seen her! She, that thought it so great an impropriety to praise a gentleman that she could not bring out one word in your favor, found a redundancy [abundance of words] to praise him.

DIMPLE. I have done everything in my power to assist his passion there. Your delicacy, my dearest girl, would be shocked at half the instances of neglect and misbehavior.⁹¹

CHARLOTTE. I don't know how I should bear neglect, but Mr. Dimple must misbehave himself, indeed, to forfeit my good opinion.

DIMPLE. Your good opinion, my angel, is the pride and pleasure of my heart, and if the most respectful tenderness for you, and an utter indifference for all your sex besides, can make me worthy of your esteem, I shall richly merit it.

CHARLOTTE. All my sex besides, Mr. Dimple! — you forgot your tête-à-tête⁹² with Letitia.

DIMPLE. How can you, my lovely angel, cast a thought on that insipid, wry-mouthed, ugly creature!

CHARLOTTE. But her fortune may have charms?

DIMPLE. Not to a heart like mine. The man who has been blessed with the good opinion of my Charlotte must despise the allurements of fortune.

CHARLOTTE. I am satisfied.

DIMPLE. Let us think no more on the odious subject but devote the present hour to happiness.

CHARLOTTE. Can I be happy when I see the man I prefer going to be married to another?

DIMPLE. Have I not already satisfied my charming angel that I can never think of marrying the puling [whining] Maria? But, even if it were so, could that be any bar to our happiness? for, as the poet sings —

“Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.”⁹³

Come, then, my charming angel! why delay our bliss? The present moment is ours; the next is in the hand of fate. [*Kissing her.*]

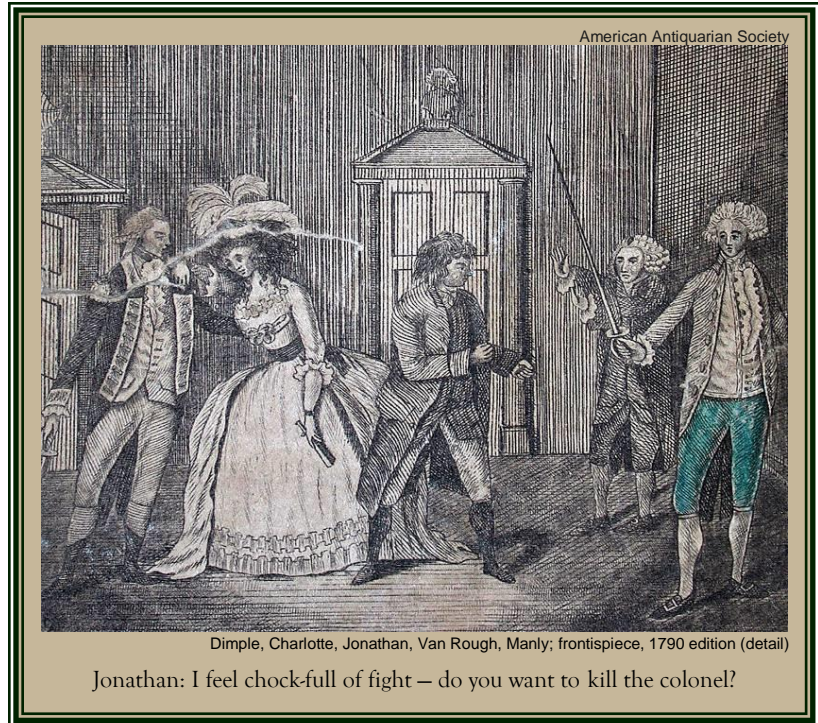
CHARLOTTE. Begone, Sir! By your delusions you had almost lulled my honor asleep.

DIMPLE. Let me lull the demon to sleep again with kisses. [*He struggles with her; she screams.*]

Enter MANLY.

MANLY. Turn, villain! and defend yourself. [*Draws.*]

[VAN ROUGH *enters and beats down their swords.*]



⁹¹ I.e., that Dimple has done to Maria so she will break their engagement.

⁹² *Tête-à-tête*: meeting; private conversation between two people [French: head-to-head].

⁹³ Alexander Pope was an English poet who composed *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717).

VAN ROUGH. Is the devil in you? Are you going to murder one another? [*Holding Dimple.*]

DIMPLE. Hold him, hold him — I can command my passion.

Enter JONATHAN.

JONATHAN. What the rattle ails you? Is the old one in you? Let the colonel alone, can't you? I feel chock-full of fight — do you want to kill the colonel? —

MANLY. Be still, Jonathan. The gentleman does not want to hurt me.

JONATHAN. Gor! I — I wish he did. I'd show him Yankee boys play pretty quick. — Don't you see you have frightened the young woman into the *hystrikes* [hysterics]?

VAN ROUGH. Pray, some of you explain this. What has been the occasion of all this racket?

MANLY. That gentleman can explain it to you. It will be a very diverting story for an intended father-in-law to hear.

VAN ROUGH. How was this matter, Mr. Van Dumpling?

DIMPLE. Sir — upon my honor — all I know is that I was talking to this young lady, and this gentleman broke in on us in a very extraordinary manner.

VAN ROUGH. Why, all this is nothing to the purpose. Can you explain it, Miss? [*To Charlotte.*]

Enter LETITIA through the back scene.

LETITIA. I can explain it to that gentleman's confusion. Though long betrothed to your daughter [*to Van Rough*], yet allured by my fortune, it seems (with shame do I speak it), he has privately paid his addresses [expressions of courtship] to me. I was drawn in to listen to him by his assuring me that the match was made by his father without his consent, and that he proposed to break with Maria whether he married me or not. But, whatever were his intentions respecting your daughter, Sir, even to me he was false, for he has repeated the same story with some cruel reflections upon my person to Miss Manly.

JONATHAN. What a tarnal [damnable] curse!

LETITIA. Nor is this all, Miss Manly. When he was with me this very morning, he made the same ungenerous reflections upon the weakness of your mind as he has so recently done upon the defects of my person.

JONATHAN. What a tarnal curse and damn, too!

DIMPLE. Ha! since I have lost Letitia, I believe I had as good make it up with Maria. — Mr. Van Rough, at present I cannot enter into particulars, but I believe I can explain everything to your satisfaction in private.

VAN ROUGH. There is another matter, Mr. Van Dumpling, which I would have you explain. — Pray, Sir, have Messrs. [Misters] Van Cash & Co. presented you those bills for acceptance?

DIMPLE. The deuce! Has he heard of those bills! Nay, then, all's up with Maria, too, but an affair of this sort can never prejudice me among the ladies. They will rather long to know what the dear creature possesses to make him so agreeable. [*Aside.*] Sir, you'll hear from me. [*To Manly.*]

MANLY. And you from me, Sir. —

DIMPLE. Sir, you wear a sword. —

MANLY. Yes, Sir. — This sword was presented to me by that brave Gallic [French] hero, the Marquis DE LA FAYETTE.⁹⁴ I have drawn it in the service of my country, and in private life on the only occasion where a man is justified in drawing his sword — in defense of a lady's honor. I have fought too many battles in the service of my country to dread the imputation of cowardice. — Death from a man of honor would be a glory you do not merit. You shall live to bear the insult of man and the contempt of that sex whose general smiles afforded you all your happiness.

DIMPLE. You won't meet me, Sir [in a duel]? — Then I'll post you for a coward.

⁹⁴ Marquis de la Fayette was a French military officer who trained and led soldiers of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

MANLY. I'll venture that, Sir. — The reputation of my life does not depend upon the breath of a Mr. Dimple. I would have you to know, however, Sir, that I have a cane to chastise the insolence of a scoundrel, and a sword and the good laws of my country to protect me from the attempts of an assassin. —

“Ladies and gentlemen, I take my leave, and you will please to observe in the case of my deportment the contrast between a gentleman who has read Chesterfield and received the polish of Europe and an unpolished, untravelled American.”

DIMPLE. Mighty well! Very fine, indeed! —

Ladies and gentlemen, I take my leave, and you will please to observe in the case of my deportment the contrast between a gentleman who has read Chesterfield and received the polish of Europe and an unpolished, untravelled American.
[Exit.]

Enter MARIA.

MARIA. Is he indeed gone? —

LETITIA. I hope never to return.

VAN ROUGH. I am glad I heard of those bills, though it's plaguy [vexing/disagreeable] unlucky. I hoped to see Mary married before I died.

MANLY. Will you permit a gentleman, Sir, to offer himself as a suitor to your daughter? Though a stranger to you, he is not altogether so to her, or unknown in this city. You may find a son-in-law of more fortune, but you can never meet with one who is richer in love for her or respect for you.

VAN ROUGH. Why, Mary, you have not let this gentleman make love to you [court you] without my leave [permission]?

MANLY. I did not say, Sir —

MARIA. Say, Sir! — I — the gentleman, to be sure, met me accidentally.

VAN ROUGH. Ha, ha, ha! Mark me, Mary, young folks think old folks to be fools, but old folks know young folks to be fools. Why, I knew all about this affair. — This was only a cunning way I had to bring it about. — Hark ye! I was in the closet when you and he were at our house. [Turns to the company.] I heard that little baggage say she loved her old father and would die to make him happy! Oh! how I loved the little baggage! — And you talked very prudently, young man. I have inquired into your character and find you to be a man of punctuality and mind the main chance. And so, as you love Mary and Mary loves you, you shall have my consent immediately to be married. I'll settle my fortune on you, and go and live with you the remainder of my life.

MANLY. Sir, I hope —

VAN ROUGH. Come, come, no fine speeches. Mind the main chance, young man, and you and I shall always agree.

LETITIA. I sincerely wish you joy [advancing to Maria] and hope your pardon for my conduct.

MARIA. I thank you for your congratulations, and hope we shall at once forget the wretch who has given us so much disquiet, and the trouble that he has occasioned.

CHARLOTTE. And I, my dear Maria — how shall I look up to you for forgiveness? I, who, in the practice of the meanest arts have violated the most sacred rights of friendship? I can never forgive myself or hope charity from the world, but, I confess, I have much to hope from such a brother, and I am happy that I may soon say, such a sister. —

MARIA. My dear, you distress me. You have all my love.

MANLY. And mine.

CHARLOTTE. If repentance can entitle me to forgiveness, I have already much merit, for I despise the littleness [pettiness] of my past conduct. I now find that the heart of any worthy man cannot be gained by invidious [hateful; meant to create ill will] attacks upon the rights and characters of others

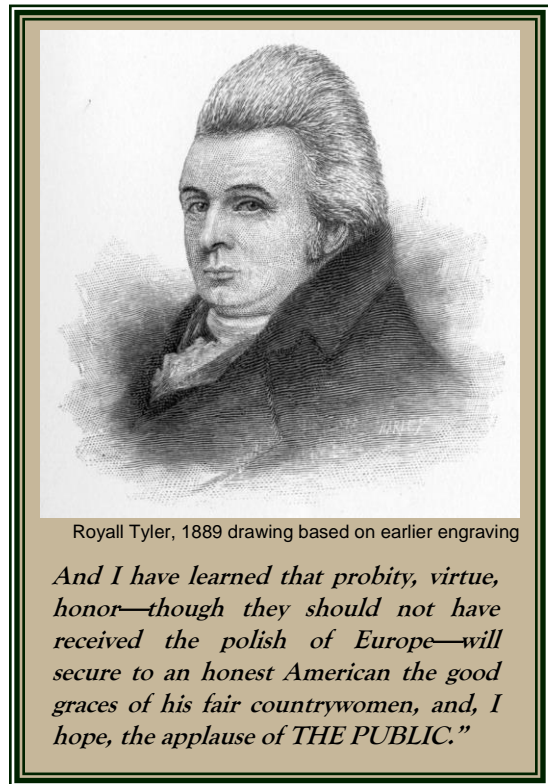
— by countenancing [approving] the addresses of a thousand⁹⁵ — or that the finest assemblage of features, the greatest taste in dress, the genteelst address [mode of speech], or the most brilliant wit, cannot eventually secure a coquette from contempt and ridicule.

MANLY. And I have learned that probity [honesty], virtue, honor — though they should not have received the polish of Europe — will secure to an honest American the good graces of his fair countrywomen, and, I hope, the applause of THE PUBLIC.

THE END

On Royall Tyler and *The Contrast*

- Arthur H. Nethercot, "The Dramatic Background of Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*," *American Literature*, 12:4 (Jan. 1941), 435-446.
- Richard S. Pressman, "Class Positioning and Shays' Rebellion: Resolving the Contradictions of *The Contrast*," *Early American Literature*, 21:2 (Fall 1986), 87-102.
- Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution: Painting, Music, Literature, and the Theater in the Colonies and the United States from the Treaty of Paris to the Inauguration of George Washington, 1763-1789* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1976): Book Three: Virtue against Luxury; Ch. 46: The Theatre.



⁹⁵ I.e., by accepting the attentions of many potential suitors.